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The radical reconfiguration over the last three decades of critical studies and what constitutes 'knowledge', whereby 'theory' and writing, literature and the 'social', poetics and politics have crossed each other's path, has led to an irreversible interrogation of previous autonomies. It would be simple to reduce this trajectory to a superficial social history that commences around 1968 and develops, above all, through the writings, both theoretical and literary, of new historical subjects distinguished by gender, ethnicity and minority status. However, these are also symptoms of an altogether deeper current that, to use the unfashionable concept of hegemony, draws our attention to the limits and crisis, both intellectual and institutional, of a particular historical-cultural formation and its subsequent arrangement of disciplines in the western academy. The confident nineteenth-century positivism and/or idealism that cultivated and established the present day divisions and distinctions of the social sciences and humanities (and the critical and historical sense of such terms are themselves to be investigated) is exhausted. Confronted by nervous retrenchment into orthodox backwaters or else the continual adjustment of the inherited discipline in order to continue to converse with change, the initial dispositif is now clearly in crisis.

Yet crisis is, of course, the very basis of criticism. This is to suggest a theoretical modality that is neither conservative nor merely accommodating. But if positivism and idealism are no longer able to mirror the world in their languages, if the confidence of a subjective objectivity orbiting around the universal I/eye (humanism) is justly afflicted by doubt, then critical work, whether in literature or anthropology, becomes an altogether more exposed, more vulnerable, undertaking. Whatever the response to such a situation, which, of course, requires recognition as a critical situation and not something to be brushed under the carpet, it becomes clear that a local response, for example restricted to the field of 'English literature', cannot be divorced from a wider comprehension of the crisis-criticism of the humanities and its particular tutelage of 'knowledge'. It is in this direction that the new series of *Anglistica* proposes to travel, drawing critical strength, above all, from an interdisciplinary approach that has historically developed within the vicinity of English literary studies, that of cultural studies. But, precisely because it is interdisciplinary, existing between and beyond existing disciplines, neither cultural studies nor the critical perspective proposed for this journal can claim the authority of an intellectual orthodoxy nor the institutional recognition of a disciplinary regime. Being vulnerable is an uncomfortable, but necessary, position to occupy; the only comfort it provides is the perpetual aperture, the opening, through which an intellectual challenge can continue on its way.

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## EDITORIAL

"English is no longer the exclusive language of the men who live in England. That stopped a long time ago; and it is today, among other things, a West Indian language". George Lamming wrote these lines in 1960 when the transformation of English into englishes was not the self-evident truth it is today. As mobility and movement have come to characterize this *fin de siècle*, voices speaking in English have indeed multiplied, claiming the right to narrate themselves bearing their own histories and accents.

Writing both against and within a language that has symbolized oppression for many, these narratives have transformed the languages of the West. No longer able to fulfil the homogeneous role scripted for them, caught in the web of hybridities they have created but at the same time denied, these languages are being interrogated by the formerly 'otherized' subjects who have appropriated these signs in their strategies of subversion and re-creation. As Iain Chambers has so aptly put it in *Migrancy Culture Identity*, "signs can be cast loose from their moorings in one system of thought, language, culture and history and acquire other, sometimes unrecognisable, perhaps incomprehensible, ones elsewhere". Today both the West and the Rest are being reconfigured.

As guest editor of this issue of *Anglistica* I am pleased to have been able to bring together scholars whose work is based on the assumptions that boundaries of time, space, and narrative voice have become blurred and that facile definitions of ethnicity, authenticity and home are no longer viable. Thus, the essays presented here evade dogmatic readings of contemporary cultural texts, be they by filmmaker Jane Campion, or writers Kazuo Ishiguro and Derek Walcott. Moving on the contaminated terrain of contemporary culture, Mark Reid offers a re-reading of the inscription of Maori tattoos on the white body of George Baines (Harvey Keitel) who becomes a double settler of Maori-land and Maori-body. Max Dorsinville insightfully grapples with the issue of a language specific to the New World – caught between imitation and originality – which has been Walcott's concern and culminates in a felicitous synthesis in *Omeros*. Sonia Torres confronts the hybridity in Chicana writers Ana Castillo and Erlinda González-Berry whose characters' nomadic practices are deployed as strategies of representation. Rebecca Suter, through Kazuo Ishiguro's works, analyzes the dynamic space of interculturality. Nunzia Ponzio focuses on the multi-ethnic Caribbean and the difficulties facing Italian translators in rendering marked terms referring to skin tones. The interview with acclaimed Haitian American writer, Edwige Danticat, reveals how her very presence on the U.S. literary scene dismantles

received notions about language and culture, writing and mother tongue. Finally, the four poems by Marcia Lipson, rooted in the Jewish experience, broaden into issues of geographical identities.

Punctual and thoughtful as they are, these contributions also evidence the pregnant limits of writing: ambiguities are unresolved and discourses remain open, as if reflecting the unfixity and instability of the subjects of their discourses. The new perspectives opened up by the displaced, the sense of entanglement expressed in the concept of englishes are reminders that in our life journey as scholars and individuals, we need to continue to look at the other side, for as Jean Rhys writes in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, "there's always the other side, always".

Attitudes to English, as the "other tongue" (in Braj Kachru's terms) or as one's own, vary widely and are ambivalent, as it comes into contact with other languages, borrows, is borrowed from, 'metamorphosises', alchemically bestows new 'powers' on those who use it, is sought after, is fought off, is hailed as the way to world unity and peace, is demonised as a real menace to civilisation and to the 'world treasure-house of diversity' (to echo Joshua Fishman's image in *Whorfianism of the Third Kind*). The world language "happens to be English" at the moment and so, it is the natural target of enmity, and desire. For most people in the world, it is English that is the other tongue. For the English monolingual native speaker, at home or abroad, the non-natives are naturally the others. Of course, 'otherness' itself is a controversial concept. Who defines who is other? And when do others stop defining themselves as other than other? English too is a controversial notion. Who defines English? 'English is no longer the exclusive property of the native-speaker, let alone the Englishman' is also a favourite theme, an axiom indeed, in sociolinguistics and English as an International, or World, Language studies, where it has been growingly acknowledged since the sixties, officially declared in various EIL conferences in the seventies, and sanctioned by far too many to cite here, although Braj Kachru's *Other Tongue* of 1982, his *Alchemy of English* of 1987, Larry Smith's *Readings in International English* of 1983 and, more recently, David Crystal's *English as a Global Language* of 1997 can conveniently and authoritatively represent them here.

All of the contributors to this volume live and and/or work interculturally and transculturally; some have become or were born 'hybrid'. Others live in hybrid nations or ones with a split identity, or, again, 'multiethnic' ones, where the issue of belonging to one or other side, or being defined as ethnic (i.e. as an un-integrated or un-assimilated other), is painful. Some are natives of one or other type of English, some are other-than-native but living in an 'English speaking world'. We, the editors, too, though native speakers of (two

different varieties of) English, are both hybrid in origin, and living in a country unrelated to (any of) our origins; we are inevitably perceived as other, and must daily negotiate meanings, status and commonality; hence, presumably, our interest in liminality, fuzziness, and belonging, in crossover and interculturality, and probably, also our attraction to interdisciplinarity.

The theme of hybridity indeed, is one of the many to be found in both cultural studies and language studies. Being hybrid, does not mean having no identity, the interstices between places being a place itself. For example, in sociolinguistics, contact linguistics and creole linguistics, the issue is nothing if not the identity of originally hybrid languages, as we can see in the Trinidadian sociolinguist Donald Winford's contribution. Winford also very usefully systematises the 'family of englishes' field providing a clear overview, and untangling of the many different other, new or ex-englishes; he also points to the usefulness of crossover between linguistic disciplines. Another important point of methodological, epistemological and theoretical contact between our two major interdisciplinary fields, concerns the basic assumptions of unfixity, fluidity, negotiability, variability and adaptability of meaning and its creation as joint between participants (speakers, hearers/writers, readers). These are very clearly visible in Jef Verschueren's laying out of some basic instruments and assumptions of pragmatics; his paper, while looking at the role of the English language media in international communication, also clearly demonstrates how linguistic studies, pragmatics in particular, are potentially ideologically and politically engageable. Richard Swiderski's concern is also that of unmasking the power dynamics in the encounter between different languages in mixed language groups, where different languages can be backgrounded or foregrounded by other languages, that is, perceived against the vision of the other, as the language by default, the others being the other; this is negotiable, but it often "happens to be English". Winnie Cheng's contribution is more optimistic. Analysing some exchanges between speakers from different 'cultures': Hong-Kong Chinese and native (American and Australian) English speakers in Hong Kong, she suggests how mutual racial stereotypes may actually be used positively in the negotiation of successful world-sharing outcomes in conversation. Maurizio Gnerre's contribution shows how the very assumed or perceived high status of English can be exploited for the purpose of (re)affirming the status of a minority language – in this case Shuar, an Amerindian language from the Ecuadorian Upper Amazon – which is struggling against the neo-colonial hegemony of Spanish, and even that of Quechua, by placing Shuar in direct 'interface' with English, in an English language text book for learners. Also concerned with cultural and ideological assumptions in linguistic choice – here at the micro level of lexis – are the two contributions by Prat

## EDITORIAL

Zagrebelsky (an Italian '*anglista*') and by Lepschy and Sanson (Italian linguists working in England). MariaTeresa Prat Zagrebelsky's word-watching of English loans into Italian shatters the common-place that word-borrowing necessarily means a submissive attitude to the lending language, even if it is the 'dominant' world language. Giulio Lepschy and Helena Sanson look at the history of the logonymic terms "Native" and "Mother (-tongue)" with the embedded allusion to other languages and their speakers, where "native" has swung from meaning the other to meaning not-the-other, and where "mother tongue" seems to bear traces of some of the emotive load of superiority of 'original' and 'ours', to be found in *Muttersprache* and to some degree in Medieval Latin *lingua materna* and Italian *lingua madre*. Geoffrey Nunberg's point, originally made on one of his *Fresh Air* radio talks in 1996, is still far from banal. Not a conference goes by, even on EIL, without someone stating automatically and tritely that English is the language of the Net, and thence (through the combined nefarious influence of the Net and English) inevitably threatens the very survival of 'other' languages. Nunberg's talk can be seen therefore as a dissenting, sensible voice in the mainly unthinking non-debate on the issue. We wish to amplify it here, perhaps starting a real debate. Moreover, 'fear of English' may stem from thinking only in terms of 'one or the other', instead of 'one and the other'. English can be the 'other' language for communication with 'others', and not thereby threaten the home language.

We might have been able to separate our volume into two sections, since some of the contributions here are clearly more 'linguistic' or more 'cultural' in focus (identifiable perhaps by being data-driven or not, or by the type of data they examine, or by the instruments or technolect typical of the two macro-fields), but the division would never have been neat. Both fields are declaredly and necessarily interdisciplinary and their area of overlap considerable. The very phenomena of culture and language are mutually embedded, constructing and constructed by the other. There were also several papers that we would never have been able to decide on appropriately assigning to one or the other sections, their approach or subject matter seemingly 'at home' in either. We have, however, let our separate voices be discernible, so that the crossover be all the more obvious.

One small consequence of our being native speakers of two different varieties of 'English', is that we have not adopted uniform spelling conventions. Our writers of English, native and other-than-native, have used their own natural or elected model. We would not wish to impose any other.

Marie-Hélène Laforest  
Jocelyne Vincent

## POEMS

...the dominant world language. Latin, Spanish and French were the main languages of Europe apart from the scale of kilometers. Your grandfathers spread the map of the world flat on the table surveying the continents like antlers on a moose. Marcia Lipson

**Ancient History**

I ran home from the playground full of tears.  
When two girls had called me dirty Jew,  
and told me I'd killed Christ,  
I'd contradicted them,  
and said I wasn't dirty  
and that I hadn't killed Christ,  
but they were big girls,  
and there were two of them,  
and the one of me  
was too shocked to find the words  
to make it right.

I remember this,  
and the playground where I went each day,  
the little swings, for older kids like me,  
two monkey bars, the sliding ponds,  
and concrete tunnels to crawl inside  
to keep the world away.

For weeks I thought of what to say  
If I should see my tormentors again,  
as though words could change their minds,  
rewrite our histories  
sway us at our play.

Marcia Lipson

**Ancient History**

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When two girls had called me dirty Jew,  
and told me I'd killed Christ,  
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For weeks I thought of what to say  
If I should see my tormentors again,  
as though words could change their minds,  
rewrite our histories  
sway us at our play.

MARCIA LIPSON

**Australia**

Your grandfather spread the map of the world flat on the table,  
surveying the continents like entrees on a menu,  
its creases tearing the borders of Europe apart,  
and he checked the scale of kilometers,  
calculating the place furthest away that would take them in,  
without asking who they were or what they believed in;  
and partial to islands, he picked a country  
with boundaries shaped by the blue oceans,  
and deserts bearing common English names,  
as if he were choosing fish over fowl.

**In the Museum at Terezin**

Pinned to plasterboard, paintings  
and poems line the exhibition,  
the survivors' childish brushstrokes  
and unformed cursives tacked up  
at eye level or above, as if to say, "See,  
these survived." Compelled to look,  
I only glimpse the whole display, the glint  
of light on glass too strong, and start  
to leave the hall with eyes less glazed  
than I expected, when the midday glare  
subsides, and what the murdered wrote  
and painted stares up through panes smeared  
by fingerprints  
at the bottom of the cases.

**In the Old City**

The sun's brutal, we're told, dig early,  
so we slip through Jaffa Gate at dawn  
to reach the excavations at the Temple Mount,  
and crouch, trowels in hand,  
sifting dirt for pottery and glass,  
unearthing David's city, layer by filthy layer.  
We salvage all we find:  
memories, bones, discarded prayers,  
heaping them in baskets that swing up  
like pendulums pursuing time.

**ARTICLES**

Introduction

This paper is a first step towards a more systematic analysis of the ways in which discourses are situated in particular social, cultural and linguistic contexts, and develops and shapes ideology. Such an approach draws on insights from critical language analysis, critical discourse analysis, sociopragmatics, and ethnography of speaking.

Second, the paper proposes adopting a dialogic-analytical approach to examining a particular text-type, i.e. intercultural dialogical conversations, with a view to identifying and describing the processes by which the participants present and negotiate their

A first version of this paper was given at the 'International Pragmatics Association on Language and Development' held in London, July 1993.

N. Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London and New York: Longman, 1989).

T. A. van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse: An Analysis of Ethnic Prejudice in Cognitive and Communicative Interaction with White Supremacy* (Lisse, Praeger, 1984); T. A. van Dijk, *Communicating Ethnic Prejudice in Discourse and Text* (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1987); T. A. van Dijk, *Discourse as Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (London: Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991); G. Yule, 'Critical Discourse Analysis', *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 11 (1991), Cambridge University Press, 1991, 84-99; S. Hodge, 'Critical Discourse and the Discourse Process: A Study of Transformation in Popular Media', *Journal of Pragmatics* 13 (1991), North-Holland, 115-31; 429-444; B. Lee, *Discourse, Ideology, Pragmatics and Ideology in Language Class* (London and New York: Longman, 1992).

G. H. Leech, *Pragmatics* (London and New York: Longman, 1983).

J. Gumperz and D. Hymes, ed., *The Ethnography of Communication: Analytical Approaches to Applied Linguistics* (Washington, D.C., 1964); D. Hymes, *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974); M. Lewis, *Language, Culture and Ideology: A Sociolinguistic and Social Discourse of Science* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Winnie Cheng

## Constructing and Negotiating Ideologies of Race and Ethnicity in Intercultural Conversations<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

This paper serves four purposes. First, it argues for a discourse-analytical approach to studying ideology; and that is, how discourse situated in particular social, cultural and linguistic contexts creates, develops and shapes ideology. Such an approach draws on insights from critical language analysis,<sup>2</sup> critical discourse analysis,<sup>3</sup> socio-pragmatics,<sup>4</sup> and ethnography of speaking.<sup>5</sup>

Second, the paper proposes adopting a discourse-analytical approach to examining a particular text-type, i.e. intercultural dialogical conversations, with a view to identifying and describing the processes in which the participants present and negotiate their

<sup>1</sup> A first version of this paper was given at the "International Pragmatics Association on Language and Development" held in Reims, July 1998.

<sup>2</sup> N. Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London and New York: Longman, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> T. A. van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse: An Analysis of Ethnic Prejudice in Cognition and Conversation* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1984); T. A. van Dijk, *Communicating Racism: Ethnic Prejudice in Thought and Talk* (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1987); T. A. van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998); G. Kress, "Critical Discourse Analysis", *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 11 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 84-99; B. Hodge, "National Character and the Discourse Process: A Study of Transformations in Popular Metatexts", *Journal of Pragmatics* 13 (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1989), 427-444; D. Lee, *Competing Discourses: Perspective and Ideology in Language* (Essex, England and New York: Longman, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> G. N. Leech, *Principles of Pragmatics* (London and New York: Longman, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> J. Gumperz and D. Hymes, eds., *The Ethnography of Communication*. *American Anthropologist*, 66 vi, pt 2, Special publication (Washington, D.C., 1964); D. Hymes, *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974); M. Lynch, *Scientific Practice and Ordinary Action: Ethnomethodology and Social Studies of Science* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).



ideological positions in the course of production and development of meaning. The interest in studying conversations, rather than other spoken discourse types such as interviews, meetings or classroom discourse, is mainly because conversations are the most prevalent mode of human communication around the world. Undoubtedly, conversations constitute a rich social platform and pragmatic context for both the construction and the exchange of ideologies between participants. Until recently, conversations have not been systematically studied.<sup>6</sup> Conversation, as defined by Warren, is a "speech event outside of an institutionalised setting involving at least two participants who share responsibility for the progress and outcome of an impromptu and unmarked verbal encounter consisting of more than a ritualised exchange".<sup>7</sup> Face-to-face conversations between interlocutors from different racial, socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds constitute an even more unique and richer backdrop by enlisting a range of norms, beliefs, values, views and background knowledge deriving from, and embedded in, more than one socio-cultural and linguistic world.

Third, the paper aims to identify and describe the ways in which participants in the intercultural conversations express, develop and negotiate their ideological assumptions relating to racial and ethnic stereotypes and identities. Topics on race and ethnicity involve delicate and sensitive issues, which are potentially face-threatening to the speaker and the hearer, and therefore require appropriate face-work by the interlocutors.<sup>8</sup> More specifically, the paper explores the

<sup>6</sup> See for example, J. Atkinson and J. Heritage, eds., *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); R. Wardhaugh, *How Conversation Works* (Oxford and New York: B. Blackwell in association with Andre Deutsch, 1985); D. Roger and P. Bull, *Conversation: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Clevedon and Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1989); R. Nofsinger, *Everyday Conversation* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1991); H. Sacks, *Lectures on Conversation: Volume 2* (Oxford; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1992); M. J. Warren, *Towards a Description of the Features of Naturalness in Conversation* (University of Birmingham: unpublished PhD Thesis, 1993); A.-B. Stenström, *An Introduction to Spoken Interaction* (London and New York: Longman, 1994); A. Tsui, *English Conversation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); G. Psathas, *Conversation Analysis: The Study of Talk-in-Interaction* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1995); K. Aijmer, *Conversation Routines in English: Convention and Creativity* (London and New York: Longman, 1996); S. Eggins and D. Slade, *Analysing Casual Conversation* (London: Cassell, 1997); I. Hutchby and R. Wooffitt, *Conversation Analysis: Principles, Practices and Applications* (Cambridge: Polity Press and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998); P. Ten Have, *Doing Conversation Analysis: A Practical Guide* (London: Sage Publications, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Warren, "Naturalness in Conversation", 8.

<sup>8</sup> E. Goffman, *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967).

discoursal and pragmatic strategies individual participants in intercultural conversation employ to conceptualise, formulate and express their ideologies of race and ethnicity; and more importantly, the collaborative efforts participants make to reinforce, reconstruct, negotiate and validate such ideologies.

Finally, the paper discusses the communicative and social functions of talk on racial and ethnic stereotypes and identities in the unique context of intercultural conversation, and compares these functions with those in other contexts, such as interviews<sup>9</sup> and written texts.<sup>10</sup>

### Discourse-analytical approach to studying ideology

Discourse studies adopting a discourse-analytical approach to examining ideologies consider discourse both the objects and a method of investigation.<sup>11</sup> Shi-xu, for example, views ideology as constituted in the "social-discursive processes and products".<sup>12</sup> His study of "reasoned discourse" (i.e. Dutch travel accounts of China) as both an object and an objective of political, cultural and socio-psychological analysis suggests that changing unequal social structure and formation will change discursive practices. Dixon, Reicher and Foster examine 'everyday texts' (i.e. bulletins and letters to local newspapers) to analyse the "rhetoric of political resistance to desegregation in the new South Africa".<sup>13</sup> In Kleiner, American college friends' "pseudo-argumentative discourse" shows diffusion and reinforcement of their non-normative, one-sided ideological positions about minority groups to appear non-racist, unbiased and rational,

<sup>9</sup> van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse*.

<sup>10</sup> Shi-xu, "Ideology: Strategies of Reason and Functions of Control in Accounts of the Non-Western Other", *Journal of Pragmatics* 21 (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1994), 645-669; B. Kleiner, "The Modern Racist Ideology and its Reproduction in 'Pseudo-Argument'", *Discourse & Society* 9,2 (1998), 187-215.

<sup>11</sup> See for example, van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse*; Shi-xu, "Non-Western Other"; J. Dixon, S. Reicher and D. Foster, "Ideology, Geography, Racial Exclusion: The Squatter Camp as 'Blot on the Landscape'", *Text* 17,3 (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1997), 317-348; Kleiner, "Pseudo-Argument"; T. L. Simmons, "Face Threats in a Faceless Medium: Negotiating Ideological Parameters in Computer Mediated Communication" (hereafter cited as CMC), in J. Verschueren, ed., *Language and Ideology* (Antwerp and Belgium: International Pragmatics Association, 1999), 514-543.

<sup>12</sup> Shi-xu, "Non-Western Other", 667.

<sup>13</sup> Dixon, Reicher and Foster, "The Squatter Camp", 317.

without being challenged.<sup>14</sup> Simmons analyses the ideological nature of interaction via computer-mediated communication (CMC), especially “the ideological assumptions of social parameters” based on face-to-face communication that moderators of mail lists bring to CMC.<sup>15</sup> van Dijk advocates a multidisciplinary approach by analysing ideology in terms of “the ‘triangle’ of (social) *cognition, society* and *discourse*”.<sup>16</sup> Discourse, being essential in “contexts of acquisition, argumentation, ideological conflict, persuasion and other processes in the formation and change of ideologies”, requires a “*detailed, systematic account* of the various levels, structures, units and strategies”.

### Stereotyping and prejudiced discourse

Stereotypes have been a focus in most work on prejudice,<sup>17</sup> and are generally equated to “wrong beliefs, faulty reasoning, or biased perception regarding other groups or nations”,<sup>18</sup> and represented as “group schemata”.<sup>19</sup> Lippman points out that one’s culturally defined stereotypes of other people, bias one’s perception of their actions.<sup>20</sup> Stroinska and Popovic define stereotyping as “the process of selecting a few, often caricatural or exaggerated features to stand for a complex social phenomenon” and as a simplified and distorted representation of social groups, complex problems or social phenomena, which often carries a “negative emotional charge”.<sup>21</sup> Such stereotypes are usually formed as part of the socialisation process, without active critical questioning. Once formed, these stereotypes are difficult to change. New information about these ethnic stereotypical representations will usually be rejected. Stroinska and Popovic analyse the linguistic and extra-linguistic means of stereotyping about the others in official media and racist propagandistic texts, and show that the texts create a

<sup>14</sup> Kleiner, “Pseudo-Argument”, 187-188 and 212.

<sup>15</sup> Simmons, CMC, 541.

<sup>16</sup> van Dijk, *Ideology*, 313.

<sup>17</sup> van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse*; Shi-xu, “Accounts of the Non-Western Other”.

<sup>18</sup> van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse*, 13.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>20</sup> W. Lippman, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1922).

<sup>21</sup> M. Stroinska and B. Popovic, “Discourse of Black and White and Stereotyping: Some Linguistic Principles of Hate-Speech”, in Verschuere, *Language and Ideology*, 544-559.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

uniform “black and white” representation of the reality, allowing no ambiguity in interpretation.<sup>22</sup>

### Strategies and functions of ideological discourse

By strategy is meant “a partial plan about the way a goal can or should be reached”.<sup>23</sup> van Dijk’s racist discourse analysis has revealed varied pragmatic and conversational strategies employed by his Dutch interviewees, namely narrative and argumentative strategies, local semantic strategies, strategies of stylistic and rhetorical formulation, and dialogical structures and strategies.<sup>24</sup> Prejudiced discourse serves such communicative and social functions as socialising personal experiences, self-presentation, identity and social integration, persuasion, informal mass communication, a mode of conflict resolution, amusement and social precepts.<sup>25</sup>

Shi-xu discusses the Dutch use of ideological strategies in reasoned discourse to protect the West, as opposed to the non-West (i.e. China), and to place the West in the “*center* of the re-arranged space and *ahead* of the re-ordered time”.<sup>26</sup> Effects of the strategies include “out-dating the Other to exclude it”, “contrasting the Other to embellish colonisation”, “aligning evidence to fix stereotypes of the Other”, “reifying stereotypes of the Other to discredit it”, “universalising Western standards to blame the Other”, “framing the Other to grasp it”, and “monopolising truth to be the arbiter of the Other”.<sup>27</sup>

Kleiner examines the structural and functional features of his “pseudo-argumentative discourse” (PA) on issues of race between college friends.<sup>28</sup> PA consists of two identifying patterns of ideational units, respectively involving the collaborative support for a mutually accepted position, and the collaborative dispute of an absent antagonist’s imported position and support.<sup>29</sup> Collaborative argumentation functions to achieve identity management (i.e. to avoid negative inferences), to reinforce participants’ mutually held non-

<sup>23</sup> van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse*, 115.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-53.

<sup>26</sup> Shi-xu, “Non-Western Other”, 667.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 657-667.

<sup>28</sup> Kleiner, “Pseudo-Argument”.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

normative beliefs, and to reassure each other of their ideological alliance and solidarity.

### Context of discourse: intercultural conversation

As noted by van Dijk, related notions such as prejudice, ethnic stereotypes, ethnocentrism, or verbal discrimination have been investigated in a range of discourse types, such as everyday talk, media discourse, textbooks, political propaganda, laws and regulations, meetings, job interviews, literature, comics and so on.<sup>30</sup> van Dijk's prejudice discourse, for instance, is recorded from pre-planned and pre-organised interviews conducted with a purpose to elicit his Dutch participants' ideological beliefs, opinions and attitudes concerning minority groups. Kleiner records the discussions between friends on topics of race, which are termed "pseudo-argumentative discourse".<sup>31</sup> Other studies, such as Shi-xu, Dixon, Reicher and Foster and Stroinska and Popovic, examine written published texts.<sup>32</sup>

The intercultural conversational data of the present study are unique in terms of the physical, social and linguistic context of utterance,<sup>33</sup> the purpose of the discourse, and the nature and characteristics of the data itself. The conversations are spontaneous naturally occurring forms of spoken discourse between Hong Kong Chinese and native speakers of English (British, American or Australian), who are acquaintances or friends. The data recorded came from one of their normal regular social encounters, and no specification or restriction was made on the purpose, duration, strategies, pattern of interaction, or topics of their conversations.

To date, Hong Kong English, especially the spoken form, has not been comprehensively and systematically described, despite a few attempts to explore and describe intercultural conversations.

<sup>30</sup> van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse*, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Kleiner, "Pseudo-Argument".

<sup>32</sup> Shi-xu, "Non-Western Other", 667; Dixon, Reicher and Foster, "The Squatter Camp"; Stroinska and Popovic, "Hate-Speech".

<sup>33</sup> J. Thomas, *Meaning in Interaction: An Introduction to Pragmatics* (London and New York: Longman, 1995); T. Dant, *Knowledge, Ideology and Discourse: A Sociological Perspective* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 78.

Examining the Hong Kong Corpus of Conversational English, Cheng and Warren have found that a characteristic of Hong Kong Chinese speakers of English (HKC) is the inappropriate level of inexplicitness used – either overly explicit or overly inexplicit; and yet on the whole, communication between HKC and native speakers is not hampered.<sup>34</sup> In a study of vague language, Cheng and Warren have shown that HKC employ vague language in very similar ways to their English interlocutors to achieve successful and cooperative communication.<sup>35</sup> The study also shows that vague language is employed by HKC and native speakers for accommodating and strategic purposes, showing that the linguistic and communicative competence of the majority of HKC speakers is quite high.

In the present study, participants come from different racial backgrounds. In some cases, they talk about racial or ethnic groups neither of them belong to. In other cases, their talk concerns the group one of them is a member of. Regarding initiation of topics, topics of racial and ethnic stereotypes, identities and prejudice are always introduced and developed spontaneously, rather than planned in advance and elicited in the process of conversing. Topics could be initiated and finished by either of the participants as the conversation unfolds, instead of pre-determined and then assigned to particular participants. When a topic relating to race and ethnicity comes up, its semantic contents do not always concern the expression of racial or ethnic prejudice against others. Some such talk is not at all loaded with any negative connotations.

It is proposed here that in social interactions such as conversations, the immediate concerns for the speakers will be to have a pleasant and mutually satisfying talk with each other, to keep the conversation going and developing, and finally to close it smoothly. However, when the conversation topic is related to racial stereotypes or even prejudice, the speakers, apart from acting as conversationalists, take on an additional role of members of the social community, and are engaged in formulation and expression of their ideological assumptions, values and attitudes concerning some delicate and sensitive, and potentially face-threatening, topics. Such topics can be face-threatening to the speaker and the hearer in at least two senses. First, when a speaker is constructing and

<sup>34</sup> W. Cheng and M. Warren, "The Use of Vague Language in Cross-cultural Conversations" (manuscript, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

delivering racial and ethnic talk, his or her own positive face and the hearer's negative face are being threatened simultaneously.<sup>36</sup> Thomas summarises positive face as an individual's "desire to be liked, approved of, respected and appreciated by others", and negative face as an individual's "desire not to be impeded or put upon, to have the freedom to act as one chooses".<sup>37</sup> Second, the degree of face-threat becomes greater when the race or ethnicity to which one, or both of the participants belong is being commented upon; in other words, when participants can identify themselves with the group in question. The more a participant identifies himself or herself with the contents of talk, the greater the degree of face loss. Strategies, such as politeness strategies,<sup>38</sup> are expected to be adopted by the participants to compensate for face loss. In a modern society like Hong Kong, where egalitarianism is upheld and racial equality is promoted, for a person to openly expressing views and beliefs which countervail social norms, implies that work is required to rectify any resultant negative impressions.

#### Ideologies of race and ethnicity in intercultural conversations

In the following, two extracts which contain semantic contents relating to ideological assumptions made of racial and ethnic stereotypes and identities will be examined in order to compare first, the types and range of underlying strategies respectively employed by the Hong Kong Chinese (HKC) and native speakers of English (NS) to manage and negotiate racial and ethnic talk; and second, to examine the communicative and social functions achieved as a result of applying those strategies.

<sup>36</sup> Goffman, *Face-to-Face Behavior*; P. Brown and S. Levinson, "Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena", in E. Goody, ed., *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 256-269. Reissued as *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>37</sup> Thomas, *Pragmatics*, 169.

<sup>38</sup> Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*.

#### Extract 1

a: *Hong Kong Chinese female*

B: *English male*

1. a: I wish I could be here earlier two to three years earlier ((laughs)) makes my life so
2. happy ((laughs))
3. B: well
4. a: wow you don't know my days two or three years ago working at that (.) factory
5. B: ah well
6. a: yeah the boss's really mad
7. B: yes
8. a: mm
9. B: was he he was the owner of the company as well was he
10. a: er he and his wife
11. B: aah
12. a: traditional Chinese type
13. B: oh dear dear that could be difficult to work in
14. a: really difficult
15. B: unless you are among the family in which case you know
16. a: ((laughs)) I am not (.) luckily or (.) luck unlucky
17. B: when those businesses grow beyond the family they can be enormously difficult er you
18. know
19. a: right
20. B: I keep telling my students who I teach organisation or communication (.) using all of
21. these very idealistic American materials based on very liberal [business practices and er
22. a: [mm
23. open friendly bosses what shall I say well (pause) this this would be very nice but when
24. you get out to the real world you may be working for somebody who really doesn't give
25. a damn about you
26. a: right it's a whole different culture
27. B: all they care about is profit [production you know [they don't care about relationships
28. a: [mm [mm
29. [and er things like that so er=
30. a: [mm
31. a: =those are the people I think most of our students have to face
32. B: well probably at least at the beginning of their careers (.) can be a shock to them and it's a
33. shock to me when I learn about how businesses are running how
34. how everything is run the school I was in how it was run [by one person
35. a: [mm

On line 6, the HKC (speaker *a*) makes a complaint about the boss of the factory in which she used to work a few years ago, but since she does not further her topic, speaker *B* supports it by asking a question for more details about the boss. Speaker *a* describes the boss as "traditional Chinese type" (line 12). The two speakers then jointly develop and negotiate the discourse topic through typifying racial and ethnic groups, namely the traditional Chinese and the Americans bosses.

A few racial and ethnic assumptions have been observed from the discursive interaction, as follows.

1. Factories or companies whose owners belong to the traditional Chinese type and whose businesses grow beyond the family could be enormously difficult to work in for people who are not among the family.
2. Traditional Chinese bosses do not care about employees whereas American bosses, as idealised in American materials, are 'open' and 'friendly', and their business practices 'liberal'.
3. In "the real world" in Hong Kong, which constitutes "a whole different culture", all bosses care about are "profit" and "production" but not "relationships and things like that". A discrepancy hence exists between what Hong Kong students learn from American books and what they will face and experience in reality.
4. The fact that the NS describes American materials on organisation or communication as 'idealistic' says something about his ideological assumption, which is American bosses and their business practices are on a par with their traditional Chinese counterparts in their behaviours, attitudes and concerns.

Specific interactive strategies such as topical sequence and discursal and pragmatic strategies have been observed to be employed by the speakers. In conversations, the sequence of topics is never random. Extract 1 shows the conversational strategy of jointly developing and negotiating topics by the speakers. Topical sequence well reflects the underlying ideological assumptions of the speakers about the racial and ethnic groups under discussion. The HKC initiates the topic when she starts complaining about her former 'mad' boss (line 6). When speaker *B* asks whether the boss owns the company, she furthers the topic by supplying information about the wife, and then labelling the husband and wife as 'traditional Chinese type' (line 12). Speaker *B* suggests that speaker *a* has experienced working in a

difficult situation, to which speaker *a* agrees. On lines 15-19, the two speakers jointly develop their racial and ethnic talk by making general statements about 'traditional Chinese type' of bosses and business practices. On line 20, speaker *B* shifts the topic to idealistic American teaching materials painting a rosy picture about American business practices and bosses which are contradictory to those found in the real world in Hong Kong. Speaker *a* supports the assertion and furthers speaker *B*'s remarks about bosses in Hong Kong 'they don't care about relationships and er things like that so er' (lines 27 and 29) by making an evaluative comment, saying 'those are the people I think most of our students have to face' (line 31). This shows that at the same time speaker *a* completes her interlocutor's utterance, she drifts the topic by linking a few things together, namely 'those people', who belong to 'a whole different culture', and 'our students' have to face them. She is putting forward her view that there exists an antagonistic relationship between 'those people' and 'our students' (line 31). The topic is finally closed by speaker *B*, with the topic then drifting to his previous work experience in a school (lines 32-34).

A range of discursal and pragmatic strategies have been adopted. Speaker *a* repeats 'difficult' (line 14) as uttered by speaker *B* (line 13) and adds 'really' to it for emphasis. Within a single utterance, she expresses her negative view towards being a member of the traditional Chinese type of family and does it in a clever and playful way by using a pair of antonyms – 'lucky' and 'unlucky' (line 16). She indicates her unfavourable view towards the traditional Chinese boss by saying that it is lucky she is part of the traditional Chinese family ('I am not (.) luckily or (.) luck', line 16), but immediately after that, she uses 'unlucky' (line 16) to imply that since she is not part of the family, she was not happy working for that Chinese boss. Each of the three times when being appealed to for feedback (speaker *B* using 'you know'), speaker *a* provides a response and responds appropriately (lines 16, 19 & 30). Her backchannels 'mm' (lines 22, 28, 30 & 35) indicate continued support to speaker *B*'s opinions and beliefs. She also effectively uses "person deixis"<sup>39</sup> 'those' and 'our' to refer to groups of people who are only identifiable from the immediate context of interaction. The strategy of "acceptable complaining"<sup>40</sup> is employed, in that she complains about working for her former 'mad' boss so as to contrast it with her feelings about the present working environment.

<sup>39</sup> P. Grundy, *Doing Pragmatics* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), 21-22.

<sup>40</sup> van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse*, XXX.

As for speaker *B*, he expresses and negotiates his ideological positions in relation to the 'traditional Chinese type' of boss compared with the American boss (line 20 onwards). Three times he uses a turn-final mild 'appealer' ('you know') (lines 15, 17-18 & 29) which appeals for feedback<sup>41</sup> from speaker *a*. On lines 20-25, he shifts the topic away from dwelling further on the Chinese to presenting a contrasting view regarding 'very liberal American business practices' and 'open friendly bosses' described in 'idealistic American materials' (lines 20-23), but then, by giving his views about what is happening in 'the real world' in Hong Kong (line 21), he is effectively saying that bosses in Hong Kong are similar to the traditional Chinese in terms of what they really care about in business. He also uses the exophoric 'you' (lines 24-25) a few times to refer beyond the context in which he interacts with his students. He uses a vague term 'things like that' (line 31), or "dissimulation",<sup>42</sup> as a means of avoiding the formulation of specific propositions, and in this particular context, his negative ideological assumptions about the boss and business practices in the real world in Hong Kong.

In terms of the participants' shared responsibility and joint construction and negotiation of discourse, both of them exchange and share concrete personal experiences, beliefs (correct or incorrect), opinions, attitudes and emotions related to specific groups of people (i.e. businessmen) in different races. It is particularly interesting to see the use of 'culture' by speaker *a* in her evaluative utterance 'it's a whole different culture' (line 26) embedded in a discourse about race and ethnicity. Her interlocutor neither has any problem making sense of this utterance; nor does he find this out of context. He actually supplements her notion of 'culture' by supplying specifics and features, to each of which speaker *a* responds favourably (lines 27-30). In speaker *a*'s following utterance 'those are the people most of our students have to face' (line 31), the talk about ideologies of race has effectively changed to one about groups having different cultures, namely business people in Hong Kong who subscribe to the characteristics listed by speaker *B* ('those ... people') and students of speaker *B* ('our people').

The jointly constructed criticism against traditional Chinese and Hong Kong bosses could be potentially face threatening for both speakers. Such an illocutionary act as openly criticising a racial or

<sup>41</sup> Stenström, *Spoken Interaction*, 64.

<sup>42</sup> van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse*, 127.

ethnic group could lessen the positive face of both speakers *B* and *a*. For speaker *a*, speaker *B*'s criticising the racial group to which she, *a*, belongs to (i.e. Chinese) could threaten her negative face. No evidence however exists to show that either speaker *a* or *B* feels great face damage. Actually, the speakers use a number of positive politeness strategies,<sup>43</sup> or "linguistic strategies of involvement",<sup>44</sup> such as attending to and showing interest in each other's wants and interest, seeking agreement and avoiding disagreement, giving and asking for reasons, and asserting common ground. For speaker *a*, it is likely that she does not identify herself with either the traditional Chinese business group or the group of Hong Kong bosses, to the latter of whom she ascribes 'a whole different culture'.

The following conversation between an HKC male and his Australian colleague took place in an 'Oliver's Super Sandwiches' restaurant in Hong Kong.

#### Extract 2

b: *Hong Kong Chinese male*

A: *Australian male*

1. b: well yea maybe hundred and fifty so [hundred and fifty thousand Filipino maids are
2. A: [( )
3. b: working in Hong Kong and I believe most of them are getting the minimum pay only
4. three thousand seven hundred fifty and er in fact er the Chinese community the
5. Chinese employers are saying that the expatriate er employers are spoiling the er
6. Filipino maids because our standards are very different because we we well the Chinese
7. the Hong Kong Chinese they are very er you know they know how to calculate the the
8. sums add the sums up so they most of them the great majority of them are paying the
9. minimum salary to the maids and the expatriates as well as I know er you know A\_\_ A\_\_

<sup>43</sup> Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 102.

<sup>44</sup> R. Scollon and S. W. Scollon, *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 40-41.

10. S\_\_ A\_\_ S\_\_ is paying her maid five thousand five hundred [it's amazing I actually I
11. A: [yea
12. b: criticise er her I complain actually I lodged a complaint with her and said er and and
13. ask her to stop mm you know pay so much to her maid because it would er [you know
14. A: [(coughs)]
15. b: disturb the er the the the market situation [(laughs)] isn't it ( ) if you are paying
16. A: [yea ((laughs))
17. b: five thousand five hundreds compared with three thousand seven hundred fifty with
18. the er great majority of course you know most of the mm actually if you if you if you
19. ask the er Filipino maids to choose obviously they would er opt for the er expatriate
20. employers because relatively speaking expatriate employers are more generous (.) more
21. generous
22. A: and less demanding
23. b: and less demanding yes that's true I mean they as you well perhaps because you are
24. quite used to doing your house chores house chores [by yourselves because you told me
25. A: [yea
26. b: you I mean you don't have any maids in Australia and er so you are quite used to er
27. doing all the work yourself [er so er I suppose so er even if you even when you are in
28. A: [mm
29. b: Hong Kong you oh since you are used to doing the work yourself you you would er as a
30. matter of habit you know do the work yourself and leave her you know some of the (.)
31. you know more time consuming ones to your your maids [and so they are I think
32. A: [mm
33. b: relatively [the er
34. A: [so I think she is in a very very good position =
35. b: = yes I think so

Extract 2 is a discourse about two racial groups (i.e. Hong Kong Chinese and the Anglo-Saxon expatriates residing in Hong Kong), each of which a participant can readily identify himself. The HKC male compares the Chinese and expatriate employers in terms of the salary they pay their Filipino maids, remarking that Chinese employers have very different standards (line 6) compared to expatriate employers in that the majority of Chinese employers are paying the minimum salary to their maids, whereas expatriates are 'spoiling the Filipino maids' (line 5-6) by paying a lot more over and above the minimum salary. He supports this criticism by saying that the Hong Kong Chinese 'know how to calculate the sums add the sums up' (lines 7-8), and referring to a specific complaint that he has lodged with a female expatriate friend (lines 9-18). His stereotypical view concerning expatriate employers is that they are 'more generous' (lines 20-21) than Chinese employers. The Australian speaker reacts by commenting that these expatriate employers, compared to their Chinese counterparts, are 'less demanding' (line 22).

The negative stereotypical image of the Chinese employer, with which the HKC can readily identify himself, could threaten the HKC's positive face. A number of strategies are employed by him to diffuse the face threat. He first indicates agreement by repeating his interlocutor's words 'and less demanding yes that's true' (line 23), probably because he feels unable to disagree, because in the earlier part of their conversation he was party to leading to such conclusions. However, after agreeing, he makes attempts to compensate for the face loss, through justifying his criticism regarding expatriate employers (lines 23-33).

The HKC uses mainly positive politeness strategies to deal with the face-threatening act (FTA) when he is faced with the situation where he feels that his face is threatened twice (i.e. on being criticised as both less generous and more demanding). He is being voluble although he is far from fluent in his utterance. He tries to give reasons for the criticism; he actually quotes the reason that the Australian gave him before, namely: the Australian is used to doing housework by himself. He uses 'you know' three times, probably as an attempt to create the impression that he and his interlocutor share a common ground.<sup>45</sup> When giving reasons, the HKC also gives his personal

<sup>45</sup> Stenström, *Spoken Interaction*, 90.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

opinion, realised by 'I suppose' and 'I think',<sup>46</sup> so as to include and involve both himself and his interlocutor in his reasoning. Although employment of negative politeness, (i.e. (with) hedging 'perhaps' (line 23)), is also evident in the HKC's justification, on balance, mainly positive politeness strategies are employed to diffuse face loss, which means face loss is not estimated to be too high. As for the NS, on line 34, his completion of the HKC's utterance ('so I think she is in a very very good position') indicates that he agrees with and supports the view of the HKC.

### Communicative and social functions of racial and ethnic talk

The talk of race and ethnicity in the two intercultural conversations examined, has been observed to fulfil communicative and social functions which are both similar to and different from those of related studies, such as prejudiced discourse<sup>47</sup> and collaborative argumentation.<sup>48</sup> There is no doubt that participants in this study are aware of the face and identities of both him/herself and the interlocutor in their expression and exchange of racial and ethnic ideologies. They are certainly engaged in the experiences of socialising personal experience, self-presentation, effective persuasion and amusement.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, there is no evidence to suggest that they are either intentionally and consciously placing one racial group over and above the others in order to protect it<sup>50</sup> or to exalt it, or managing their respective identities so as to avoid the attribution of racism.<sup>51</sup> It is, therefore, argued that the main communicative and social functions of ideologies of race and ethnicity in intercultural conversations are to conduct a successful, harmonious and smooth conversation, which is characterised by such features as co-operation, equal speaker rights and shared responsibility<sup>52</sup> and to achieve solidarity, camaraderie and involvement with the interlocutor.

<sup>47</sup> van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse*.

<sup>48</sup> Kleiner, "Pseudo-Argument".

<sup>49</sup> Cf. van Dijk, *Prejudice in Discourse*.

<sup>50</sup> Shi-xu, "Accounts of the Non-Western Other".

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Kleiner, "Pseudo-Argument".

<sup>52</sup> Warren, "Naturalness in Conversation".

### Conclusion

This study of intercultural conversations has aimed at examining the context of interaction, the topic, goals and motives of participants which combine to produce the ideological contents and strategies in a non-hostile environment. Similar to any other topics that may emerge as the conversation unfolds, topics of racial and ethnic stereotypes, identities and even prejudice are collaboratively managed by the participants. Participants' choice of strategies was shown to have contributed to a smooth conversation and to foster a "general atmosphere of cooperativeness and harmony".<sup>53</sup> A great variety of semantic, conversational and pragmatic strategies are employed by the Hong Kong Chinese and native speakers of English in the construction, reinforcement and negotiation of their racial and ethnic ideological positions. Examples of such strategies abound here and include topic management, lexical choice, stylistic and rhetorical features, face work and politeness phenomena. Many of the ideological contents and strategies employed by the participants are primarily for effective conversation, amusement and solidarity, and secondarily for socialising personal experiences, self-presentation and persuasion.

<sup>53</sup> Stenström, *Spoken Interaction*, 1.



Max Dorsinville

### The Heat of Home. Metaphors of Incorporation in Derek Walcott's Poetry

Asked to comment on the concluding line of the signature poem in *Sea Grapes* ("The classics can console. But not enough"),<sup>1</sup> Derek Walcott replied, "The truth of human agony is that a book does not assuage a toothache."<sup>2</sup> That response, steeped in paradox, simultaneously using and questioning the power of language to affirm the primacy of sensory experience, constitutes a central trope in Walcott's poetic discourse. It is epitomized in the cathartic encounter between the narrator and his mentor in the resolution of *Omeros*: "A girl smells better than a book.... A girl smells better than the world's libraries" (7.51.3).<sup>3</sup> The 'girl' is Helen ("I remember Helen's smell"), and she is symbolic of St. Lucia, the poet's birthplace, and its people ("Love is good, but the love of your own people is / greater"). The terms of the epiphanic journey in *Omeros* are, therefore, characterized by the use of metaphors designed to elicit a sensorial texture. Such an emphasis in Walcott's masterwork suggests the importance of retracing the poet's use of impressionism throughout his early and late work. In a larger, deeper, sense, Walcott's use of language to affirm the primacy of sensory experience emerges from reconciliation between two initially antithetical poles: the Western literary tradition and a New World aesthetic.

Rei Terada<sup>4</sup> argues that Walcott's poetry is wedded to a paradigm of 'mimicry' whose premises are stated in "The Caribbean: Culture or

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the poems discussed are from the collected edition, Derek Walcott, *Collected Poems 1948-1984* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> David Montenegro, "An Interview with Derek Walcott", *Partisan Review* 55 (1990), 213.

<sup>3</sup> From Derek Walcott, *Omeros* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990). All citations are followed in the text by parentheses indicating book, chapter and section number.

<sup>4</sup> Rei Terada, *Derek Walcott Poetry* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992).

Mimicry?"<sup>5</sup> A close look at Walcott's essay suggests the extent of Terada's misreading of the poet's use of irony in rejecting 'mimicry' or imitation as a valid course for New World writing: "Because we have no choice but to view history as fiction or as religion, then our use of it will be idiosyncratic, personal, and therefore, creative. All of this is beyond the sociological, even beyond the 'civilized' assessment of our endeavor, *beyond mimicry* (italics mine)".<sup>6</sup>

Against 'mimicry's' central flaw, Walcott believes that the New World experience compels originality and freshness in the use of language. An Adamic vision informs, thus, much of his poetry: 'Creation', 'invention', 'beginnings' are words that he interchangeably uses otherwise in his essays to convey his commitment to the New World.<sup>7</sup>

For every poet it is always morning in the world.... There is a force of exultation, a celebration of luck, when a writer finds himself a witness to the early morning of a culture that is defining itself, branch by branch, leaf by leaf, in that self-defining dawn, which is why, especially at the edge of the sea, it is good to make a ritual of the sunrise.<sup>8</sup>

Much before his 1992 Nobel Prize lecture, from which this quote is taken, Walcott repeatedly stakes a claim on the appropriation of language and its incorporation in the felt experience indigenous to the New World. To Edward Hirsch, for example, he substantiates, and simplifies, the Adamic vision first proclaimed in his 1974 essay, "The Muse of History", as "this elemental privilege of naming in the new world":<sup>9</sup> "I have felt from my boy-hood that I had one function and that was somehow to articulate, not my own experience, but what I saw around me".<sup>10</sup> *Omeros* has been assessed as the culmination of Walcott's self-avowed quest. The consensus among critics validates the long poem's rewriting of the Homeric epic for a fresh rendering of the Caribbean experience.<sup>11</sup> The poet

<sup>5</sup> Derek Walcott, "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?", rpt. in R.D. Hamner, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott* (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1993), 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>7</sup> Derek Walcott, "The Muse of History: An Essay", in Orde Coombs, *Is Massa Day Dead? Black Moods in the Caribbean* (New York: Anchor, 1974), 2-6.

<sup>8</sup> Derek Walcott, *The Antilles* (New York, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Hirsch, "The Art of Poetry", in Hamner, ed., *Perspectives*, 72.

<sup>11</sup> See Mary Lefkowitz, *New York Times Book Review* (7 October 1990); D. J. R. Bruckner, *New York Times* (9 October 1990). Both reviews are reprinted in Hamner, ed., *Perspectives*. See also Jervis Anderson, "Derek Walcott's Odyssey", *The New Yorker* (21 December 1992), 78.

who, in "The Muse of History", had early on rejected the epic as a 'literary project', if it meant the distancing effect bred in the genre and the poet's concurrent attitude toward his subject, demonstrates the consistency of his thinking when, in the wake of *Omeros's* critical acclaim, he tells D. J. R. Bruckner: "I do not think of it as an epic".<sup>12</sup> To another interviewer, Jervis Anderson, he elaborates by quoting from the earlier essay: "I believe, as I've said elsewhere, that the epic poem is not a literary project. It's already written. It is written in the mouths of the tribe".<sup>13</sup> This deconstruction of genre is made imperative by Walcott's sense of urgency to inscribe his voice in a communal continuum whence he derives strength as a person and legitimacy as an artist. Thus, he further tells Anderson, "But the books had already been written in the mouths of the Caribbean tribe. And I felt that I had been chosen, somehow, to give it voice".<sup>14</sup> A note of gratitude is echoed in the two interviews. To Anderson, Walcott says, "I was writing it for the island people from whom I come. In a sense, I saw it as a long thank-you note".<sup>15</sup> To Bruckner he adds the following: "What drove me was duty: duty to the Caribbean light. The whole book is an act of gratitude. It is a fantastic privilege to be in a place in which limbs, features, smells, the lineaments and presence of the people are so powerful".<sup>16</sup> The linkage between gratitude or pride in origin and a sensory evocation of the poet's sense of self and collective identity is furthermore correlated with a reference to 'light', a dominant metaphor in Walcott's mature work.

What this complex and revealing statement signals are some key elements that counterpoint the dominant, canonical, aesthetic of 'the classics' Walcott subverts. Juxtaposing his poetics and his poetry in his early and late development suggests that Walcott's contention with the canon revolves around the dichotomous, polarized, hence incomplete, range of 'the classics' for the New World artist. They have addressed the "head" and not the "body", to put it in clear, simple, terms similar to the poet's. The classics can only "console"; they do not 'heal' or prevent 'ailment', it is implied, because they are unresponsive to the visceralness of felt experience. The New World poet, molded by the concreteness of time and space unknown to 'the classics', is thus condemned to invent and create out of that specificity: "Perhaps the only privilege that a poet has is that, in the agony, whatever chafes and hurts, if the person survives,

<sup>12</sup> Hamner, ed., *Perspectives*, 396.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

produces something that is hopefully lasting and moral from the experience".<sup>17</sup>

This essay aims at taking up Walcott's challenge to assess his work as a verbal journey through felt experience particular to the New World. Its argument is developed in three interwoven stages: the recurrent figures of Odysseus and Helen are seen as conflicting icons in the poet's journey through linguistic abrogation and appropriation; a set of metaphors drawing on birthing and nurturing are seen as integral elements of a self-reflexive, creative, developing discourse; and these metaphors, finally, cohere within a "delayed decoding" construct wherein Walcott integrates a canonical form of impressionism with a quest for a pure aesthetic.

Admittedly, Walcott is not the first New World or Caribbean poet to successfully challenge tradition. He himself provides a context that is clearly genealogical when, in "The Muse of History", he singles out Aimé Césaire and St. John Perse, respectively from Martinique and Guadeloupe, as his closely related forebears. They are praised for their pioneering effort in deconstructing the metropolitan language and making it responsive to the Caribbean through a changed vocabulary and texture evocative of its felt specificity:

I do not know if one poet is indebted to the other, but whatever the bibliographical truth is, one acknowledges not an exchange of influences, not imitation, but the tidal advance of the metropolitan language, of its empire, if you like.... It is the language which is the empire, and great poets are not its vassals but its princes.<sup>18</sup>

Walcott's perception of these two poets obviously mirrors his own beliefs. His aesthetic, like theirs, is not exclusionary but complementary; it is not imitative but innovative; it is historically grounded in a metropolitan language that has been transformed by indigenous control and experience.

As early as *In a Green Night* (1962), Walcott uses the Homeric figures of Odysseus and Helen to dramatize his quest for an authentic Caribbean expression through subverting the classics. They are positioned in an aesthetic of division best identified by "two Helens": "Between two Helens, / yours is here and alive" (*Omeros* 7.62.2). At the outset of his journey, he admits to alienation: he is alternately

<sup>17</sup> Montenegro, "Interview", 213.

<sup>18</sup> Hamner, *Perspectives*, 15.

drawn by a European and a Caribbean iconography. The poet is the wandering Odyssean figure, irresolute and ambivalent, and he is reflected in the problematized images of Odysseus and Helen. This starting point is crucial for a middle stage in his development, introduced by *Another Life* (1973), seasoned in *Midsummer* (1984) and stressed as "the heat of home" in *The Arkansas Testament* ("The Lighthouse", 1987). A tactile identification of place conveying the poet's sense of the Adamic newness of the Caribbean yields a metaphoric language for its creation through the biological process of birthing and nurturing. The poet's mature, late work conclusively points to an impressionist aesthetic of 'home' or the New World whose tone and texture resolves centrifugally the earlier tension between the binaries of alienation and authenticity.

## I

The first stage in Walcott's journey can be seen in two poems from *In a Green Night*: "A Map of the Antilles" and "Roots". "Map", a lament for the stillbirth of the West Indian Federation, draws a parallel between the distorted vision of Caribbean politicians and the poet's. Against the prevalent myopia of both ("men invent those truths which they discover"), the idea of 'home' or homecoming is aborted when alienation prevails. In contrast to the apparent, but deceptive, benign surface image of the sea, Odysseus's journey symptomatizes the extent of uprootment: "Even as he lingered in Circean seas; / ... in no magic port was there such peace / As where his love remained". The specificity of language, landscape and identity is buried for the alienated poet and the politicians under the illusory recourse to universalism that makes "a mockery of the heart".

"Roots", on the other hand, makes a more emphatic claim for clarity of vision: "... till our Homer with truer perception erect it, / Stripped of all memory of rhetoric". The need to articulate the truth of the Caribbean experience is yet made difficult by the weight of colonial history. History, misread and misunderstood, is the colonial's burden long after colonialism has officially ended, Walcott argues in "The Muse of History". "Roots" illustrates this point through dispossession of language: "When they conquer you, you have to read their books". The poet's task is a difficult one, for he has to abrogate a received tongue (starting with a substitute for "Homer") and appropriate it as well for his own use. "Sorcière", therefore, reflects

the native topography in need of foregrounding, in contrast to the inculcated reflex of a search for validation through invoking Switzerland. The point is that the New World topography is self-referential, as should be its language severed from Old World inscription. Walcott addresses, then, the key issue of language specificity for innovation in poetic form. The implications of 'naming' are further explored in "Roots" when the focus turns to "Vigie" and Helen.

The former, a main peninsula off Castries, St. Lucia's port city and capital, is juxtaposed with "Helen, old Helen lying alone in bed". There is a close parallelism between the two: "St. Lucia's colonial history is embossed in its being named 'Helen of the West Indies'".<sup>19</sup> St. Lucia's status as object of predatoriness is coded in the alien resonance of classical taxonomy. "Helen" reflects Europe's self-image while "Vigie" connotes the Caribbean's self-reflection. As the site of the lighthouse illuminating Castries' harbor, it symbolizes the possibility of self-identification through language arising out of the meeting of New World sea and land. The promontory's colonial history ("the ageing wall", "the stone turrents" and "the yellow fort") is tempered, if not canceled, in the poem's resolution by the metamorphosis of Odysseus as "an old fisherman" framed by the elements, "rowing home in the rain". Odysseus changes from the aimless wanderer to the poetic persona of the survivor, the colonized subject, who can yet be the "prince" of his fate if he understands that "from all that sorrow, beauty is our gain".

Walcott's revisitation of history is voiced in a cautionary discourse qualified by doubleness or tension between opposites in "Roots". The history of the Caribbean, he suggests, remains an alien one as long as it is written by others; its true history, on the other hand, is a challenge for indigenous creation. Yet both, the existing and the yet-to-be-born versions, have to be recognized – the latter as the antithesis of the former. The doubleness of Homeric allusions in Walcott's work is fundamental, then, for his strategy of reaching for a synthetic vision. An initial stage in that project stems from subversion of the dominant, canonical, nomenclature. The recreation of Odysseus as an old

<sup>19</sup> In "Leaving School", a 1965 essay reprinted in *Critical Perspectives*, Derek Walcott writes, "In elementary school we had been taught that Sainte Lucia was 'The Helen of the West' because she was fought for so often by the French and British. She had changed hands thirteen times. She had been regularly violated.... Her name was clouded with darkness and misfortune; Columbus had named her after the blind saint; her saint's day was December thirteenth" (24).

fisherman illustrates the poet's intent. Redefined through the ritual of fishing, Odysseus's canonical status is deconstructed and the implications are vast.

A predominant symbol in Walcott's later poetry, fishing is introduced in the closing line of "Roots" as emblematic of the poet's conception of the rootedness of his craft in his native space. As an everyday practice defining the islander's relationship with his environment, fishing proposes itself as an apt analogue for post-canonical poetry indigenous to the New World. The poet-as-fisherman identifies the connectedness of the writer with his birthplace; it is a trope for authenticity. The 'lines' of the poem are closely related to those cast by the fisherman, as gauge for value. In "Nearing Forty", a 1969 poem, the poet states, "You will rise and set your lines to work / ... until the night when you can really sleep". In "The Schooner Flight", published ten years later, he has his speaker say, "Well, when I write / this poem, each phrase go be soaked in salt; / I go draw and knot every line as tight / as ropes in this rigging". In *Midsummer* (1984), the anticipation of *Omeros*'s subversion of an epic of gods and warriors yields the poet's choice of analogy for his craft:

You could map my limitations four yards up from a beach – a boat with broken ribs, the logwood that grows only thorns, a fisherman throwing away fish guts outside his novel. What if the lines I cast bulge into a book that has caught nothing? (xxix)<sup>20</sup>

"Roots" conclusively augurs of "the light beyond metaphor" (6.54.3) sought in *Omeros*. Yet, before that latter stage is successfully reached, the weight borne from "the classics" conjures up the dominant gloomy representation of Odysseus and Helen in Walcott's early poetry. As the burden of colonial history, theirs are images of dispossession, alienation and hopelessness, "borrowed ancestors", seen as challenge to native invention. Helen, for example, is not only one of those "ancestors" in "Homecoming: Anse La Raye" (1969). She is Janie, in *Another Life*, "the town's one clear-complexioned whore" while in "Menelaus", from *The Arkansas Testament*, she is dismissed as "the white trash that was / Helen ... A whore's". Similarly, Odysseus, in "Homecoming: Anse La Raye", discovers "there are no rites / for those who have returned... there are homecomings without home". Again,

<sup>20</sup> From Derek Walcott, *Midsummer* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1984). All citations are followed in the text by parentheses indicating section number, when necessary.

his return home, in "Sea Grapes" (1976), is to a land of "gnarled sour grapes", one that "brings nobody peace".

An albeit faint and fragile reversal appears in "A Map of the New World" (1981) when the "old fisherman" of "Roots" is now a "man with clouded eyes" who "picks up the rain / and plucks the first line of the Odyssey". The association of age, rain and motion points to a self-reflexive affirmation; as in "Roots", it positions Odysseus as the poet-as-fisherman on the threshold of reclaiming his natural home. Helen appears also as an aged, changing figure whose maturation suggests growth in the same poem ("Helen's hair, a grey cloud").

A more substantial manifestation of change occurs in the symbolism of 'light'. In the two poems from *In a Green Night*, light is blinding or uncertain, and certainly less than a reassuring presence. The light of the "emerald sea", in "A Map of the Antilles", is associated with excess and lack of control ("wild ... destructive ocean"). Natural light, in "Roots", is unpleasant ("The hard coral light which breaks on the coast"). The artificial light implied in reference to Vigie's lighthouse intensifies, on the other hand, the fragility of the closing line's reference to age and rain. Developed further, in "Homecoming: Anse La Raye", it is menacingly seen as "this sheer light, this clear, / infinite, boring, paradisaal sea". The gloomy journey home in "Sea Grapes" opens with the ominous image of "that sail which leans on light". In all these instances, light is in fact "blackness" or absence of vision, blindness, dispossession. The poet wears a false, deceptive mask of illumination like Helen / Janie's hair in *Another Life*, "back / hair electrical".

With *Midsummer*, however, the image of light is transformed and accompanies a changed, youthful, natural Helen. The insufficiency of 'the classics' is recalled; the 'new' Helen is unlike the 'old' since she is "not Nike loosening her sandal" (xxv). She now represents a sensory investment in language tied to the landscape of 'home'. Foreshadowing her representation in *Omeros*, the poet allies Helen with the Caribbean light: "like a candle / flame in sunlight". The poet's altered Odysseus figure, the fisherman, finds enlightenment in his mirrored double, Helen, who legitimizes "[the] palms [that] have been sliced by the / twine / of the craft I have pulled at for more than forty years". His craft is embedded in the endless ritual of island fishing; 'home' is thus incorporated: "the lines I love have all their knots left in". In addition to ritual, the poet's craft now partakes of clear vision. It is symbolized by Helen who is the natural light of 'home'. The Helen identified as "here and alive" in *Omeros* is

imagistically defined in *Midsummer*: "Then, in the door light: not Nike loosening her sandal, / but a girl slapping sand from her foot, one had on her frame".

*Midsummer* represents a turning point in Walcott's poetics. In very important ways, it links his early and late poetry. Odysseus and Helen evolve from figures of sterility to fertility, from symbols of alienation to identification and from the distancing of language to its appropriation. The symbolic journey they exemplify is from death to life when Odysseus's return to a land of "dead / fisherman" in "Homecoming: Anse La Raye" is contrasted with its felicitous counterpart in *Midsummer*.

## II

The relationship with the sea provides another perspective on Walcott's developing poetics. Incorporation correlates with genealogy and the sea provides a prismatic metaphor for the appropriation of the biological process of birthing and nurturing as self-reflexive poetic discourse. In *Omeros*, for instance, the poet evokes his father's words: "Simplify / your life to one emblem, a sail leaving harbour / and a sail coming in" (1.13.2). This to-and-fro movement objectifies the poet's unceasing search for truth and accurate vision that resists fixity. It further strengthens his identification with the 'new' Helen whose embodiment of light progressively reveals itself, as the poet unburdens himself from canonical dependence.

Emergence of New World invention, as earlier suggested, takes the form of the perception of Helen as the native Muse, in *Midsummer*. But she stands for more than a literary cliché when she is a defining, genealogical, trope for self and collective identity. "But to curse your birthplace is the final evil" (xxix) from *Midsummer* is a line whose metaphorical range is explored by the poet; first, in response to a direct question from Edward Hirsch as to its intent, he states, "I think the earth that you come from is your mother and if you turn around and curse it, you've cursed you mother".<sup>21</sup> Then, in *Omeros*, the same idea is maintained but the reference to the sea is added to complete the metaphor: "A man who cursed the sea had cursed his own mother. / *Mer* was both mother and sea" (6.54.3). The genealogical trope is thus all-

<sup>21</sup> Hamner, *Perspectives*, 80.

encompassing; it unites the male and the female life forces through 'voice', even if it is a male speaker's who asserts root identity in the birthing process. He *names* the truth of his self and creative identity. But the masculinity of perception and expression is made subservient to the creative *process* linking land and sea, and whence it originates. The act of creation, 'birthing' of the text, then, is analogous to motherhood while as the above quotes indicated, the male speaker's self-identity is subordinated to the 'femaleness' of birthing and place: both the earth and the sea are 'mothering' entities.

It is within such a complex symbolic construct, fusing creativity and self-identity and their accompanying textual, biological and psychological implications that Helen plays the role of a unifying, revitalizing figure reflecting the poet's developing consciousness and control over his craft. By *Midsummer*, she is the emerging "light" beyond cultural alienation. The fusion of the self and the land she represents ("the girl slapping sand from her foot") culminates with its amplification, in *Omeros*. The speaker first sees her "easing straps from each heel" (1.6.1), then he specifies that "her clear plastic sandals swung by one hand"; thus, attention is drawn to Helen's contact with the land, with her bare feet.

The connection between Helen's feet and the land emblemizes the authentication of craft and language the poet associates with genealogy. His father is remembered for foreshadowing Helen's relationship with the land in a telling instance, when the sight of peasant women walking uphill brought the admonition: "They walk, you write ... and your duty / from the time you watched them from your grandmother's house / as a child wounded by their power and beauty / is the chance you now have, to give those feet a voice" (1.13.3). The tactile relationship between feet and land parallels the correlation between sight and light. In either instance, it reveals an evolution in understanding dramatized by the reiteration of Helen's duality in two poems from *The Arkansas Testament*.

The classical representation of Helen as whorish, in "Menelaus", counterpoints her prototypical significance in "The Light of the World". Though the mythical resonance is obviously biblical in the poem's title, a very secular meditation on guilt and the search for expiation dominates thematically. Three women figures symbolize the terms of the dilemma: "Helen" (not named but related to the named one, in *Omeros*, through sharing a yellow

piece of clothing, a feline and ebony analogy and a similar mesmerizing quality), the speaker's mother and a marketwoman. A connection is made between the first two, starting with juxtaposition in the speaker's thought process:

I looked at two girls, one in a yellow bodice  
and yellow shorts, with a flower in her hair,  
and lusted in peace ...  
That evening I had walked the streets of the town  
Where I was born and grew up, thinking of my mother.

Just as Helen, in *Omeros*, resists reification in the conflict of male desire between Achilles and Hector, she plays a similar (albeit more enigmatic) role involving the speaker and an implied Hector in the ominous van in "The Light of the World". On the other hand, her power as subject in control of life-giving (her pregnancy) enhanced by her knowledge of the expected child's father's identity (compared to Achilles's and Hector's ignorance) is problematized here, even as in both poems she exercises control over the poet's creativity. The dynamic of creativity at risk in the earlier poem, linking the speaker/poet and "Helen", is further externalized by the marketwoman's address to the van: "*Pas quittez moi à terre*". The poet doubly dwells on the multiplicity of meaning contained in the use of Creole, the maternal vernacular. On the one hand, the land ("*terre*") and air (the van named "Comet" in *Omeros*) are opposed; on the other, "Helen" and the speaker are fugitives in contrast to the marketwoman and the speaker's mother ties with the land. The conflict between home and exile is given a new twist.

The speaker's presence on the van is as ambiguous and threatening as the van itself, when Hector's fate is considered as one of its implications in *Omeros*. Here, deceptiveness prevails, at least on the surface, for everyone is involved with the vehicle and its purported symbolism of progress. The speaker's presence on the moving vehicle travelling from Castries to Gros Ilet, from a port city to a fishing village, alludes to his returning journey 'home' from a creative standpoint, to the 'vision' he initially ascribes to "Helen" and to a fuller one identified with his mother and the marketwoman. His return is contextualized by a sense of guilt that underlies surface deceptiveness. The speaker's progressive raising of consciousness is ironically externalized by the vehicle's movement and its ultimate destination (Gros Ilet, the fishing village, presumably "Helen's" home

as well as the poet's) that is never reached in the poem.<sup>22</sup> The surface images revolving around the van, including the speaker's assertion of homecoming as reinsertion into his community ("I wanted to be going home with her ["Helen"] this evening"), prove to be false in light of his gnawing feeling of guilt: "I had abandoned them, / I had left them of earth".

Truth and vision are imperiled on the van: yet the image of 'earth', with the surface and hidden meanings of the marketwoman's use of the vernacular the speaker scrutinizes, is other than simple as it points to the speaker's own paradoxical state. The journey motif closes with an apparent note of retribution, linked with the theme of guilt. The incompleteness of his journey, noted by the speaker's echoing words, "they left me on earth", suggests retribution and expiation compounded by validation of the marketwoman's fear of abandonment in one instance.

But the "earth" image, as earlier noted, is complex: it may mean rootlessness *and* rootedness, depending on perception or point of view. Thus, the speaker's rejoining the ground, at the end of the poem, may stand for a counter, affirmative, stance tied to the genealogical tropism of earth and its life-giving feminine symbols (the speaker's mother and the marketwoman). The poem, in very concrete imagistic ways, then, turns on reflection, perception and mirroring, and it sets up these challenges in the deceptive allusion of its title to a mythical, canonical source. "Light", here as mirror, is meant to reflect the complex complementarity of selves inside and outside the van. "They left me on earth" would, therefore, carry the alternative choice of rootedness for the speaker rejoining the genealogical community of his mother and the marketwoman, in contrast to the technological one of the van fraught with menace hovering over "Helen". Two visions are opposed and extend to the land and its future: one is alluring, and it is the mirage-like effect of technology circumscribing "Helen", and it is sterile like the van's incomplete journey; the other counters the false light of technology. It is hidden in the "shadows" associated with both the speaker's mother ("with her white hair tinted by the dyeing dusk")

<sup>22</sup> It is important to stress, however, that Gross Ilet is the principal setting in *Omeros* and its centrality is foreshadowed by an eponymous poem also in *The Arkansas Testament*. This pattern of revisitation of setting to signal perceptual growth, along with poetic development, is quite frequent: see, for instance, "The Lighthouse", which is a mature reflection on the implied lighthouse of Vigie in "Roots" (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1987).

and the marketwoman ("the Market / itself was closed in its involved darkness / and the shadows quarreled for bread in the shops"). The complete form of the journey lies in joining Helen's "carved ebony mouth" with the other women's communal "shadows": "I, who could never solidify my shadow / to be one of their shadows". The speaker leaves unsaid in the end the terms of this reconciliation. It is even left in a menaced form for "Helen" on the van. But his leaving the van implies his own reconciliation and the poem's self-reflexive claim on authenticity in vision.

The alluring yet problematized image of "Helen" points to the duality of her iconography in *Omeros*: "These Helens are different creatures, / one marble, one ebony" (7.62.2). While Julie Minkler (275-6) correctly notes the appearance of ambivalence in the lines that follow ("each draws an elbow slowly over her face / and offers the gift of her sculptured nakedness"), one is valued over the other, even as (and maybe because) her actual namelessness in "The Light of the World" reinforces her exposure to false vision, and her fragility is the speaker's own struggle on a journey whose real termination point is in *Omeros*. Then, she is substantiated by name (Helen), she rejoins the earth (the van and Hector are at a distance) and, principally, she iconizes the completeness of the journey in Gros Ilet, the fishing village, reflexively for the speaker/poet/fisherman who then sees true 'light' through her.

"Helen's" distance from the earth, implied by the marketwoman's cry ("*Pas quittez moi à terre*") is bridged by Ma Kilman in the later poem whose niece is her rejuvenated namesake. The "mothering" appropriation of the earth that completes "Helen's" identity is introduced otherwise in earlier poems dominated by a male speaker intent on foregrounding genealogy and the centrality of its feminine process for his own creativity. Thus, the marketwoman's cry in fact is an echo of the speaker's assertion in "Sainte Lucie" (1976): "*Moi c'est gens Ste. Lucie. / C'est la moi sorti; / is there that I born*". A filial point of view confirms the maternal and they fuse for the purpose of stressing the birthing process of the self and the poem.

A broader context for genealogical tropism and Helen's ultimate meaning in *Omeros* as "the light beyond metaphor" (6.54.3) lies in the call for "the style past metaphor" linked with "the household truth" in the 1969 poem, "Nearing Forty". That form of truth is given substance in the ordinary lives of Gros Ilet, in *Omeros*. The deconstruction of language ("past metaphor") sought in the poet's early and late work is achieved by means of the simplicity and clarity of diction associated

with the 'household' paradigm. The weight of the classical canon is thus discarded: "But I saw no shadow underline my being ... I was seeing the light of St. Lucia at last through her own eyes" (7.56.2). The 'Homeric shadow' of tradition, Old World aesthetic, is replaced or subsumed by the Adamic stamp of beginnings, implying the construction of 'home' where the self and the elements are one: "to see Helen as the sun saw her" (6.54.2).

The rapport between the poet and Helen rests in a process of gestation akin to the freshness of language of New World invention. The sea's omnipresence plays a vital role accordingly when it is inscribed in the vernacular of St. Lucia that does not phonetically distinguish between "mer" and "mère", as noted by the speaker more than once, in *Omeros* (1.2.3; 6.54.3). But there are further implications to the sea's 'motherhood' in the semiotic deconstruction of the word *Omeros*. The middle syllable's double meaning is framed by beginning and closing syllables that visually evoke a circle. All three syllables conflate, consequently, as a vast encircling motif charting the form of the narrative as a journey resisting closure, but one which also blurs the boundaries between the supposed, opposed, female and male principles of sea and land. Dichotomizing these principles is a legacy of the Old World canon, and this form of shortsightedness is recognized by the narrator's mentor, the canonical "Omeros", near the end (the "book" vs. "smell" antithesis *he* draws). Closer to New World truth is the narrator's mother's joining of the two when referring to his father, Warwick, as "Nature's gentleman". The narrator, in "Sainte Lucie", identified as a son, completes her perspective beforehand when, in response to his self-articulated plea, "Come back to me, / my language", he resorts to the maternal tongue, Creole, to affirm, "C'est la moi sorti".

Not surprisingly, the social and historical terms of the journey, in *Omeros*, are dominated by masculine, wandering figures seeking to exercise control in one form or another over other or the environment. Major Plunkett, Achille, Philoctete, Seven Seas, the narrator are thus linked by a common Odyssean streak which even overshadows the shipwrecked Crusoe typology, noted by Edward Hirsch.<sup>23</sup> That the 'male' form of their journey is self-destructive and sterile, the

<sup>23</sup> Edward Hirsch points out that "Robinson Crusoe was [Walcott's] first, and indeed his most persistent, symbolic figure for the West Indian artist". See "Derek Walcott: Either Nobody or a Nation", *The Georgia Review* 49 (1995), 311; also Walcott's own 1965 essay, "The Figure of Crusoe", rpt. in Hamner, *Perspectives*, 33-40.

narrator's own account, in *Omeros* and elsewhere for the unreconstructed Odysseus figure, as earlier seen, makes that clear. But that the culture-bound concept of 'maleness' itself is called into question is an undercurrent throughout Walcott's poetry that is fully highlighted in the genealogical construct that formally privileges the femininity of creativity.

Nature, Adam's realm, is emphatically feminine in the poet's work. The problem is not the commonplace quality of such a tropism; as discussed previously, it lies rather in separating the 'worn out' trope, deadened by tradition, from a 'fresh' one, necessitated by New World invention. Birthing and nurturing metaphors are enlisted to meet this challenge, and the archetypal image of 'home' or, in the poet's words, "the household truth", provides the anchoring frame.

Next to the womb-like emblem of the name itself, *Omeros*, when deconstructed, its formal content is built as a series of concentric circles which 'maternally' envelop the narrative. The sea, for instance, encircles the island/earth: "The sea moves round an island" (7.58.2). The self-reflexive implication for the text itself is immediately added: "to circle yourself and your island with this art". Another reflexive circle follows in connection with the bird imagery that ties Maud Plunkett's embroidery, Achille's journey to Africa and the text as a whole, when the narrator notes, "I followed a sea-swift to both sides of this text" (7.63.3). The narrator's internalization of his father's observation on the symbolism of a boat's to-and-fro movement (1.13.2) is reiterated on three other occasions (4.36.3; 6.44.2; 7.64.1). The use of repetition emphasizes the circularity of an activity whose island quotidian quality gains the natural visual form of a pattern Walcott associates, in *Another Life*, with the feminine aesthetic of mother and home: "I can no more move you from your true alignment, / Mother, than we can move objects in paintings". Indeed, an aesthetic of order tied to stability and place is very much what is remembered by a number of male, wandering, characters including Seven Seas, who echoes the narrator's words in *Another Life*: "You have learnt no more than if you stood on that beach / watching the unthreading foam you watched as a youth ... the right journey / is motionless" (7.58.2).

Ultimately, then, the function of circularity in *Omeros* serves an aesthetic of open-endedness in the pursuit of clear vision and expression. It locates its model in "the household truth" given order by the likes of Maud, Ma Kilman, the narrator's mother, and even Helen as an expectant mother. The space of 'home' is contrasted with that of



'exile', even as the former might suggest a form of confinement and the latter the 'open' space of travel. The real meaning of the journey lies in the discovery of true form, which may have been there all along, in the 'home', but alienation and blindness due to "borrowed ancestors" prevented its perception. Divestment of "the classics" means the ability for the narrator to celebrate the New World in the analogue of the 'home' of his upbringing and his true mentor in his mother, in *Another Life*: "Your house sang softly of balance, / of the rightness of placed things".

Not unexpectedly, "Sainte Lucie", the poet's birthplace named in the vernacular, is placed at the exact center of *Sea Grapes*. The implication is the relatedness of setting, creativity and language to its 'mothering' source.<sup>24</sup> Notable for its prismatic evocation of an aesthetic of the senses through its listing of original Creole names for places, flora and fauna, "Sainte Lucie" highlights linguistic doubleness, Creole and English, for another variation on genealogical pairing. Creole is the 'mother' tongue and English is obviously the 'father's' (conspicuously stressed in *Omeros*'s naming him "Warwick"). The subtle visceral and cerebral qualities conveyed, respectively, by Creole and English informs the previously quoted line spoken in reference to "Warwick", in *Omeros*, by the narrator's mother: "Nature's gentleman". The same duality is addressed in "Sainte Lucie" when the narrator's identification of home takes the Creole form of "*C'est la moi sorti*" immediately juxtaposed with the dialectal English, "Is there that I born". The violation of linguistic propriety, of the "gentleman's" code, serves the purpose of an intended closing of the gap between Creole and English by means of infusing through dialect the visceralness or femininity of the former into the cerebralness, or masculinity of the latter. Creole's sensorial attributes are identified with the tactile process of the womb in the contrasting use of the verb '*sorti*' in Creole and 'born' in English. The former further suggests emergence from the earth itself, an association that is dwelled upon in "The Light of the World's" "*pas quittez moi à terre*". The narrator deliberately pauses on the different meanings of the marketwoman's utterance in English. But whether she means "don't leave me on earth" or "don't leave me the earth", or even, more

<sup>24</sup> It is important to note Ma Kilman's pivotal role in "Sainte Lucie": she is the storyteller of the Creole half of the poem. See *Sea Grapes* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1976).

accurately, "don't leave me stranded", the point stressed in the repetition of the word 'earth' is its pivotal, gravitational, pull for identity linked with place of birth. An additional parallel between the two poems comes out of the 'light' symbolism. As previously seen, it is embedded in paradox in the later poem: as prism, it is deceptively contextualized by mythology, whether it is biblical or technological; and it falsely mirrors surfaces while its true location is in the "shadows", the earth shared by the marketwoman and the narrator's mother to which he returns. The narrator's ambiguous stating of this return, "they left me on earth", is counterbalanced and somewhat clarified beforehand in the centeredness of the naming and positioning of "Sainte Lucie" in connection with the narrator's bilingual identification of birth: it stands for 'light' or the process of being born to 'light' issued from a specific earthly place whose name, from its Latin root, 'lux', means 'light'. Borrowing from another root source, French, completes the mythical resonance of the poet's birthplace: "Holy Light". As with "The Light of the World", myth's function buttresses the aesthetic of genealogy, with the accent here in "Sainte Lucie" on making an inventory of source material, unveiled from the "shadows": "Evening opens at / a text of fireflies".

Yet another variation on the birthing metaphor is obliquely accomplished in a later poem, "Early Pompeian" (1981): a woman's miscarriage serves as analogue for the miscarriage of art and artistic identity. A transition poem of the poet's middle phase, its title stands out in sharp contrast to "Sainte Lucie", in signaling a European place name as the point of departure for the rule of entropy. It paradoxically focuses on the antithesis of destruction of the life-giving process for the dramatization of alienation, guilt and the search for expiation – a theme shared with "The Light of the World". Like the latter poem, which it predates, its real intent is to delineate the terms of true creation.

On the surface, the poem's confessional, personal evocation of a tragic event in the life of a couple's loss of a child through stillbirth is given the dramatic, historical backdrop of the destruction of a famed city by a volcanic eruption. The paradigm of a "man-made" construct is structurally counterpointed by an act of nature that is ironically 'creative' in itself but destructive for 'others'. Clearly, such an oppositional frame signals a range of polarities revolving around a relationship such as the marital grounded in the dialectic of 'self' and 'other'. The poem is about the failure of harmony or communication

between dualities, and the burden is borne by the 'self'-speaking voice of the narrator whose sense of guilt is further stressed by voicing the 'other's' tragic experience for which he bears responsibility. The symbolism of mirrors is again being used on a number of levels, including the self-reflexive meditation on the use and the questioning of language all at once when the experience is sensory and visceral. Hence, the haunting closing lines: "Pardon. Pardon the pride I have taken / in a woman's agony".

The duality of the personal and the historical allows the poet to reflect once more on his doubleness in regard to the Western canon and New World invention. The reference to a mythical city and its destruction infers a self-revealing meditation on lost artistic beliefs. The poet reintroduces the metaphor of stillbirth, first used in "A Map of the Antilles", to characterize the failure of vision and language that makes him an accomplice of the politicians' distorting 'universalism' in the earlier poem. His indulgence in false, derivative or unnatural art leading to the kind of disruption, alluded to in "The Light of the World", for instance, finds its objective correlative in the unnatural disorder of a stillbirth. His own delayed or distorted 'mothering' of a true text is symbolized by the woman's failed motherhood.

In this poem, then, as is the case throughout much of Walcott's work, the maternal trope plays an objective role in the representation of the poet's meditation on his work. If here she viscerally bears the speaker's burden in intensely graphic fashion, the risk involved in indulging a form of stereotyping is more than counterbalanced by the concrete display of the poet's consistency in discourse that is both self-reflexive and self-scrutinizing: in other words, the 'other' mirrors the 'self'; if perception is drawn to the 'other', it is in agreement with the by now accepted use and function of the objective correlative so that the 'self' gets a clearer sense of itself. The failed mother figure here self-reflexively represents the artist's 'bad' art. As icon ("You resembled those mosaics"), she merges with the "marble" Helen and the Pompeian context reinforces the classical canon. Her complexity, however, lies in that she is the product of the speaker's indulgence in canonical myth-making. The personal tone of the poem conclusively suggests that a false, artificial, iconography has been imposed on a person and the result of blunting her naturalness – and telling of their speaker's insensitivity or blindness – is the miscarriage of the birthing process. The historical volcanic eruption provides an expanded

metaphor for the rebellion of nature or the woman's buried self. But before catharsis of a sort is thus reached and leads to the poem's resolution on an affirmative note, the focus is kept on the "woman's agony" – the features of an artificially imposed identity. The imagery is relentlessly dark, brooding and deathlike: "Past the lowering eyes of rumors, / ... Now you walked in those heel-hollowed step / in which all of our mothers before us went". Violation of nature is a sacrilegious denial of the sacred life-force; religious connotation, as in other poems, is used to provide resonance for the otherwise natural process: "into the lava of the damned birth-blood, / the sacrificial gutters".

Culpability is ascribed to the misuse of the paternal, canonical, language of empire (the Roman), architecture ("mosaics", "colonnade", "white columns", "stone") and even technology (the hospital, "scientific" setting) that fails the natural experience of 'mothering' the child/text: "The lamp that was struggling with darkness was blown out / by the foul breeze off the amniotic sea". Art ("the lamp") is denied because creativity ("the sea", the maternal process) is defiled by false language ("the foul breeze"). Blackness, as in earlier poems, is a metaphor for blindness or false vision: "The black harbour, / ... black schooners / ... the sea / is black".

What hope there is grows out of the speaker's raised consciousness in the form of the stillbirth – exorcism of his guilt or false aesthetic. In the end, he turns to the faint but understood "light" or the meaning of the lost child ("little star") and what it augurs of a new "beginning", the possibility of true invention in the immediate New World landscape, especially the turning to the natural, maternal earth: the lost child is "a curled seed sailing the earth". Mainly, the raised consciousness of the speaker is divested of false history and mythology and, in the characteristic fashion seen in the affirmative denouement of similar poems of guilt and catharsis, it blends with the native environment, insisting on the predicates of present time and space: "So I go on / down the apartment steps to the hot / streets of July the twenty-second, nineteen / hundred and eighty, in Trinidad, / amazed that trees are still green".

An intensely confessional poem, one whose subject on an immediate level singles itself by its emotional charge, "Early Pompeian" is nonetheless inscribed in a continuum of abrogation of the canon and the appropriation of language and experience specific to the New World. Part of its merit grows out of its juxtaposition with "A Map of the Antilles", which predates it by some twenty years: both are

united by the oblique strategy of focusing on an antithesis to the natural to validate a New World aesthetic based on fresh invention and symbolized by images of conflicting false and real creation charting the text's own development.

## III

Finally, the poet's overall design, to effect a verbal journey through felt experience, cannot but integrate his awareness of the aesthetic of impressionism in the Old World with the specificity of New World invention. In the range of early influences, two stand out as they circumscribe the tension between the visual and the verbal arts, and their ultimate fusion, in his artistic development.<sup>25</sup> As the poet puts it in *Another Life*,

Where did I fail? I could draw,  
I was disciplined, humble, I rendered  
the visible world that I saw  
exactly, yet it hindered me, for  
in every surface I sought  
the paradoxical flash of an instant  
in which every facet was caught

in a crystal of ambiguities, ...  
... I lived in a different gift,  
its element metaphor.

The tension is between the visual impression of Cézanne and the verbal compression of Conrad, and they both use an impressionist texture that strikes a responsive chord in Walcott. The evidence of his awareness of their works is impressive. To Edward Hirsch, Walcott states,

<sup>25</sup> For an excellent analysis of the relevance of painting in *Midsummer*, see Robert Bensen, "The Painter as Poet: Derek Walcott's *Midsummer*", *The Literary Review* 29 (1986), 257-268. For an overview of Walcott's use of chiaroscuro in both his drama and poetry, see R. D. Hamner, "Derek Walcott", in R. L. Ross, ed., *International Literature in English* (New York: Garland, 1991), 703-716. For a comprehensive discussion of the relatedness of the visual and the verbal arts and a convincing argument for Walcott's successful integration of the two in his mature work, see Terada, *Derek Walcott Poetry*, 119-148.

The painter I really thought I could learn from was Cézanne.... It's as if he knew the St. Lucian landscape – you could see his painting happening there. There were other painters of course, ... but I think it gave me a lot of strength to think of Cézanne when I was painting.<sup>26</sup>

He refers to Cézanne, by name, in a number of poems, including *Another Life*, *Midsummer*, and *Omeros*. More importantly, the texture of his poetry repeatedly conveys a Cézannesque play on the senses: "With all summer to burn, / a breeze strolls down to the docks, and the sea begins".<sup>27</sup> Crucial to both, Cézanne and Walcott, the image draws attention to its centrality and to the purity of its sensorial quality. A visual focus on balance, color and pattern anchors the quest for an aesthetic of form, order and truth.

As well, Walcott's debt to Conrad is freely admitted. He too is mentioned by name in *Another Life*, "Volcano" and *Omeros*. Key Conradian motifs (Africa, "fog", "mist", a Marlovian self-reflexive narrator, light-and-dark parallelism) are strewn throughout Walcott's early and late work. As with Cézanne, the important point is Walcott's incorporation of Conrad's aesthetic in a verbal construct that appeals to the senses. Therein lies the resolution of the divided claims, quoted above from *Another Life*. To the purely visual, and daunting, plastic form of his early trials with painting, he finds a balance in Conrad's use of a verbal equivalent to visual impressionism. Moreover, he extends Conrad's use of perceptual effect in prose expression, for example, "delayed decoding", in poetic form, and he finds in a New World setting the analogue for Conrad's use of the tropic in his fiction. Speaking to Bruckner, Walcott substantiates the connection: "I learned a lot in writing the poem [*Omeros*] ... the solidity I felt behind me [singling out Conrad's prose] was the solidity of prose. I wanted the feel of great prose rather than a strong verse line".<sup>28</sup> As defined by Ian Watt, Walcott recognizes in Conrad's style, "the verbal equivalent of the impressionist painter's attempt to render visual sensation directly".<sup>29</sup>

Conrad, then, is a primary model in two ways: for his fusion of Cézanne's style in verbal form, and hence his solving an early

<sup>26</sup> Hirsch in Hamner, *Perspectives*, 68.

<sup>27</sup> Derek Walcott, *Midsummer* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1984), iii.

<sup>28</sup> Hamner, *Perspectives*, 398.

<sup>29</sup> Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 176.

dilemma faced by Walcott; and, second, for Walcott's own fusion of *his* achievement with the demands stemming from a New World aesthetic, especially revolving around language, setting and characterization and their claim on the senses.

As it has been argued throughout this essay, Walcott's poetics is characterized by an aesthetic of doubleness. Nowhere is this more apparent than in *Omeros*'s linguistic structure, which not only blends the appearance of verse with the substance of prose, as mentioned above, but also, and as subtly, gives extended form to the mixture of a maternal, vernacular, language of the people (Creole) and a paternal, distant, language of History (English) introduced in poems such as "Sainte Lucie" and "The Light of the World". In the latter case, Walcott consciously expands on the achievements of his predecessors, Césaire and Perse, noted in "The Muse of History".

The orality of the villagers' everyday speech, in *Omeros*, sharply contrasts with the encoded, scripted language of history; the gap between the two is yet another arena for conflict over control of Helen pitting Major Plunkett and the narrator, on the one hand; and, on the other, the narrator and his own rapport with the text: 'open', like the villagers' voice or 'closed', like the *Major* code? The latter's limitation for the New World experience is reflected in Plunkett's inability to write to the island's history. His failure is directly mirrored by his code's distance from the 'live' reality of Helen, best seen by his wife, Maud: "Those lissome calves, / that waist swayed like a palm was her island's weather" (2.23.3). Maud, as an artist working with material indigenous to New World environment (her use of the sea-swift), is perceptually closer to the sensory speech of the people. In the 'open' book of sound of village life that she partakes in, she represents the reversal or rewriting of history that includes her in the narrator's concern for New World invention and excludes her from her husband's "closed", unfinished book (and maybe her death reflects its 'dead-endedness'). As the narrator puts it, "Plunkett, in his innocence, / had tried to change History to a metaphor, / in the name of a housemaid; I in self-defense, / altered her opposite" (6.54.2). Helen sums up in a 'natural' frame of reference, as perceived by the narrator, the link between orality and identity when, after announcing her pregnancy, her not knowing "for who" is ironically translated into onomatopoeia, sound instead of concept: "'For who', she heard an echoing call, as / with oo's for rings a dove moaned in the machineel" (1.6.1).

The narrator's own attitude toward his craft oscillates between the 'open' and 'closed' use of language (Creole and English) and subtly incorporates them in the uniqueness of a text inscribed tonally and textually in the felt life of the villagers (or, as the writer puts it, "the mouths of the tribe"). He identifies the 'closed' code as the Homeric "shadow" that needs the transforming openness of 'light'. Though its epitome is "the sun" merging with Helen, the appeal is not only to sight. 'Light', as in Conrad's duality of meaning for the metaphor of sight ('to see'), in his preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, ultimately also means understanding or consciousness. Its "delayed decoding" serves to substantiate the 'moral' and 'lasting' value of experience beyond the canonical.

Yet another implication to Walcott's use of "delayed decoding" in the context of linguistic duality is the attendant dialogism within the text's linguistic components and the consequent assumption of reader response, all of which serving a text's, such as *Omeros*'s, deep meaning. First, the reader's enlistment in the life of the village is ensured not simply by the centeredness of setting but by the careful weaving of linguistic pluralism and the symbolism of fishing. The reader reads a text written on the whole in English; only a delayed effect of the reading process will reveal the 'real' code, beneath the surface: what is "reeled in", in fact, is the submerged maternal tongue, Creole. The reader comes to the text with pre-conditioned reflexes, ones shaped by the dominant, canonical, code: English. The intent, akin to the text's subversiveness is to reverse the built-in presuppositions (represented in *Omeros* by Major Plunkett, obviously) so that the deflation of sighting/reading the familiar, reassuring, established code leads to the 'unseen' part of the iceberg:<sup>30</sup> the *hearing* of the people's everyday, maternal tongue: Creole. What Walcott referred to, speaking of Conrad's prose, translations into "the feel" or "the solidity" of the "tribe's" speech beneath the canonical code.

"Delayed decoding" here means the writer ensnaring the reader with his 'lines', "reeling in", "catching" the reader and simultaneously making him or her complicitous in the ritual, thus "landing" the reader

<sup>30</sup> The allusion to a key stylistic concept in Hemingway suggests an affinity between the two writers. *The Old Man and the Sea* is surely the Hemingway text Walcott has in mind in his comments to Bruckner, quoted later. Both writers' evident use of the Caribbean sea and fishing for symbolic resonance in their work does not exclude, as with Conrad, Walcott's adaptation of a technical feature associated with prose writing in his poetry.

into the core of the fishing village, Gros Ilet, the text's mirroring texture. The interplay with the reader's senses is induced by the encircling nautical imagery, beginning with the dedication: "For my shipmates in this craft.... A result of the reader's discovery of being placed in a structurally passive role of "being lured" by the poet/fisherman is an expected counter-reaction, an active resistance, in fact, leading him or her to identify and question the manipulative use of language. If images, metaphors, symbols, linguistic doubleness are 'lures' or 'lines' designed for a purpose controlled by a sort of predator, the poet/fisherman, then the reader cannot but be alert to the existence of an agenda built-in the nature of language and its user. The poet's making use of linguistic artifice expects the reader's awakening to language that calls attention to itself. Thus, the overall strategy of *Omeros's* use of a dominant linguistic code has the delayed function of revealing its artificiality, on the one hand, but, on the other, its truth in 'hinting' at the true, hidden, meaning of things: the endurance and resistance of the villagers, their unheralded nobility, akin to their maternal tongue denied official encoding but permeating through tone, rhythm, texture and even silence or apparent inarticulateness, like Helen in the village, the existing canon or the text's relationship with English. 'Pure' expression lies behind the mask of language's deceptiveness. The poet's intent is to "reel in" the reader in the act of deconstruction and join him in seeing "the light beyond the metaphor": pure expression in the previously unseen, the purification of "the words of the tribe", a variation on a precept whose Mallarméan and Eliotesque overtones are ironically intended by the poet.<sup>31</sup>

Helen's cryptic use of language, "I pregnant" (1.6.1) and "Is the music / the people I like" (2.21.1), points to another intended effect of linguistic deconstruction combined with "delayed decoding": the evocation of the deep resonance of a hidden natural language sensed through the lasting meaning of Helen's sensuality. Her characterization, along with the sea's and Ma Kilman's notably, merges with the role played by landscape. Then, in Ian Watt's words, delayed decoding "combines the forward temporal progression of the mind, as it receives messages from the outside world, with the much slower reflexive process of making out their meaning".<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> As early as in "The Muse of History", where there is a direct reference to Eliot and a discussion of the Mallarméan concept of "les mots de la tribu" cunningly translated as "the mouths of the tribe", a phrase Walcott repeats in later interviews with Bruckner and Anderson. See pp. 9-10.

<sup>32</sup> Watt, *Conrad*, 175.

Helen iconizes the text's real language through her fluidity of movement (she is a "panther"); balanced form (an "ebony mask"); mesmerizing gaze that redefines language – "that incredible / stare paralyzed me past any figure of speech" (1.6.3) – and her sheer embodiment of sensorial oppositional power to the merely verbal (again what is implied in her simplicity, "Is the music / the people, I like"). In a way, she is everyone's real "shadow": Achille's, Hector's, Major Plunkett's, Maud's and the narrator's, a mirror for each individual's fractured, incomplete, vision bounded by language vainly put to use for her attempted control. As "the light beyond metaphor", she represents that instance of pure expression ultimately grasped by the narrator, the one that language can only hint at *and* where it stops: "Why not see Helen / as the sun saw her, with no Homeric shadow?" (6.54.2). That the narrator reaches that epiphanic state, "I was seeing / the light of St. Lucia at last through her own eyes" (7.56.2), serves to confirm the deeper language of the senses, through communion with the elements: in other words, the "beyond language" state meant by the narrator's "beyond metaphor" qualification of Helen's light. She represents thus 'pure art' or 'pure expression' of the New World aesthetic: Helen, "as the sun" itself or the text's crowning epiphany, in the above quote, is self-sufficient and self-referential. She is the achieved art form no longer in need of outside reference (Major Plunkett, obviously; but, as well, the narrator who relinquishes the power of communication to her and perceives the essence of beauty in her).

Walcott's statement to Bruckner, in reference to *Omeros*, that "the greatest character is the Caribbean Sea itself"<sup>33</sup> supports the symbolism of the sea as the outer circle of a series of concentric encircling motifs, whose hub is the island. These previously discussed patterns visually function to suggest "delayed decoding". Their delayed meaning is shaped by the perspective on a narrative's true meaning, as understood by Marlow in *The Heart of Darkness*: "The meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside".<sup>34</sup> In other words, the 'shell' or the outer covering is privileged over the 'kernel', the core. If meaning lies, for Conrad's deceptive narrator, not in the expected storyline or plot but in what is left unsaid or obliquely stated in a narrative, then it follows that the ebb and flow movement

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin, 1974), 30.

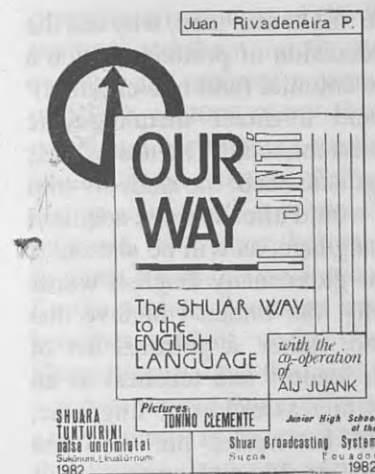
of the sea contains the overall open-endedness of *Omeros*. Its unceasing and enduring process naturally identifies itself with the analogy of the sea's mothering and nurturing of the text. Thus, when the narrator concludes, "Let the deep hymn / of the Caribbean continue my epilogue" (7.64.1), he merely punctuates the semiotic centeredness of the sea and the endlessness of artistic form modeled on its rhythm that 'closes' the narrative: "When he left the beach the sea was still going on" (1.64.3). The text's absence of closure parallels the sea's fluidity and externalizes the reader's involvement with its delayed, deep, meaning: the temporal, durational, "lasting" quality of the experience, notwithstanding the 'moral'. In a Hemingwayesque context, not foreign to Walcott's mind – interpreted and quoted by Bruckner, "He has a special affection for Hemingway because 'he is the only one to let you see the Caribbean the way it is, to feel it and smell it'"<sup>35</sup> – the reader is incorporated in the closing image of Achilles's 'unthinking' at the end of the day, symbiotically united with ritual, fishing and the 'ongoing-ness' of the sea.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, not to be overlooked in the enveloping construct of setting and characterization is the role played by Ma Kilman. Her power as healer derives from her inscription in the island's flora. Her "mothering" relationship with the earth allows her to cure not only Philoctete's physical wounds but Major Plunkett's psychic disarray following Maud's death (6.49.1; 7.61.1). The 'new' Helen in the person of her niece completes her "mothering" range that even subsumes Helen as her tactile rapport with her environment additionally hints at the text's grounding in pre-encoded language.

Firmly rooted in the Caribbean landscape of his birth, Walcott progressively approximates and successfully articulates in his later work a counter New World poetic discourse as an alternative to his early perception of the insufficiency of 'the classics'. His disagreement with the Western canon and its misuse in the New World, expressed in both his essays and his dour images of Odysseus and Helen, is replaced by his transformation of language, grounded in sensory evocation (impressionism), paced for intended effect (delayed decoding) and paradoxically constructed and deconstructed to impress the texture of "the heat of home".

<sup>35</sup> Watt, *Conrad*, 175.

<sup>36</sup> On this other Hemingwayesque stance, see Carlos Baker, *Hemingway, The Writer as Artist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 297.



Maurizio Gnerre

*Ii Jintí, 'Our Way'.*  
An English Textbook  
from the Amazon

### 1. An English textbook

In 1982, in a small remote town of the Ecuadorian Upper Amazon, Sucúa, a book was published at the printing facilities of the local Indigenous Organization, the Shuar Federation.<sup>1</sup> Its title: *Our way. Ii jintí. The Shuar Way to the English language*.<sup>2</sup> The book was an introduction to basic English. Its most salient feature was that, together with Spanish, an Indigenous language of the region, Shuar, was used to gloss English lexical items, idioms and sentences. Nowhere else, south of the United States, in Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries, had an Amerindian language without a written tradition been assumed by its speakers (given some interest in English) to have

<sup>1</sup> The Shuar and other Jivaroan peoples (Achuar, Huambiza, Aguaruna and Shiwiar) are traditionally settled in the South-eastern Ecuadorian and North-western Peruvian Upper Amazon. The Jivaroan peoples all together number close to 90,000 persons. Most of them are hunters and swidden-horticulturalists. The Shuar and the Aguaruna occupy the westernmost pre-Andean part of the Jivaroan area with some relatively high rain-forest sub-areas (between 1200 and 800 m. o.s.l.). Their ethno-linguistic dialects are reciprocally very close and as such constitute, more than a language family, a linguistic isolate. Jivaroan languages have no close relatives among other Amazonian tongues, although some distant relation with some Maipuran languages is possible (see Maurizio Gnerre, "Profilo descrittivo e storico-comparativo di una lingua amazzonica: lo shuar (Jívaro)", in *Quaderni AION, Nuova Serie*, 1 (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1999). For the phonological value of the Shuar alphabet see the Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> By: Juan Rivadeneira with the co-operation of Aij' Juank, *Shuara Tuntuirini natsa unuimiatai. Sukúnnum, Ekuatúrnum. Junior High School of the Shuar Broadcasting System* (Sucúa, Ecuador, 1982).

enough status to gloss English forms.<sup>3</sup> We might ask, then, why did the Shuar leaders and teachers come to the decision of producing such a textbook, in which the role played by the colonial (and neo-colonial)<sup>4</sup> language, Spanish, was diminished, and a direct metalinguistic interface between Shuar and English was established? The use of their own language was not motivated by a linguistic need: the students who were to have English in their curriculum would already have acquired a good knowledge of Spanish, and this language, as will be shown, is indeed used in the text, when needed, to gloss many English words otherwise translatable with great difficulty into Shuar. I believe that this unique English textbook represented, rather, a political act of identity: English was used by the Shuar leaders and teachers as an instrument through which, not only a strong assertion of linguistic, and, implicitly, cultural equality could be made, but also the international potentialities of their language could be claimed.

To understand the political, socio-cultural and linguistic dimensions which form the backdrop, under colonial and neo-colonial conditions, to such an unusual publication, we need to go through some aspects of recent Shuar history.

## 2. Head-hunters

One important dimension of colonial relations is that of the representations built by the dominant groups around minority peoples. The Shuar were known in the past as warlike and fierce peoples. The earliest Spanish account, in 1550, refers to them as the "most barbarian and savage people ever met" (by the unlucky *conquistador*).<sup>5</sup> This image was preserved and strengthened among the Spanish-speaking colonial élites of Peru and Ecuador during the following three

<sup>3</sup> Another somewhat similar case I know of is a comparative grammar of a Zapotec language (spoken by c. 3000 persons at San Cristóbal Amatlán, Oaxaca, Mexico) and English: David B. Riggs, *Gramática Comparativa Inglés-Zapoteca* (Mexico: Author's private printing, 1995). In this case, however, the historical and demographic conditions are completely different from the Shuar ones: Zapotec languages (Oto-Mangue stock) are part of very large ethno-linguistic family whose speakers have been acquainted with Western literacy since Conquest days.

<sup>4</sup> I use this term to refer here to the conditions of the Jivaroan peoples after the collapse of the Spanish colonial empire in South America, during the third decade of the 19th century.

<sup>5</sup> Hernando de Benavente, "Carta-relación de la Conquista de Macas", in *Relaciones Geográficas de Indias*, Vol. IV, *Ultimo Apéndice* (Benavente: Publicalca Marcos Jiménez de la Espada, Madrid, Ministerio de Fomento, 1887 [1550]), xxxii.

centuries when most of the Shuar, due to the difficult terrain of their territory and their sinister reputation, were not in direct contact with colonial and national powers, values and ideologies. When, from the mid-19th century, many Jívaros<sup>6</sup> shrunken heads reached the outside world and the Jívaros became widely known, through many accounts, as the "Head-Hunters of the Upper Amazon",<sup>7</sup> that grim image was further reinforced. It is ironic to observe, in the context of neo-colonial relations, that, long before the Shuar started "their way" towards English, almost all these accounts, building up a sinister image of them for the outside, dominant world, were originally written in English. It becomes evident, under this perspective, that a significant part of Shuar history – but the same is true for many other Indigenous peoples – is interwoven with different dimensions of the representation built around them. In the next two sections I will focus on two aspects of that history, language contact and language power, both relevant to developing our analysis of the English textbook introduced above.

## 3. Language contact

Jívaroan groups and languages emerged in pre-Columbian times from multi-ethnic and multi-lingual settings that it has not yet been possible

<sup>6</sup> 'Jívaro' is a word of colonial origin derived from a 16th century Spanish pronunciation of the ethnic name \**shiwari*, an early form for *shuar* (Maurizio Gnerre, "Sources of Spanish Jívaro", *Romance Philology*, Vol. XXVII (1973), 203-204). This form immediately assumed a derogatory connotation in Spanish and as such spread to the Caribbean; it is not accepted, let alone used, by any of the local Jivaroan groups as an ethnic name.

<sup>7</sup> This dark evocative label was used in early travel accounts, such as those by Fritz W. Up de Graff, *Head Hunters of the Amazon. Seven Years of Exploration and Adventure* (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing, 1923); Wolfgang Von Hagen, *Off with their heads* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1937); Bertrand Flornoy, *Haut-Amazonie. Trois français chez les indiens réducteurs de têtes* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1939); Lewis Cotlow, *Amazon Head-Hunters* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953) and an ethnographic account by Rafael Karsten, *The Head-Hunters of Western Amazonas. The Life and Culture of the Jibaro Indians of Eastern Ecuador and Peru* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum, Vol. 7, No 1, 1935). Even missionaries took advantage of the stereotype, as in the book-title: *Mission to the Head Hunters*, by Frank and Marie Drown (New York: Harper, 1961). One of the first writers to avoid this stereotyped image was Michael Harner, whose book had the more inspiring title: *The Jívaro, People of the Sacred Waterfalls* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1973). All these accounts were translated into Spanish in recent years. For an historical-anthropological analysis of the construction of that dark image see Anne Christine Taylor, "La invención del Jívaro", in *Segundo Moreno Yanes (Org), Memorias del Primer Simposio Europeo sobre Antropología del Ecuador* (Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala, 1985), 255-267.

to fully reconstruct.<sup>8</sup> In historical times, the Jívaro peoples have been in contact with two widely spread languages: with Quechua from the 15th century onwards, and with Spanish, from the mid-16th century. Norman Whitten has pointed out the importance of the linguistic Jivaroan-Quichua border in the past.<sup>9</sup> Both he and Harner stressed the relevance of the trading exchanges between the two cultural and linguistic areas.<sup>10</sup> The linguistic contact between the Achuar and the Canelos Quichua has been, and still is, particularly alive.<sup>11</sup>

In neo-colonial times, during the second half of the 19th century, it is likely that a few Jívaro men involved in rubber extraction work, heard English being spoken for the first time, and then only occasionally, by traders along main rivers of the Upper Amazon, or in a town such as Iquitos. The fact is that in those years two words entered the Shuar language from English: *ínkis*, from "English",<sup>12</sup> which assumed the meaning of "a white (Caucasian) not Spanish-speaking person, likely to come from far away", and *kwít*, from "quid", a well-known British slang expression to refer to units of money, which assumed a wider meaning "material valuables, money in general".<sup>13</sup> Obviously, these sporadic contacts were not at all significant for the cultural and political representation of the English language among the Shuar at the time.

It is likely that the first stable and significant contact with English-speaking people – somehow contributing to the local representation of English as a powerful language, and opposing its 'strength' to that of Spanish, not to mention Quechua – took place after 1902, at least for some northern Shuar, when a family of Gospel Union missionaries settled at Macas, an old *mestizo* village in the Shuar country, North of Sucúa.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See Gnerre, "Profilo descrittivo".

<sup>9</sup> Norman E. Whitten and Sacha Runa, *Ethnicity and Adaptation of Ecuadorian Jungle Quichua* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> Harner, *The Jívaro*.

<sup>11</sup> For some linguistic data on this contact see Juan Rivadeneira, *Shuar llaktapi. Runa shimi* (Sukúnium: Shuara tuntuirini Natsa Unuimiatai, 1983), 90 ff.

<sup>12</sup> The preference for the English form, rather than Sp. *inglés*, as a model for the Jivaroan word, is grounded on the word-initial position of the stress in *ínkis*. As for the phoneme /l/ (present in both "English" and "inglés"), this is absent from Jivaroan phonology: in loan-words from Spanish where originally that phoneme is present, it is either substituted (with /r/, /n/ or /j/) or suppressed.

<sup>13</sup> Harner, *The Jívaro*, on data collected in 1856-7, glossed *kuit* as "material valuables", including "shotguns, hunting dogs, blowguns, curare, feather headbands (*tawaspa*), and Western-manufactured shirts and trousers" (121).

<sup>14</sup> These missionaries, the Olsons, actually managed to translate the Gospel of San Luke into Shuar (Gospel Union, *El Evangelio de Lucas en Idioma Jíbaro* (Glasgow: Gospel Union Print, 1934)). The variety of Shuar they were taught and used, however, was close to a pidginized form of the language, quite similar to that used by the Finnish ethnographer Karsten

Spanish-speaking Catholic missionaries had been present for decades in the same area, and the Shuar were certainly able to perceive the tensions and divergences between these two little groups of white missionaries.

Since then, many Jivaroan, in different parts of their extended country, have had the occasion to hear the English language being spoken by travelers, researchers, missionaries and officers of oil companies.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4. Language rhetoric and power

The Shuar families in contact with the missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, saw them writing and reading and realized that through these techniques some of them were able to learn the Shuar language, considered by the Shuar to be not only hard and beautiful, but also powerful.<sup>16</sup> Beyond the aesthetic judgement, whose importance I do not intend to diminish, there is, indeed, from the Shuar point of view, a belief concerning the power intrinsic in some linguistic forms, as well as in some communicative genres. Through writing, and even more through its printed form, the Shuar language assumed additional dimensions of power.

Shuar curiosity toward the outside world, together with their fierceness, is one of their characteristics which have always been emphasised by observers, even since the earliest accounts. In the Journal of one of the expeditions to the "Jíbaros" (as the Shuar were known) aimed at "reducing" them to Christianity and civilization (Zamora, August and September 1785) we can read:

(see Maurizio Gnerre, "Shuar de contacto y español de contacto: dos reflejos lingüísticos de las relaciones interétnicas", *44 Congreso Internacional de Americanistas* (Manchester 1982), *Relaciones interétnicas y adaptación cultural entre shuar, achuar, aguaruna y Canelos quichua* (Quito: Abya-yala, 1984)) a variety of contact Shuar used in Macas.

<sup>15</sup> As for travelers and researchers, the list would be much longer than the one suggested by the authors quoted in note 5. As for English-speaking missionaries, in the 1940s a Protestant mission was established at Makuma, in the Eastern Shuar region (Drown and Drown, *Mission*). In the 1950s, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, a U.S.-based Christian (Methodist) organization devoted to linguistic research aiming at translating the Bible into each single ethno-linguistic variety spoken in the world, started its work among the Shuar.

<sup>16</sup> Janet W. Hendricks, *Images of Tradition: Ideological Transformations among the Shuar* (University of Texas at Austin: Dissertation, 1986) observes: "The Shuar are always willing to help someone learn their language, which they rightly believe is beautiful" (18). The relevant question, not raised by the author, concerns the reasons underpinning such an attitude on their language as well as the disposition to make it available to foreigners. See also Gnerre, "The Decline of Dialogue: Ceremonial and Mythological Discourse among the Shuar and Achuar of Eastern Ecuador", in Joel Sherzer and Greg Urban, eds., *Native South American Discourse* (Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1986), 307-341.



One evening, one of the un-faithful Jíbaros ... being tired of answering the many questions that the Commander in Chief was posing him, and carefully observing the way in which [the secretary] was taking notes of his answers, stopped answering, and admiring the novelty of writing, started to ask about this ability of ours [i.e. writing] that was unknown to him, and repeating aloud the names of the persons who were present there, he moistened his finger with saliva, and using his round wooden shield as a writing tablet, was acting as if he were writing down all those names.<sup>17</sup> [my translation]

In this account, an early 'awareness' of 'the novelty' of writing becomes apparent. We must observe that the "unfaithful Jíbaro" was acting as pretending to write Shuar names, a far from accidental or casual linguistic choice.

The first known printed text in Shuar, a tangible output of the learning process of the language through the instrument of writing, is an educational-religious booklet, written at the end of last century, by a Catholic missionary (Fr. Vacas Galindo). The learned priest selected an apparently bizarre title for his work: *Catón en lengua Jíbara*, "Cato in the Jívaro Tongue".<sup>18</sup> This reference to the Ancient Roman moralizing orator was, but only apparently, an odd choice. On the contrary, the title was very insightful: rhetoric, in our current understanding of it, is a pervasive feature of Shuar life. The same missionary also wrote a novel, which tells the story of Nankijúkima, a very important Shuar Big Man who, among other adventures, while visiting a *mestizo* settlement, was impressed by the rhetorical ability of the local authorities and priests, as well as by people's interest in listening to public speeches. When Nankijúkima went back to his own settlement, he applied these 'new' techniques of public oratory, gaining great power and prestige among his own people.<sup>19</sup>

The relationship between linguistic ability and magical strength or power is an important issue in Jivaroan culture. Highly elaborated

<sup>17</sup> The account was published by Jacinto Jijón y Caamaño, "Contribución al conocimiento de las lenguas indígenas en el Ecuador. Los Paltas y Malacatos o Jíbaros", *Boletín de la Sociedad Ecuatoriana de Estudios Históricos Americanos*. Vol. II, N. 6 (Jijón y Caamaño, 1919), 385.

<sup>18</sup> Anonymous, *Catón en lengua Jíbara para la Misión de Macas* (Riobamba, 1891).

<sup>19</sup> Enrique Vacas Galindo, *Nankijúkima. Religión, usos y costumbres de los salvajes del Oriente del Ecuador* (Ambato: Antonio Merino, 1895).

metaphors are either learnt or originally developed by men and women to produce magical songs (*anent*), to be performed under various different circumstances. Some important medicine-men are known to use particularly powerful magical songs in the Quechua language 'bought' by them from leading Quechua-speaking shamans.

The 'new' Shuar rhetorics, the monological discourse of one person to many, is certainly related to literacy and new settlement patterns, but it is also one additional expression of Shuar self-representation. *Paant* is a well-known expression referring to outstanding male behavior. In the newly-formed villages, direct competition for power among men once living in isolated longhouses became a daily challenge. Public speaking in meetings, schools, and general political assemblies was one of the main grounds of power confrontation. The rhetorical display of control of the Spanish language and of the new knowledge coming from the Western world became a central ingredient in local power confrontation.<sup>20</sup>

From the early 1970s, young Shuar leaders were extending their own individual political activity beyond the village level, producing written texts and speaking on the radio, as a way of manifesting their own inner 'spiritual' strength. As can be expected, a politics of meaning was taking place, with a massive impact on the production of meanings and forms, both spoken and written.

### 5. Shuar irúntramu

The changes that led to this new linguistic-communicative setting had their origins in the mid-1940s, when, after the first Ecuadorian-Peruvian war (1941), an increasing number of colonists from the Ecuadorian Andes migrated to areas traditionally settled by the Shuar. As a consequence, many Shuar families abandoned their settlement pattern of scattered, isolated longhouses, situated several hours apart by foot or canoe, to form, throughout the nineteen-fifties and -sixties, villages of single-family residential units. Colonization of Shuar lands, supported by state institutions such as the Ecuadorian Institute for Agrarian Reform and Colonization (IERAC), was meant by conservative political parties to be an alternative to a real land reform in the Andean highlands. Under these new circumstances, learning Spanish and acquiring literacy became for the Shuar particularly

<sup>20</sup> Hendricks, *Images of Tradition*.

important linguistic abilities. Families who wanted their children to go to the mission schools had to reduce the distance from them to a maximum of a one-day's walk. Consequently, the quest for the power associated with literacy and learning the national language, brought about and encouraged massive changes in settlement patterns.

In the nineteen-sixties, the Shuar of the Rio Upano valley (where both Sucúa and Macas are located) started to organize themselves into a federation (*Shuar irúntramu*) whose main purpose was that of defending their land rights from the Andean colonists. Some Catholic missionaries supported this early organization.

An American missionary, the founder of the Protestant mission of Makuma, had started to broadcast in Spanish and in Shuar in the late fifties. The Catholic missionaries, for their part, also established at Sucúa, in 1967, a radio station broadcasting every day for many hours in Shuar. Some young Shuar were trained to run it. Under these new conditions, the Shuar were furnished with fresh confidence in the rhetorical 'strength' and 'power' of their language, so often reviled by Spanish-speaking colonists. Within the ideologized frame of the *shuartikia* ("the Shuar way of being") there was room left for new rhetorically-shaped dimensions of identity. Self-representation as fierce people, in part a reflex of the image externally built of them, is an enduring tradition among the Shuar. Organization, education, and literacy are seen as new instruments to strengthen that self-image, as is, indeed, shown sometimes in public events. In 1973, a young leader, Ricardo Tankámash, said in a speech, in Spanish, addressed to the Ecuadorian President:

We the Shuar, who once used to cut and shrink the heads of our enemies, we are now joining together to cut off the head of ignorance and, even more importantly, of injustice. We are able to reason, to face and solve our problems, without any use of violence. [my translation]

A further step in the same process took place in 1972, when the *Shuar irúntramu* sponsored an Education-by-radio program. This was the "*Shuara Tuntuirini unúimiatai*", or the "*School of the Shuar Broadcasting System*", the institution responsible for publishing the textbook we are discussing.<sup>21</sup> Shuar elementary school curricula were

<sup>21</sup> *Tuntú* is the large signal drum carved from a log; this concept was extended to refer to the "radio"; *unúimiatai*, "the place for learning" refers to the school. Today the Education-by-radio program has been extended to more than 230 villages, where approximately 35,000 Shuar are settled.

re-designed as "bilingual and bicultural". Biculturalism was, however, most difficult to pursue in the context of extensive cultural changes in the direction of Western-*mestizo* patterns of life.

## 6. The English-Shuar textbook

The Shuar language was the extant symbol of ethnic continuity from a rapidly fading, and already almost mythical, past. As may be expected, however, under the illusion of its continuity, the language underwent a re-shaping, not so much in its morphological and syntactic organization, as in the meanings conveyed through it and, even more, in its social functions. These were rapidly shifting from an emphasis on magical-performance dimensions of language use to an emphasis on its referential potentialities. These were being enhanced in different semantic directions, through a high level of meta-linguistic awareness and intellectual effort, to push the language towards becoming a useful tool in formal education. Beyond its early implementation limited to the teaching of writing and elementary Spanish, in a few years, the Shuar lexicon was extended by the education-by-radio team of teachers, to cover part of the high school (*natsa*, "young people", in our book) curriculum. The language's referential 'strength' was thus enhanced by this effort both through the extension of its lexicon and through its acquiring of metalinguistic 'power'. This latter 'power' was developed both in the reflexive sense, through the elaboration of a linguistic-grammatical lexicon to refer to itself,<sup>22</sup> and in the external sense, when used to gloss three different languages: Spanish, Quechua, and English.<sup>23</sup>

These two meta-linguistic developments parallel two types of message present in our textbook: the first, its implicit contents and the

<sup>22</sup> Maurizio Gnerre, "The Lexicalization of Linguistic Action and its Relation to Literacy", in Jef Verschueren, ed., *Linguistic Action: Some Empirical-Conceptual Studies*, Volume XXIII, Advances in Discourse Processes (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1987), 11-26.

<sup>23</sup> Spanish, as should be expected, deserved more attention by the Shuar teachers and an intermediate step was the production of a large Spanish-Shuar dictionary: Instituto Normal Bilingüe Intercultural Shuar, *Chicham Nekatai. Apach chicham - Shuar chicham. Diccionario comprensivo Castellano - Shuar* (Sucúa: Sistema de Educación Radiofónica Bicultural Shuar, 1988). As for Quechua, the second language of Ecuador (as well as of Peru) a book was produced in 1983 (Rivadeneira, *Shuar llaktapi*). In this case there were specific historical and socio-linguistic dimensions involved: the Shuar and also their neighbours, the Achuar, had been in contact with Quechua-speaking peoples and that contact was increasing in those years, with the migration to the Shuar areas of Quechua-speaking Andean colonists.

latter, the explicitly-stated messages. I will start to discuss some aspects of the book concerning the first type of messages.

Let us consider the front page of the book reproduced above xerographically. I would like to direct the reader's attention to the message of 'modernity', transmitted by its graphic presentation with its use of geometric shapes and vertical print, for example. The book cover, in color, is, on the contrary, in graphic terms, quite traditional, suggesting a moderate version of modernity: a Shuar boy, with a traditional hair-cut sits on a traditional stool, listening to a radio (the reference is to the education-by-radio system); on a branch over the radio, two parrots are singing. Such a semiotic mix reflects quite closely the Shuar Federation political messages. I will discuss some other drawings below, pointing out the mixture of images related to modernity and to tradition which produces an overall semiotic complexity and provides a context for explicitly-stated messages.

The analysis of some of these messages will allow us to go further into the complexity of some implicit contents. In the first two pages (5-6) there is a foreword or presentation of the book, "Al lector", "To the reader", written in Spanish by Aij' Juank (a Shuar pseudonym adopted by a Catholic missionary) and dated from Sucúa, on "October 12, 1982", a highly symbolic day, celebrated in Latin America as *Día de la raza*, and in North America as "Columbus Day". Aij' Juank, at the very beginning of the presentation, writes that the main purpose of the book is that of

gradually introducing young Shuar into the complex *mundo gringo*, without frightening him with a culture so much different from his own, and showing with simplicity lights and shades of the "American (?) way of life" [in English in the text, with the question mark after the first word].

*Gringo*, as it is widely known, is the slightly derogatory term used in most Latin American countries to refer to North American English-speaking people; the question mark after "American" suggests that the word is mis-used, because it should not refer only to the *gringos*, but to any person born in the continent, 'discovered' on October 12, 1492. In this way, the study of English is framed into a spatial-temporal cluster. The main linguistic feature of the book, that of translating directly from English into Shuar, is introduced inside this frame. In the presentation, the comment on this feature is: "In this way, the

correspondences between two languages, that somebody, arbitrarily, would like to put at two different levels, become evident".

There is here, an explicit claim of equal status between English and Shuar which implies – and this is the real target of the comment – a claim of equal status of Shuar and Spanish. This is a reaction to the disdainful, or openly insulting attitude taken by uneducated Spanish-speaking people towards Shuar language. While such an 'egalitarian' position is likely to be shared by most educated Shuar teachers, most Shuar actually assume a 'superior' status for their language in relation not only to that of the neighboring Achuar, but also in relation to Spanish, let alone Quichua [sic], spoken by part of the Andean immigrants contemptuously looked down upon by the Shuar.<sup>24</sup> As Hendricks notes: "Even the ability to speak Spanish is looked upon with some skepticism among the less acculturated Shuar, leading some Federation officials to deny their knowledge of Spanish".<sup>25</sup>

At a different, more subtle level, we find diverging attitudes in relation to the semantic adaptation of Shuar lexical items to express Western concepts. On one side we find a resistance against semantic extension, on the other, an open attitude which favors it. An example of a sort of psychological, and consequent semantic, 'resistance' to the association of a traditional linguistic form with a new meaning is provided by the Shuar names for the parts of the house. To refer to the 'living-room' (in Sp. *sala*) of the 'new' houses, built according to *mestizo* patterns, the Shuar have not extended the meaning of their traditional term *tankámash'*, "part of the traditional longhouse reserved for visitors and men", even though the 'living room' is fulfilling many of the functions of the traditional *tankámash'*. It seems probable that the Spanish name was used by the owners of 'new' houses not only to stress the socially higher status of their new-style

<sup>24</sup> Until a few years ago the Shuar regarded the Achuar as a backward people and declared themselves unable to understand them. Both socio-cultural traditions and communicative practices were, however, quite similar. In strictly linguistic (i.e. de-contextualized) terms, the Shuar and Achuar languages could be regarded as 'ethnolinguistic dialects'. From the local point of view, however, what the Shuar meant, when they said it was hard for them to understand the Achuar, was that the communicative performances of the latter were characterized by a set of audio and visual cues which, as a whole, represented a difficultly 'socially accountable' performance, in the Shuar perspective. In other words, based on a totally 'external' linguistic interpretation, one could say that the interactions were adding a lot of communicative 'noise' to the de-contextualized distance between the two languages.

<sup>25</sup> Janet Hendricks, "Symbolic Counterhegemony among the Ecuadorian Shuar", in G. Urban and J. Sherzer, eds., *Nation-States and Indians in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 63.

houses, but also to stress the fact that socio-cultural events and communicative exchanges taking place in the *sala*, were quite different from those which used to take place in the *tankámash'*.

The open attitude towards the semantic extensions of existing words prevails, however, on the conservative attitude of resistance against these processes. It is this attitude, somehow connected to an open acceptance of social change, which is rapidly reshaping the semantics of the Shuar language. We observe, however, that these two attitudes only apparently point in opposite directions: they are, rather, complementarily acting towards a reshaping of Shuar semantics: both reflect the effects of a long-term 'cross-cultural' communication which has slowly led to a modification of traditional attitudes towards communicative modalities and meanings. To take our previous example again: as *tankámash'* is not used to refer to the *sala* in the 'new' Shuar houses, this term has acquired, through the newly produced lexical opposition, a new, more specific meaning: "the communal and visitors' side of the traditionally built Shuar longhouse". In other words, the lack of semantic adaptation of *tankámash'* is only apparent.

Just as the 'open' and the conservative semantic attitudes have both conceptual costs and benefits, so, too, do the efforts towards an 'open' meta-linguistic attitude. The statement of equality between English and Shuar not only implies, as observed above, a statement of equality between Spanish and Shuar, but also a representation of Shuar as intrinsically influenced by literacy. This has a conceptual cost: a 'grammar and dictionary' representation of language, that would rule out a 'voice and sound', and a 'performance and power' one. The latter is, however, the representation of the Shuar language shared by the majority of its speakers.

The third paragraph of Aij' Juank's presentation introduces a further significant dimension into the politically and socio-culturally complex issue represented by teaching/learning English in Shuar schools:

In Ecuador, the native cultural awakening generates today a minimalist [sic, Sp. *minimista*] attitude towards the value of foreign languages teaching: there are school authorities (and programs) that easily eliminate English language from the curricula, replacing it with Quichua<sup>26</sup> or

<sup>26</sup> This form has been used by the author, in place of the better known Quechua, because this is the form under which the language *Runa shimi* is commonly referred to in Ecuador.

another vernacular language. Somebody thinks that in this way, importance is attached to these languages, without reflecting, instead, on the inferiority complex that such a choice arouses in the pupils: many of these even reject the college made "to their own measure", almost an Indian reservation, and look with nostalgia at an education without differences, in which that subject is taught.... [my translation]

The criticism of politically extreme nationalist and anti-imperialist positions taken by some Indigenous leaders and educational authorities is grounded in the egalitarian spatio-temporal frame discussed above. So, Aij' Juank is right when, to conclude his presentation, he claims: "even in the study of a foreign language, we, the Shuar, have started a new path, *our way*: II JINTI".<sup>27</sup>

Shuar individualism and specificity (the concept of *paant*) is, after all, the top value to be preserved, even if the argument underpinning it passes through an egalitarian assumption.

The argument against those who, on ideological-political grounds reject the study of foreign languages, is implicitly developed at the very beginning of the first part of the textbook, "English Grammar and exercises". Seven pages are devoted to a socio-geographical and ideological-political framing of the study of English in the Shuar cultural and linguistic environment. In this frame, and keeping in mind the 'egalitarian' foundations of the argument itself, it is ironic to observe that the first English sentence, "English is a foreign language" presents a lexical problem for its Shuar translation: there is no way to express the concept of 'foreign' with one Shuar word; the concept has to be split into two levels of indexical approximation. The Shuar sentence worked out is: "*Inkis chichamka juyánchuiti, Ekuaturnumianchiti*", where "*juyánchuiti*" means "it is not from here", while the last word specifies the range of indexicality of "here", making explicit, in neo-colonial terms, that 'it is not from Ecuador'. To further clarify the concept of "foreign", under the English sentence there is a Spanish translation with an explanation: "*El Inglés es un idioma EXTRANJERO, o sea no es*

<sup>27</sup> When he refers to "we, the Shuar" he acts as a Shuar representative. Neither he, nor the author of the book, are Shuar; they both are, however, very close, to the Shuar "way" of confronting themselves with socio-cultural changes. The author, Juan Rivadeneira, is the son of a family with very old roots in the northern Shuar region. In the presentation of another book by him (Rivadeneira, *Shuar llaktapi*), a Quechua-Shuar textbook, Aij' Juank writes about the author: "he wrote this textbook with total involvement with the Indigenous cause, having spent years among the Shuar, who remember him with sympathy" (3).

*propio del Ecuador*", that is, "it is not natively spoken in Ecuador". This is the first example of the role played by Spanish in the text. The authors correctly assume that for a native speaker of Shuar, Spanish, a Western language with a long written tradition, represents in many cases a 'bridge' towards English. As a consequence, Spanish is often, but always stealthily, used as an intermediate language, ideally half way between English and Shuar and used as a device to make some dimensions of English meanings clear. Some examples however, will show that the authors do without Spanish as soon as they do not need it as a metalinguistic bridge.

On the same page, we find a key to interpreting the neo-colonial role assigned to Spanish, beyond its metalinguistic mediating function. Between the English sentence and its Shuar translation (and Spanish explanation) discussed above, there is a map of Ecuador. An Indigenous man from the Andes and a Shuar are drawn sitting on its upper side; the first man says, in Quichua: "*Runa Shimiwan rimani ...*"; "I speak Quichua", the Shuar says: "*Shuar chichamjai chichawitjai ...*", "I speak Shuar" and the Andean man concludes: "*Somos Ecuatorianos!*", "We are Ecuadorians!". A nationalistic claim is used here, despite the prevalent Shuar feelings of contempt in relation to the Andean people, to refer to an ideal linguistic coalition, opposed to the "foreign" language, English.

In contrast to this page, the following one (p.12) is centered on the world diffusion of English: "*Tuimp inkis chichamjai chichau ainia? Nakumkamu iist?*", "Where are those who speak English? Look at the figure". The figure referred to is a map of the world, on which all the English-speaking countries are in evidence. The aim is that of making clear that English is a world language and not only the language of the United States, i.e., not only the language of the *mundo gringo*. The next page, however, focuses on this latter country, called in Shuar *Amérikianmaya Iruntraru Nunka*, lit. "united land of the Americas". At the end of the page, after a political comment on the un-equal trading conditions between Ecuador and the United States, we read the overstatement: "*Todos los negocios se hacen en idioma inglés*" ("All businesses are made in the English language").

The socio-political contents are further developed in the next page, introducing the complex theme of Shuar language attitudes in relation to English. Pages 14 and 15 are conceived as a unit developing this theme. At the top of the two pages we read, in capital letters, the question: "*INKIS CHICHAMKA ISHAMMAINIASHIT?*" (lit. "Is the English language one to be afraid of?"). No Spanish or English

translation is provided in the text. This is a real question, almost confidentially addressed to the Shuar student. I need to describe and comment these two pages in some detail, because their content is a vital key to understanding the reasons behind the textbook itself. In these pages there are three drawings: in the first, a white man, angry and aggressive, addresses three Shuar boys yelling at them (in English, in capital letters): "LISTEN TO ME! HAVE YOU UNDERSTAND [sic]? Obey at once! Pay attention!". The Shuar boys look shameful and think (without speaking) "*Antatsji ...*", "We don't understand". In the second drawing an older Shuar boy says, in English: "Listen to me". Three little Shuar boys comment: "*Warintiua?*", "What is he saying?", "*Cha ...*", "I don't know ...", "*Itiúrchataiti ...*", "It is difficult ...".

Between these two drawings there is a text in Spanish. Its first part refers to the upper drawing: "MANY STUDENTS ARE AFRAID OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE [in capital letters] ... We should not be afraid of English, because we know where this language comes from and why it comes to us" [my translation]. In the last part there is a comment on the lower drawing: "There are also other students who feel superior for having learnt two words in the English language". At the bottom of the two pages there is another Shuar sentence, in capital letters, not translated into Spanish or English: "*INKIS CHICHAMAN NEKA AUKA, NANKAMAKTINCHAITI!*" ("He who knows English, is not a superior person!"). This sentence, like the one at the top of the page, is directly addressed to Shuar students.

On the other page (15), the message is more that of a positive proposal: a text in Spanish makes explicit some ideas of equality among languages and a drawing completes the message. While in the preceding page only males are drawn in the figures, in the drawing on this page we find three women, each one speaking in her own language, all conveying the same message: "O.K. Pay attention. Silence, please. Listen. Thank you"; "*Bien. Presten atención. Silencio, por favor. Escuchen. Gracias*"; "*Pénkeraiti. Ane rtarum. Takam tsatarum. Antúkt rum. Yuminksajme, yuminksajrume*".<sup>28</sup> The message of the two pages is gender-split: while men are represented

<sup>28</sup> The Shuar text corresponds almost word-by-word to the English and the Spanish texts: *Aneártarum*, an imperative form, means 'be ready'; in *Takamátsatarum* 'be silent', another imperative form, the suffix *-sa-* expresses a modalization equivalent to Eng. 'please'. Corresponding to 'Thank you' and Sp. '*Gracias*' we find two Shuar forms, the first *Yuminksajme* meaning 'I praise you' (sing.) and the other 'I praise you' (pl.). The use of two forms of the same verb is due to the necessity of translating the English and Spanish forms, that can be used to thank one or more persons.

as not working towards a reciprocal understanding, women seem to be very cooperative. In the text, in Spanish, we read:

Our attitude towards English must be one of loyalty to our people. Let's learn this foreign language to be able to defend the rights of our homeland, which is a poor country due to the abuses made by wealthy people who look to the United States as to the best possible country. [my translation]

The final sentence suggests that foreign people (mostly North Americans) should learn not only Spanish, but also Shuar: "We will make our language known to the foreigners, so that they also can learn to express themselves in Spanish and in Shuar".

This statement, a boldly ambitious one, as far as its wish that foreigners learn Shuar goes, marks the climax of the ideological-political discourse on the Shuar language. It concludes the part of the book on the "otherness" of English and its speakers.

On the following page, begins the fully metalinguistic section of the book. I will focus first on two statements, in Shuar, about English phonology, both carrying a metalinguistically negative connotation. The first is about the relation between writing and reading in English: *Inkis chichamjainkia: aatai aujtaijai metekchaiti*, lit. "In the English language, writing and reading are not equal" (i.e., there is not a one-to-one correspondence between graphemes and sounds). The second is about the (apparent) internal heterogeneity of English phonological templates: *Mash chicham nusha antunawai*, lit. "every word is heard on its own", i.e. "has its own sound". The implicit reference in the first statement is to the Shuar orthography: the alphabet was selected on phonemic criteria, with clearly stated allophonic realizations, such as /t/, usually realized as [t], except in the cluster /nt/ (as in *antunawai*) where it is pronounced [d], and so on.<sup>29</sup> The statement is a negative one: *-cha-*, in *metekchaiti* "it is not equal", attributes a negative value to English, when compared to the brand-new crystalline orthography of Shuar. It is not a neutral metalinguistic statement as my second technical English gloss might suggest. In the second statement, the implicit comparative reference is to the phonology of Shuar, more regular, in terms of possible templates, than the English one. The

<sup>29</sup> The Shuar orthography was established in 1970, after a series of meetings among Shuar teachers, educational authorities and missionaries (both Catholic and Protestant). For some more details, see the Appendix.

overall message is that phonological homogeneity and regular sound templates are to be preferred.

Apart from abstract phonological statements, Spanish is used in the presentation of English pronunciation which, to a native speaker of Shuar, is likely to present some problems with the contoids /b/, /d/, /g/ /f/, /l/. These sounds, however, are present in Spanish, so that, the authors, assuming that the potential students are familiar with that language, does not explain those sounds. The real problem is rather represented by two sounds not found in Spanish: the voiced affricate /dz/ (<g> and <j>, in English graphemics), and the realizations of <r>. In the page devoted to "The English Alphabet" the author presents the pronunciation of *g* and *j*, taking advantage of a subtle distinction in Ecuadorian Spanish dialectology: the English sound is represented through Spanish graphemic clusters <lli> and <llei> and the comment is: "<Ll> is pronounced in the way those from Quito say 'gallina' [hen] and not in the way of those from Cuenca". No explanation is provided for the pronunciation of English *r*.

I will discuss now two examples in the treatment of which Spanish is left aside, in a sense for opposite reasons. In the first one (p. 70), eleven English color names are introduced. Here Shuar cannot be used to gloss them, because, as in most Amazonian languages, its color categorization, in terms of Berlin and Kay's theory, is quite distant from English, and generally from Western categorization and lexical reflexes of it.<sup>30</sup> Shuar color terminology is more specific than English in some cases, referring with one lexical item not only to the color, but also to the specific material texture to which it is associated. In other cases, however, there is one single Shuar term to which more specific chromatic and lexical distinctions in English correspond. These divergences make Shuar color terms inappropriate to satisfactorily gloss the English ones. Spanish could accomplish the task of glossing the eleven English terms, but the chromatic values of its lexical items would not be necessarily clear to the Shuar students. As a consequence, the authors selected a referent-name solution: color samples of the eleven are provided, each one with its English name printed beneath it.

The second case (on p. 87) is provided by the English lexical distinction between *to make* and *to do*. As it is well-known, this lexical distinction would be glossed in a Romance language as Spanish, at

<sup>30</sup> Brent Berlin and Paul Kay, *Basic Colour Terms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

least at an elementary level of its use, with *hacer*. Shuar, on the contrary has a quite complex set of verbs which express a subtle local theory of agentivity. Here Shuar verb *najánatin* is used to gloss the first of the two English verbs, while Shuar *túratin* and *áitkiatin* are used to gloss the second form. As I cannot go in any detail here into this complex semantic topic, I will only observe that the first Shuar verb has a resultative and material connotation, while the other two verbs both have much more abstract meanings and are used also as connectives among sentences.

The last aspect of the textbook that deserves to be pointed out are the drawings, from which we started our interpretation. The book's cover, its front page (reproduced above) and three text drawings have been already described and interpreted. No single drawing in the book is politically neutral in terms of the message it carries with it. A major distinction that can be discerned as being made is one already introduced while commenting on the book's cover: the alternative representation of the Shuar as either traditional or modern. The first type of representation would deserve a more in-depth analysis against the ideological background outlined above: as obvious, a Shuar interested in learning English is likely to not be a traditionally-minded person, and in any case, these persons are found today only in the remoter regions of Shuar territory. So, on p. 21, under "Names of women" and "Names of men", we find a Shuar female and male face, each one painted in traditional ways, a practice increasingly abandoned by young people. On p. 23, in a drawing in the middle of the page, we see two Shuar men, or, more likely, two Achuar men, sitting on traditional stools, assuming a traditional body posture and wearing traditional clothing and feather head ornaments; below them we read: "I am Juwá. You are Naikai", two utterances (an exchange) that would never occur produced (in Shuar, of course) by two men sitting in ceremonial attitude. As an example of a modern image, on p. 19, under the heading "GREETINGS" and "LEAVE TAKINGS", both translated into Spanish ("*Saludos*" and "*Despedidas*") a young Shuar man, wearing Western clothes, but with traditional long hair, is stretching out his hand to shake somebody else's hand. This is a highly innovative form of greeting for the Shuar and other Jivaroan peoples.

There is, therefore, in the drawings, an almost equal distribution between images of traditionally-minded and modern-minded Shuar. This distribution however, far from an balanced representation of the social environment in which the book was supposed to be used, is a

reflex of the *shuártikia* ideology of the Federation leaders and teachers.

## 7. Conclusions

The production of this English language textbook was only marginally motivated by the will to introduce English into Shuar schools. The book was, rather, a political statement towards not only the Ecuadorian State, but also towards other Indigenous organizations. In opening their school curricula to English, the Shuar were showing, once more, their individualism and their independence with relation to the positions defended by other Indigenous organizations.

The Shuar, as well as other speakers of minority languages, are trapped in communicative networks. They, "the fierce people", have faced every day, for decades, the impact of a locally powerful, neo-colonial and 'national' language, Spanish, and have been looking for a way out from that labyrinth. One partial solution found (in the past) was represented by the metalinguistic effort of 'strengthening' their own language. In more recent years, however, some of them became aware of the world-power of another language, English. The ideological statement represented by the Shuar-English textbook is grounded on another political move out of the labyrinth: to take advantage of the high status of English, in order to break the unequal interface of Shuar with Spanish. English, the 'foreign' international language, even if represented in the book in a faded and quite aseptic way, does play, however, the central role of highlighting the position conceptually assigned to the other two languages: Shuar, the minority language placed here in a direct interface with it, and Spanish. English, through this direct interface with Shuar, assumes an anti-neo-colonial role: Spanish, the neo-colonial language, as a result of a unique alliance between Shuar and English, is ousted. Not completely, however: on the one hand, it is often metalinguistically useful as a semantic interface with English; on the other, it plays its neo-colonial role, and this becomes evident in the pages in which Quechua, the second language of Ecuador, becomes involved. This last language plays a mediating function in highlighting the neo-colonial "national" role of Spanish. The fact is that, to be able to say, effectively, "*Somos todos Ecuatorianos*" the two Indigenous persons, the Quechua and the Shuar-speaking one, have to, necessarily, use Spanish.

Under this interpretation, English and Quechua play symmetrical, even if quite different, roles, in the relationship between Shuar and Spanish: while English contributes to strengthen, both at a linguistic and a political level, the position of Shuar in relation to Spanish, Quechua plays the ideological-political role of 'remembering' the neo-colonial, 'national' function of Spanish.

### Appendix<sup>31</sup>

#### *Shuar Orthography and Pronunciation*

The Shuar forms quoted are written in the orthographical system, established in 1970.

#### *Vowels*

- <a> low central unrounded
- <e> high central-back unrounded, [i] as in 'roses'
- <u> high back rounded
- <i> high front unrounded

#### *Consonants*

- <ch> voiceless palato-alveolar affricate
- <j> voiceless glottal spirant
- <k> voiceless velar stop; [g] following nasal consonant
- <m> voiced bilabial nasal
- <n> voiced alveolar nasal
- <p> voiceless bilabial stop; [b] following nasal consonant
- <t> voiced alveolar flap
- <s> voiceless alveolar fricative
- <sh> voiceless palato-alveolar fricative
- <ɬ> voiceless alveolar stop; [d] following nasal consonant
- <ts> voiceless alveolar affricate; [dz] following nasal consonant
- <w> voiced bilabial semivowel
- <y> voiced palato-alveolar semivowel

<sup>31</sup> Throughout the text the widely accepted technical metalinguistic usage is followed: <> indicates graphemes, // phonemes, [ ] phones or allophonic variants.

Giulio Lepschy and Helena Sanson

### "(Non-)Native Speakers" and "(M)Other Tongues"

1. The English term "native" (together with several others such as "indigenous" and "aboriginal") is one of those 'enantiosemic' words which seem to be usable with either of two opposite meanings: the first, older and more germane to the etymology, indicates belonging, rootedness, autochthony in a given country; the second, more recent, and in modern usage more common, prevalent apparently in imperial contexts and conveying the colonists' viewpoint, indicates the 'other', the exotic, i.e., the native as foreign.

This is reasonably well understood, but certain unforeseen implications have emerged in the use of one of the basic notions of modern linguistics, that of "native speaker". In a recent collection of articles on this topic a further enantiosemic twist was highlighted.<sup>1</sup> There are some third world countries in which institutions offering English teaching advertise for "native speakers", which turns out to mean white (British, American or Australian) speakers of English. The implication (or perhaps the implicature) seems to be that in order to be accepted as a proper and authoritative native speaker of English you need to be a non-native, because the natives (in the imperial or colonial sense) may be native speakers of their own mother tongue, but (even if their mother tongue is one of the 'other' or 'new' Englishes) are not deemed to enjoy the native speaker authority expected from a bona fide teacher of (proper, i.e., non-other or non-new) English.

Davies in his monograph on this notion from the view point of applied linguistics, concludes that 'native speaker' is an implicitly differential, oppositional designation:

<sup>1</sup> R. Singh, ed., *The Native Speaker: Multilingual Perspectives*, Language and Developments 4 (New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London: Sage Publications, 1998). See also F. Coulmas, ed., *A Festschrift for the Native Speaker*, *Janua Linguarum, Series Maior*, 97 (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1981).



The concept of native speaker is not a fiction but has the reality that 'membership' however informal always gives.... [L]ike other majorities, native speakers define themselves negatively as not being non-native speakers. To be a native speaker means not being a non-native speaker.<sup>2</sup>

2. "Native speaker" seems to be a central notion in modern linguistics, but almost as an undefined and perhaps undefinable prime. "The first language a human being learns to speak is his *native language*; he is a *native speaker* of that language" wrote Bloomfield.<sup>3</sup> And Chomsky describes grammatical sentences as those which are "acceptable to a native speaker".<sup>4</sup> The sentences generated by a grammar "will have to be acceptable to the native speaker".<sup>5</sup> With the two most influential American linguists of the century supporting it, from different methodological assumptions, it is not surprising that the notion of native speaker should have enjoyed an almost undisputed status as the basis on which the whole edifice of linguistics rests, the touchstone against which the reliability of our data can be ultimately verified.

But, as we all know, there is no effective way to decide who is and who is not a native speaker. René Coppieters, on the basis of interviews with two groups of proficient French speakers, one consisting of native speakers, and the other of near-native non-native speakers, reached the conclusion that they differed in their intuitions about sentences, but were indistinguishable at the level of language use.<sup>6</sup> Chomsky, questioned by Paikeday, dismissed the whole discussion on the native speaker as uninteresting.<sup>7</sup> Languages are not external objects out there in the world, which can be learnt either in a 'native' manner or in some 'other' manner. Individuals have a language faculty L, at birth in an initial state L-0, which at some point, probably before puberty, reaches a steady state L-s:

So then what is a language and who is a native speaker? Answer, a language is a system L-s, it is the steady state attained by the language

<sup>2</sup> A. Davies, *The Native Speaker in Applied Linguistics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 164 (hereafter cited as NS).

<sup>3</sup> L. Bloomfield, *Language* (New York: Holt, 1933), 43.

<sup>4</sup> N. Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton, 1957), 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-50.

<sup>6</sup> R. Coppieters, "Competence Differences Between Native and Near-Native Speakers", *Language* 63 (1987), 544-573.

<sup>7</sup> T. M. Paikeday, *The Native Speaker is Dead! An Informal Discussion on Linguistic Myth with Noam Chomsky and Other Linguists, Philosophers, Psychologists, and Lexicographers* (Toronto & New York: Paikeday Publishing Inc., 1985), 58.

organ. And everyone is a native speaker of the particular L-s that that person has 'grown' in his/her mind/brain. In the real world, that is all there is to say.<sup>8</sup>

Which is an admirable way of cutting through to the heart of the question, showing that it does not exist, and therefore refusing to answer it.

3. The question of the native speaker does not seem in fact to be a factual problem which can receive a 'scientific' answer from cognitive psychology; it looks more like a topic suitable for examination in the context of the study of specific cultural traditions. But such an examination is surprisingly problematic, owing in part to the scarcity of relevant factual information.

Establishing the history of the expression "native speaker" is less straightforward than one might have expected. Davies states that he has been unable to find attestations earlier than the passage quoted above from Bloomfield.<sup>9</sup> The *OED* unaccountably does not record the expression, either in the entry for "native" or in that for "speaker".<sup>10</sup> From the CD-ROM edition of the *OED*, seventeen occurrences of "native speaker" turn up, with dates ranging from 1943 to 1982. They are not particularly helpful or instructive, and it should be obvious that they presuppose an earlier history not documented in the *OED*. For instance, one is tempted to think that the expression may have been used originally in the context not of a language of culture, but rather of a "native" language (perhaps American Indian), for which linguists would have stressed the need to rely on the authority of informants who were "native speakers", i.e., had that language as mother tongue, rather than on accounts from missionaries or other non-natives who had learned or studied the language as adults.

This hypothesis was however not fully confirmed by a search made by the *OED* editors in the University of Michigan *Making of America* website. This has provided us with four interesting quotations, apart from those which appear to result from the accidental juxtaposition of "native" in the sense of indigenous, and "speaker" in the sense of orator.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>9</sup> Davies, NS, x.

<sup>10</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

In fact, one of these four quotations can probably be discarded as belonging to the group just mentioned. It is by Lewis H. Morgan, the famous anthropologist whose theories were highly valued by Marx and Engels. In *The Indian Migrations* (1868-70) Morgan observed:

Any person familiar with the articulation of Indian languages can form a very correct opinion of their development when heard from the lips of native speakers in council. The Mandan, as used by the chiefs in formal addresses, is a clear sonorous language, with quantity and accent strongly defined.<sup>11</sup>

It seems likely that Morgan was talking here about "speakers in council" who are "natives", rather than "native speakers", and therefore the passage is only marginally relevant for our question. This leaves us with three quotations.

The first (1835) concerns a Greek in America who speaks English well, "as is usual with those who learn a foreign tongue from books, and from enlightened native speakers".<sup>12</sup> The second (1854) mentions a Semitic dialect "called Ekhili by native speakers".<sup>13</sup> The third (1883), in a review of a textbook for learning French, criticises the use of "a style of conversation such as never went out of the mouth of a native speaker".<sup>14</sup>

As can be seen, the native speaker is not one of 'us', but one of 'them'. The native speaker is not an insider, but an outsider, the native speaker is the 'other'. Even in the 1835 quote, where the native speakers are American English, the viewpoint is that of a Greek, in whose eyes they were foreigners from whom he had learnt English (being educated Americans, they were also "enlightened native speakers" in the words of the American author).

<sup>11</sup> L. H. Morgan, "The North American Review" (October 1868 and January 1870), reprinted in W.W. Beach, ed., *The Indian Miscellany, Containing Papers on the History, Antiquities, Arts, Languages, Religions, Traditions and Superstitions of the American Aborigenes, with Descriptions of Their Domestic Life, Manners, Customs, Traits, Amusements and Exploits* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1877), 222.

<sup>12</sup> L. Minor, "Letters from New England. No 5, by a Virginian", *Southern Literary Messenger* 1 (1835), 421-422.

<sup>13</sup> J. C. Nott and G.R. Gliddon, *Types of mankind [...] Illustrated by Selections from the Inedited Papers of Samuel George Morton*, Sixth Edition (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo & Co./London: Trübner, 1854), 491.

<sup>14</sup> Anon. review of R. S. Rosenthal, *The Meisterschaft System. A Short and Practical Method of Acquiring Complete Fluency of Speech in the French Language* (Boston: Estes & Lauriat, 1883), *The Catholic World* 37 (1883), 855.

4. Looking for early uses of the expression "native speaker" we find an interesting cluster of examples at the beginning of the twentieth century, in Ireland, in the context of the discussions on the revival of Irish. One of the fathers of the Gaelic renaissance, Peter O'Leary (later known in the Irish national tradition as An t-Athair Peadar O Laoghaire) insisted that in order to write Irish prose it was necessary to distance oneself from English models, and to rely on the living speech of ordinary people, i.e., of the native Irish speakers. In his articles collected in the volume *Irish Prose Composition* the term "native" is often used with "speaker" (but also "listener" and "reader"), implying a contrast with an anglicised sort of writing.<sup>15</sup> A polemical tract against O'Leary's positions was published by J. M. O'Reilly, and carries the phrase "native speaker" in its title: *The Native Speaker Examined Home. Two Stalking Fallacies Anatomized*.<sup>16</sup> It is, in the words of the author, "a humble contribution toward the saving of the language from its great natural enemy, the native Speaker", based on the conviction that in order to write in Irish you need to rely on culture and literature, rather than "the mouth of the people", and that there is a contrast, even incompatibility, between "scholarship" and "native speakership".<sup>17</sup>

The expression "native speaker" was used frequently at this time, particularly with regard to the teaching of Irish, and therefore in the context of studying and learning "another" language. It is interesting that Bloomfield in his *Introduction to the Study of Language* of 1914 uses the expression "native speaker" not, as in 1933, discussing the nature of language, but in the chapter on "The Teaching of Language": "As to the preparation of the teacher, a prime requisite is, of course, mastery of the language to be taught, – in modern languages a knowledge comparable to that of an educated native speaker and in ancient a fluent reading ability and some facility in writing".<sup>18</sup> The quote of 1933 cited above marks not so much the entry of this

<sup>15</sup> P. O'Leary, *Irish Prose Composition. A Series of Articles Including Several Upon the Irish Autonomous Verb* (Dublin: The Irish Book Company, 1902).

<sup>16</sup> J. M. O'Reilly, *The Native Speaker Examined Home. Two Stalking Fallacies Anatomized* (Dublin: Sealy, Bryers, & Walker, 1909; 2nd edition, rev., Dublin: M.H. Gill & Son, Ltd, 1925), iii.

<sup>17</sup> For the "Necessity of de-Anglicizing Ireland", as Douglas Hyde wrote in 1892, and for the background to these discussions, see D. Kiberd, *Synge and the Irish Language* (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), 216-260 and *Inventing Ireland* (London: Cape, 1995), 136-165.

<sup>18</sup> L. Bloomfield, *An Introduction to the Study of Language* (London: Bell/New York: Holt, 1914), 297.

expression into linguistics, as rather its final consecration, or the beginning of a new lease of life which was to lead to the somewhat problematic present day discussions.

5. Some further insights into the question can be obtained if we look at it from the viewpoint of 'English and the other'. What is the counterpart in other languages of the English expression "native speaker"? A quick look at standard dictionaries shows immediately that there does not seem to be an obvious rendering. One finds either calques, implicitly or explicitly based on English (e.g., Spanish "*hablante nativo*";<sup>19</sup> French "*locuteur natif*"; angl. native speaker";<sup>20</sup> Italian "*parlante nativo*").<sup>21</sup> Other designations are also used, typically involving the notion of "mother tongue".<sup>22</sup>

The origin and development of the expressions designating the mother tongue in European languages is far from straightforward. In Italian we find both "*madre lingua*" and "*lingua madre*" (in both cases written as one or two words), each usable with the sense of either (1) "native language", or (2) "language from which another derives", the difference being that for "*madrelingua*" sense (1) is more common than sense (2), and vice versa for "*lingua madre*" sense (2) is more common than sense (1). In any case, for either expression, sense (1) seems to be attested later than sense (2).

Dictionaries are not as helpful as one might wish. Tommaseo gives:

"*Madre lingua*", quella che si considera rispetto a una o più derivata da essa. "*Madre*" preposto, fa quasi tutt'una voce, e denota più ass[olutamente] la potenza di quella lingua; "*Lingua madre*" qui "*Madre*" è quasi Agg. e può dirsi anco d'una lingua evidentemente derivata da un'altra, ma da cui procede un altro idioma.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *The Oxford Spanish Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>20</sup> *Le Grand Robert de la langue française* (Paris: Le Robert, 1985).

<sup>21</sup> F. Palazzi, G. Folena, *Dizionario della lingua italiana*, con la collaborazione di C. Marelllo, D. Marconi, M. A. Cortelazzo (Torino: Loescher, 1992); F. Sabatini, V. Coletti, *DISC Dizionario Italiano Sabatini Coletti* (Firenze: Giunti, 1997); *Vocabolario della Lingua italiana. Il Conciso*, direttore Raffaele Simone (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1998), cf. *parlante*.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., the *Collins German Dictionary* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 1997) translates "native speaker" as "Muttersprachler(in)".

<sup>23</sup> Henceforth, square brackets signal notes or translations by the editors. ["*Madre lingua*, that [language] which is considered [mother] to one or more derived from it. *Madre*, being preposed, makes almost for a single lexeme, and more absolutely determines the

Giorgini/Broglio: "*Madre lingua*' e '*Lingua madre*', da cui altre sono derivate. Il latino è la '*nostra lingua madre*'".<sup>24</sup>

For *madre lingua/madrelingua* Battaglia gives "*lingua materna o madre lingua*" with a quote from Lanzi (1789): "*le vittorie, le vicinanze, i commerci han congiunte or due lingue madri, or una madre lingua con uno o più dialetti separatamente formatisi da lei stessa*".<sup>25</sup> For *madre lingua* both Palazzi/Folena<sup>26</sup> and Sabatini/Coletti<sup>27</sup> give a first attestation date "a. 1810" probably based on Cortelazzo/Zolli<sup>28</sup> which specifies "before 1810", this being the date of death of Lanzi (for the 1789 passage quoted above), and they both suggest that the phrase is based on the German *Muttersprache*. We have actually found an earlier record of *madrelingua* in sense 2 (but the interpretation is not fully perspicuous), in the 1660 *Vocabolista Bolognese* by Giovanni Antonio Bumaldi, the pseudonym of Ovidio Montalbani, in which the author praises the noble origin of the Bolognese language. Here referring to "*le più lontane etimologie delle voci nostre Bolognesi congiunte assai colle Lombarde*" we read that "*La lingua Lombarda è la 'Madre Lingua' Italiana*" and also that "*resterà conchiudentissimamente provata la propositione, che la lingua Bolognese è la lingua della Madre de Studi, e così del più saggio ragionare, 'madre lingua' Italiana*".<sup>29</sup>

For *Lingua madre/Linguamadre* Battaglia gives quotes from Giambullari (1549), Salvini (1735), Manni (1758), Cesarotti (1785),

potential of that language; *Lingua madre*, *madre* is almost an Adj. and one could even say it of a language which [although it] is obviously derived from another, but from which another language is derived". N. Tommaseo and B. Bellini, *Dizionario della lingua italiana* (Torino: Unione tipografico-editrice, 1861-79), cf. *Lingua* §27.

<sup>24</sup> ["*Madre lingua*' and '*Lingua madre*': languages from which others are derived. Latin is our '*lingua madre*'"]. *Novo vocabolario della lingua italiana secondo l'uso di Firenze* (Firenze: Cellini, 1870-97), known as Giorgini-Broglio, cf. *Lingua*.

<sup>25</sup> ["[military] victories, [geographical] vicinity, trading, have joined, sometimes two *lingue madri*, sometimes one *madre lingua* with one or more dialects which had individually derived from it[self]"]. S. Battaglia, *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* (Torino: UTET, 1961), cf. *Lingua* §5.

<sup>26</sup> Palazzi/Folena, *Dizionario*.

<sup>27</sup> Sabatini/Coletti, *Dizionario*.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. M. Cortelazzo, P. Zolli, *Dizionario etimologico della lingua italiana* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1979-88), 5 vols.

<sup>29</sup> ["referring to 'the earliest etymologies [origins] of our Bolognese words [which are] so very intimately conjoined with the Lombard ones we read that 'the Lombard Language is the Italian *Madrelingua*' and also that 'the proposition will be absolutely conclusively proven that the Bolognese language is that of the Mother of Studies [a punning allusion to the University of Bologna, the first ever '*universitas studiorum*']' and thus, through the wisest reasoning, the Italian *madre lingua*'"]. G. Bumaldi, *Vocabolista bolognese, nel quale con recondite historie....* (G. Monti: Bologna, 1660), 45 and 90.

but in all cases the expression cited is "madre", not "lingua madre", with reference to a language from which another derives. The first use of "lingua madre" seems to be in the quote cited above from Lanzi (1789) which is far from straightforward. For *lingua madre* in sense 2 Cortelazzo-Zolli refers to a text earlier than the one by Lanzi quoted above, i.e. a passage from Lorenzo Magalotti from 1711.<sup>30</sup>

The use becomes fairly common in the 19th century. Battaglia quotes a passage from Cattaneo. Battisti/Alessio for *Linguamadre* gives 1884 as a first attestation date and refers to French *langue mère*, German *Muttersprache*.<sup>31</sup>

As for *Muttersprache*, it has a long history of its own. Its origin is controversial. The traditional view is that the German expression is based on the Medieval Latin *lingua materna*.<sup>32</sup> Leo Weisgerber suggested that this is an original German coinage.<sup>33</sup> Leo Spitzer objected on grounds of historical documentation (the Latin attestations, from the 12th and 13th centuries, are earlier than the German ones, from the 14th century), of cultural history (the Latin expression is related to the importance attributed in the Christian Middle Ages to maternal education, *caritas* and religious faith being absorbed with the mother's milk), and to grammatical analysis (against Weisgerber's interpretation of *Mutter* in *Muttersprache* not as a genitive specification: "Of the mother, learnt from the mother", but as if it had the value of a prefix: "Shaping and nourishing us, acting like a mother", on the model of formations like *Mutterboden*, *Mutterland*, etc.).<sup>34</sup>

Concerning the controversy, and in general on the development of the notion of *Muttersprache*, there is a large bibliography.<sup>35</sup> The

<sup>30</sup> A. Dardi, "Nuove datazioni di tecnicismi sei-settecenteschi", *Studi di Lessicografia Italiana* 2 (1980), 223, which refers both to a manuscript by Magalotti, and a letter of 1711 from *Lettere scientifiche ed erudite del Conte Lorenzo Magalotti* (Venezia: Occhi, 1740).

<sup>31</sup> C. Battisti, G. Alessio, *Dizionario etimologico italiano* (Firenze: Barbèra, 1950-57), 5 vols.

<sup>32</sup> O. Behagel, "Lingua Materna", in *Zeitschrift für Französische Sprache und Literatur* suppl. 13 (1929) [Festschrift Behrens], 13-15.

<sup>33</sup> L. Weisgerber, "Ist *Muttersprache* eine Germanische oder eine Romanische Wortprägung?", *PBB* [Paul und Braune: Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur] 62 (1938), 428-437.

<sup>34</sup> L. Spitzer, "Muttersprache und Muttererziehung" in *Essays in Historical Semantics* (New York: Vanni, 1948), 15-65. See also the review by J. Jud, *Vox Romanica* 11 (1950), 245-248.

<sup>35</sup> See K. Heisig, "Muttersprache", *Zeitschrift für Mundartforschung* 22 (1954), 144-174; A. Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel. Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1957-63), Bd. I-IV, 2251; A. Rosellini, "Réflexions sur les expressions 'lingua vulgaris, materna, layca, romana ...' dans les documents francoprovençaux (quelques conséquences sur le plan de la francisation)",

question is obviously complex and the individual arguments are often controvertible. The earliest attestation quoted of *materna lingua*, at the beginning of the 12th century, is by Hesso "magister scholarum *argentinensis*", i.e. from Argentorate or Strasburg, and according to Weisgerber he must have based his Latin phrase on the German expression *Muttersprache*. This suggestion has been criticised, together with other misinterpretations,<sup>36</sup> and it has been pointed out that Weisgerber seems to project back on to the Middle Ages values and connotations of *Muttersprache* which emerged and were added to it only later. Steinthal in an interesting essay of 1867 "*Von der Liebe zur Muttersprache*" makes penetrating comments about the late development of this notion in Germany, and observes that the 'love for the mother tongue' requires both culture (the uneducated seem to lack this concept) and the presence of the 'other', of a contrast between the mother tongue and a different language (the Greeks, who produced the highest culture in antiquity, according to Steinthal, not only did not feel "love for their mother tongue", but did not even have the phrase 'mother tongue').<sup>37</sup>

During the 18th and particularly the 19th centuries, the notion of mother tongue became associated in Europe with the struggle for national independence, and in some cases appeared to be the most important constituent of nationhood. This seems to have provoked particularly deep emotions in Germany, where we find *Lieder* such as the one by Max von Schenkendorf of 1814: "*Muttersprache / Muttersprache, Mutterlaut, / Wie so wonnesam, so traut! / Erstes Wort, das mir erschallet, / Süßes, erstes Liebeswort, / Erstes Ton, den ich gelallet, / Klingest ewig in mir fort*".<sup>38</sup> Put together with the

*Aevum* 43 (1969), 88-113; R. Steding, "Zur Wortgeschichte von *Muttersprache*", *Niederdeutsches Wort* 12 (1972), 44-58; E. Genouvrier and N. Gueunier, *Langue maternelle et communauté linguistique = Langue Française* 54 (Mai 1982); "Muttersprache", *Referate von Zweiten Internationalen Soziolinguistischen Symposium*, Graz, 21-23 Okt. 1985, Grazer Linguistische Studien (1986); H. D. Erlinger, C. Knobloch, eds., *Muttersprachlicher Unterricht im 19. Jahrhundert. Untersuchungen zu seiner Genese und Institutionalisierung*, Reihe Germanistische Linguistik, 117 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1991); H. Ivo, *Muttersprache. Identität. Nation. Sprachliche Bildung im Spannungsfeld zwischen einheimisch und fremd* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994); C. Ahlzhweig, *Muttersprache-Vaterland. Die Deutsche Nation und ihre Sprache* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. for instance Heisig, "Muttersprache", 146.

<sup>37</sup> H. Steinthal, "Von der Liebe zur Muttersprache" [1867], in *Gesammelte kleine Schriften*, vol. I (Berlin: Dümmlers, 1880), 97-107.

<sup>38</sup> ["Mother Tongue, Mother Tongue, Mother-sound, Oh how blissful! Oh how beloved! The first word to ring (in my ears), The first sweet loving word, The first sound I stammered, You will resonate loudly within me forever"] Ahlzhweig, *Muttersprache*, 146.

Humboldtian idea of different languages being intrinsically linked to different worldviews, this concept of mother tongue produced a potent and intoxicating brew which became more and more effective as an ideological and political weapon, and conversely less and less usable as a meaningful concept for an understanding of language and mind.

6. A large study devoted recently by C. M. Hutton to *Linguistics in the Third Reich* sports the subtitle *Mother-Tongue Fascism, Race and the Science of Language*.<sup>39</sup> This is an unsettling book, which offers a painstaking documentation, on the one hand, of how deeply German linguistics was nazified in the Third Reich, and on the other, of how little needed doing for this to happen, since the relevant assumptions were already in place before 1933. One of the elements which are disturbing in the book is that it does not face with the necessary energy the problem posed by the distinction between, on the one hand, ideological assumptions, and, on the other, scientific achievements obtained notwithstanding, or irrespective of, political beliefs.

That the formation of Indo-European comparative philology was inseparably linked to racialist (and specifically anti-Semitic) views is something of which cultural historians have been aware for some time.<sup>40</sup> For Hutton

Indo-European linguistics provided an important intellectual framework both for British colonialism and National Socialism, with an intellectual apparatus – ‘substratum’, ‘adstratum’, ‘invasion’, ‘proto-language’, ‘original homeland’, ‘migration’, ‘assimilation’ – which allowed sufficient flexibility for the ideologically most desirable state of affairs to be postulated or ‘reconstructed’. (LTR, 304-305)

Some of his observations have even more general implications:

I have found no fundamental contradiction between adherence to Nazism and adherence to high standards in scholarship or to scientific method, however chilling this conclusion might be. All the sciences of

<sup>39</sup> C. M. Hutton, *Linguistics and the Third Reich. Mother-Tongue Fascism, Race and the Science of Language* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999) (hereafter cited as LTR).

<sup>40</sup> See for instance L. Poliakov, *Le Mythe aryen. Essai sur les sources du racisme et des nationalismes* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1971) and M. Olender, *Les Langues du Paradis. Aryens et Sémites: un couple providentiel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989).

human measurement – physical anthropology, human biology, race science, linguistics, etc. – contributed to Nazi scholarship, as they have contributed to new forms of self-understanding in the modern world. (LTR, 2)

According to Hutton “[i]t is hard to see why a science of linguistic classification should be respectable, while a science of racial classification is viewed with suspicion. Either both are scientific activities or neither is” (LTR, 260-261).

Hutton is aware of the problems this may entail, but somehow unwilling to face the full implications and consequences of his argument. He seems to be prepared to jettison the scientific character of linguistics and any discourse about kinship of languages etc., because this inevitably involves speculations concerning the speakers of these languages and their ethnicity, homeland, migrations etc., all of which is tainted with racist assumptions that are both ethically repugnant and scientifically untenable. But the same attitude ought to apply to any discipline or field of study, from physics to biology, psychology, history and so on. In each case we can find examples of people who were competent specialists in their fields and convinced fascists or nazis. It seems to us that it is not necessary to reject research because it is capable of being tainted. It is however both desirable and possible (even if not always easy) to distinguish ideological from scholarly considerations, and to discuss a piece of research on its own merits, accepting or rejecting its findings on the basis of their factual and theoretical validity rather than of the political and ideological convictions of the author. (It will be apparent that we do not share the fashionable enthusiasm for abandoning scientific criteria of evidence, proof, truth etc., and for imputing a rhetorical and fictional character to historical discourse.)

Apart from this, Hutton’s book is a very useful examination of academic linguistics in Nazi Germany, focusing in particular on the question which concerns us here of the centrality of the mother tongue. (We may observe en passant that an investigation of analogous questions in the Italian tradition does not seem to have been made.) Three linguists are particularly important in this context, Weisgerber, Kloss, and Schmidt-Rohr. The first two continued being influential even after 1945, and it may be useful to mention their political involvement with nazism, as it emerges from Hutton’s book where relevant documentation will be found. The third, now generally forgotten in linguistics, was the most fanatical upholder of the

importance of the mother tongue for the formation of cultural attitudes and national frames of mind.

For Leo Weisgerber the mother tongue identifies the language community and its view of the world. During the war Weisgerber acted as *Sonderführer*, answerable to the *Propaganda Abteilung* of the military government and the German embassy in Paris, with special responsibility for radio broadcasts aimed at the Celtic minorities in France, Ireland and Britain. After the war he worked particularly in the area of language policy as an upholder of mother tongue rights (LTR, 106-143).

Heinz Kloss worked mainly in the field of sociolinguistics, with particular reference to German speakers outside the Reich (LTR, 144-188). He elaborated notions, such as *Abstand* ["distance"] and *Ausbau* ["development"], which are still influential.<sup>41</sup> He was sympathetic to anthroposophy and the theories of Rudolf Steiner, but in spite of having been considered politically unreliable, ended up as a member of the Nazi party and is found reporting on meetings in Poland in 1941 on the need to retrain Jews in agricultural and craft skills.

The third name is that of Georg Schmidt-Rohr, a curious figure linked to the *Wandervogel* movement which aimed at channelling adolescent energies into organised structures (LTR, 288-294). Schmidt-Rohr published in 1932 *Die Sprache als Bildnerin der Völker*.<sup>42</sup> The following year, after the Nazi victory, a second edition appeared, with the new title *Mutter Sprache*, in which the spiritual notion of race is stated to be more important than the corporeal, physical one. But the manner in which this is argued in the preface gives us little joy – apart from its being unwittingly comical as well as sinister: "While Hindenburg and Hitler, Goebbels and Bismarck, Göring and Goethe belong to the *same* Aryan race, through the difference of the biological racial types which these men represent with immediate evidence, the spiritual unity of a 'race' is established, a unity in the ideal, in the spiritual". And further:

If the German *Volk*, in its main constituent parts, belongs to the 'Aryan race', this is because one thus designates an *originally linguistic* community, which includes also other European and extra-European

<sup>41</sup> See for instance, with reference to Italian, Z. Muljagic, "Introduzione all'approccio relativistico", *Linguistica Pragmatisia* 7,2 (1996), 87-107.

<sup>42</sup> [Lit: "Languages as Sculptors of Peoples ('s national character)"].

*Völker*. The unity of this Aryan race which in the course of centuries extended to various blood-races and filled them with its spirit (*Geist*), is based on language.... [B]etween English, French, Germans, who are all Aryans, the demarcation depends now essentially on the spirit, not on blood.

To sum up: '*Volk ist Sprachvolk*'.<sup>43</sup> The Jewish question (*Judenfrage*) was of course central for the mother tongue ideologues, who on the one hand, could not deny that many Jews had German as their mother tongue, and on the other, wanted to exclude them from the German nation, even if this was crucially defined on the basis of the mother tongue. Hitler had already found this question unsettling.<sup>44</sup> Schmidt-Rohr stated however that he had Fichte, Bismarck and Mussolini on his side:

An Italian fascist told me: 'Mussolini will send to the remotest islands those who, owing to some ideology or other (even if it were anti-Semitism) based on race or religion, tear apart the unity of the Italian nation. We look at what the *individual has to offer* to the nation, not the fact that he belongs to a certain racial type or to a certain religion'. Of course, the damage caused to the *Volk* by the Italian Jews is not to be compared with the *Volk*-wrecking actions of the Jewish *Volk*-enemies in Germany, of course even Fichte, Bismarck, Mussolini can make mistakes, and have made mistakes. But anyone who disparages the national attitude which inspired their lives, must make an evaluation of his own standing in this respect.<sup>45</sup>

Schmidt-Rohr maintained that language was more important than race in determining national mentality. He was criticised by the well known upholder of biological racialism in linguistics, Edgar Glässer, and had some difficulties within the Nazi party which he had joined in 1933; this however did not prevent him from being rehabilitated by the *Rassenpolitisches Amt* in 1939, and from ending up as a head of a secret "Political Language Bureau" established under the umbrella of Himmler's *Wissenschaftsamt A der SS*. He finally disappeared at the end of the war after joining the *Volkssturm*, the last-ditch mobilisation against the Allies.

<sup>43</sup> G. Schmidt-Rohr, *Mutter Sprache. Von Amt der Sprache bei der Volkwerdung* (Jena: Diederichs Verlag, 1933), vii-viii.

<sup>44</sup> See the relevant passages in LTR, 300-301.

<sup>45</sup> Schmidt-Rohr, *Mutter Sprache*, viii.

7. In this article we have considered briefly the history and use of the two notions 'native speaker' and 'mother tongue'. Most of the relevant documentation seems to be in English for 'native speaker', and in German for 'mother tongue', or rather for the original designation *Muttersprache*. There is a sense in which these two designations can be considered the counterpart of each other. They refer to the individual and to the first language he/she has acquired in childhood: each individual is a native speaker of his/her mother tongue.

The two notions (or their equivalent in other languages) are fairly commonplace and seem to be intuitively self-explanatory. They have also, in an implicit sort of way, been erected into cornerstones of linguistic theory, particularly "mother tongue", with its ideological connotations, in the German cultural tradition, and "native speaker", with its appeal to an authority that can decide on questions of grammaticality and acceptability, in the English speaking tradition.

They are however difficult to define precisely and appear to be unable to carry the weight of the theoretical implications which have been attributed to them. When we discuss linguistics it may be impossible not to refer to "native speakers" and their "mother tongues", as first approximations. But as soon as problems arise which require greater precision, it would seem desirable to replace these general notions with specific ones which can be defined more clearly and effectively.

Nunzia Ponzo

### Translating 'difference'

In the last decade the Italian publishing world has shown a great interest in the fiction coming from countries once considered marginal. Asian, African, Australian and Caribbean literatures have indeed been attracting an increasingly large number of readers. Publishing companies like Guanda, Bompiani, Marsilio and Zanzibar have mostly chosen to translate women writers for their wide female readership. Within anglophone literature, Caribbean women's writing, because of its energy and unexpected cultural richness, has been promoted by academics and literary critics who have thus determined their success with the Italian public.

My aim is to discuss two fundamental issues in translation practice: how do Italian translations reframe ideologies of class, racial, sexual and cultural differences? How do they use language to inscribe the 'other'?

Many problems arise in a cross-cultural translation which is a many-sided semiotic operation. Firstly, the translator's linguistic scrutiny must involve a range of extralinguistic features to transfer not only the linguistic, but the sexual, gendered and racial complexity of texts. The knowledge of the matrix culture and society is required when faced with literatures which describe a different civilisation but set up a cultural transplantation through a European language. Malinowski's notion of 'context of culture' pointed to the idea that,

in order to understand the meaning of a foreign language, it was necessary to have a sound knowledge of the immediate environment of a speech act (which he, like Halliday years later, called the context of situation) allied to a sound knowledge of the cultural environment.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Taylor, *Language to Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 94.

The translator's competence is very often theoretical, limited to information about the author's complete works acquired through other texts rather than through direct experience of his/her world and reality, that may convey different levels of meaning. Every text is generated through a strict link between word and reality, language and thought; each statement records fragments of reality and emotions which must be interpreted. This determines lexical, stylistic and methodological choices which express the communicative effect of the translated text. Translation itself contributes to the construction of diversity, as it produces an 'other' element that refracts, to use a Bakhtinian term, the original text through references, winkings, a play of seductions. However it is important to bear in mind, as Bassnett and Lefevere warn, that "there is no way ... that the translation will have an effect on readers belonging to the target culture which is in any way comparable to the effect the original may have had on readers belonging to the source culture".<sup>2</sup> Therefore the sense of the text is a hybrid between the original one and the reader's interpretation by virtue of the unlimited semiosis of the text.

Literary translation is always an hermeneutic journey. In its aspect of rewriting, it resembles the work of a critic. Translating from a cross-cultural perspective means comprehending and mediating the message to cross the border of two cultural universes. But how are texts reshaped in the time, space and history of the target language?

André Lefevere views translation as a form of rewriting just like anthologies, reviews, histories and critical articles. He states that all these writing processes model and manipulate literary production. "Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices ... But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain ...".<sup>3</sup> The analysis of feminist rewritings, for instance, has shown that the transformation the text undergoes often derives from the translator's ideology which aims at disrupting the patriarchal semiotics of production.

Many American women translators consider their task a political activity, so they want women's subjectivity to be visible on the page

<sup>2</sup> Susanne Bassnett and André Lefevere, eds., *Translation, History & Culture* (London: Pinter Publishers Limited, 1990), 3.

<sup>3</sup> André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London: Routledge, 1992), vii.

by virtue of the 'poetics of transparency'.<sup>4</sup> Women, as traditional mediators, would be more inclined to linger 'in between', in the pause between translatability and untranslatability, faithfulness and betrayal towards the 'other' – work, author, language – and the reader-receptor, who inhabits the same language and desires to 'appropriate' the 'other'. As Susan Bassnett has said, "women's discourse is double; it is the echo of the self and the other, a movement into alterity", or better plurality.<sup>5</sup> Adopting a gender perspective, the reader accepts the text with different attitudes, points of views and elaborations according to his/her sex. Writing like reading and translating are never neutral practices, as they always carry the mark of their producers. They are indeed very conscious acts; therefore translation becomes the ideal place to say something in 'other' ways. Barbara Godard considers it a performance of the source language in the second language. From an intertextual outlook, she underlies the active role of the translator as reader/rewriter, affirming and exalting her critical difference, "...s/he is both the receiver and sender of an utterance, the end and the beginning of two separate but linked chains of communication".<sup>6</sup>

A translation fluctuates between written and physical performability and is particularly influenced by the sexual affiliations of the translator for a process of automatic identification with the author in question. The texts presume a going through and beyond, with the holistic involvement of being a woman, so rewriting/translating becomes a metaphor for reading woman. For Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, who has chosen to work only on texts by women, "it is a question of self-preservation, and for readers it may be an indication of the extent to which the translator's female identity and feminist subjectivity enter into her work".<sup>7</sup>

Notwithstanding this, the translator who approaches 'other' literatures cannot do without the epistemological contributions of feminist translations provided by Black and in general 'Third World' women critics and theorists. They insist on the adoption of a pluralistic insight. Gayatri Spivak, for instance, in her essay *The Politics of Translation*, complains of the lack of knowledge of the history of the language and the author's culture by translators, so that a "neo-

<sup>4</sup> Luise von Flotow, *Translation and Gender: Translating in the 'Era of Feminism'* (Manchester: St Jerome, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Susanne Bassnett-McGuire, *Translation Studies* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1980), quoted in Bassnett and Lefevere, *Translation*, 88.

<sup>6</sup> Bassnett and Lefevere, *Translation*, 92.

<sup>7</sup> Flotow, *Translation*, 28.



colonialist construction of the non-Western scene is afoot".<sup>8</sup> Such easy-reading translations conforming to Western tastes do not open new horizons and remain anchored in the current dominant ideologies and poetics. Spivak especially questions the misrepresentation of Black women voices by 'first world feminists', who risk contributing to their 'exploitation' by a 'colonialist' attitude that denies women's racial differences. Obviously, the risk of mistranslating the non-European for Europe exists if the reshaping or representation is carried out through interiorised ideological filters of the target culture and society. Cultural orientation in this sense might cause a distortion and a change of perception of other cultures. "Language and literature are implicated together in constructing the binary of a European self and a non-European other, which, as Said's *Orientalism* suggested, is a part of the creation of colonial authority".<sup>9</sup>

Quite often translations are disappointing and inadequate, betraying the expectations of the audience who counts on a fair representation of the original. "Particularly where the translator is dealing with texts distanced considerably in time and space [s/he] regards the target culture as greater and effectively colonises the source text".<sup>10</sup>

This attitude might not only continue to subordinate and marginalise 'other' literatures but might threaten the identity of their cultures, the image of their works and that of their authors as they are conveyed through alien eyes. It should be added that great part of the success or failure of 'other' literatures available in translation is also determined by the amount of pre-faces or post-faces, what Palma Zlateva considers 'pre-text', a threshold of access contextualising the source-text, that contributes to construct an 'image', a desire to knowledge independently from the quality of the translation itself.<sup>11</sup> This discourse brings into play the positionality and moral responsibility towards the target readers and towards the very survival and evolution of some literatures. Sherry Simons warns of the danger of a lack of "an ethnographic approach respectful of the culturally alien origin of the material", an ideological attitude known as

<sup>8</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Politics of Translation", in Michele Barrett and Anne Phillips, eds., *Destabilizing Theory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 84.

<sup>9</sup> Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 73.

<sup>10</sup> Bassnett and Lefevere, eds., *Translation*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Palma Zlateva, "Translation: Text and Pre-text 'Adequacy' and 'Acceptability' in Crosscultural Communication", in Lefevere and Bassnett, eds., *Translation*, 29-37.

'cannibalism', an aggressive act of appropriation of foreign cultural values.<sup>12</sup>

Both [author and translator] can choose to adapt to the system ... or they may choose to oppose the system, to try to operate outside its constraints ... by writing works of literature in ways that differ from those prescribed or deemed acceptable at a particular time in a particular place, or by rewriting works of literature.<sup>13</sup>

If the translator's positionality differs from the author's, the latter's image may become obscured.

The translations of Caribbean texts are a case in point. Caribbean women's writing generally questions the European attitudes regarding the 'other'. Women writers from the Caribbean are consciously engaged in rewriting their history – clichéd, objectified or obscured by the West – in redressing their images and recuperating their voices kept in the matriarchal oral and choral tradition of the region. The central role of language mirrored in their multilingual virtuosity – the result of their African heritage and resistance to European colonisation – must be rendered into the target language.

"The 'prismatic vision' central to Caribbean experience and thought", quoting Pamela Mordecai, derives from the wide extension of the West Indies from Belize to Trinidad and Tobago, and prevents from generalising or flattening the literary output coming from the region and from the diaspora – the West Indian immigrants in the 'first world metropolises' – because it would remove and deny their fragmented and rooted histories.<sup>14</sup> The African American poet Audre Lorde "warns of the inherent dangers of ignoring rather than recognising and exploring difference".<sup>15</sup>

If on one hand the connection with 'Third World literature' "still evokes a common project of linked resistances ... [as it] implies that the shared history of neocolonialism and internal racism form a sufficient ground for alliance",<sup>16</sup> on the other hand, the hybrid

<sup>12</sup> Sherry Simons, "Translating the will to knowledge: Prefaces and Canadian Literary Politics", in Bassnett and Lefevere, eds., *Translation*, 115.

<sup>13</sup> Lefevere, *Rewriting*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Joan Anim Addo, *Framing the Word. Gender and Genre in Caribbean Women's Writing* (London: Whiting & Birch Ltd, 1996), 15.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>16</sup> Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism. Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1995), 40.

constellation of discursive spaces requires a contingent and relational deciphering.

The savage history of Caribbean colonisation led to the destruction of the indigenous Carib and Arawak peoples as well as to the demise of the African languages spoken by the deported slaves and their replacement with the unifying European languages. English especially, as the official language which maintained 'public' functions, refused any other linguistic practice. In colonial politics the ideological power of the dominant European language spread the concept of hegemonic Eurocentric culture which denied Black the knowledge of the history of slavery. The recovery and restitution of Caribbean history and identity was possible through a subversive and appropriating strategy of the colonisers' languages along with the adoption of the hybrid regional languages, the different Creoles, which resulted from the syncretism of European and African languages.

In its syntax and morphology the demotic (the multifacet and polysemic array of dialects and discourses according to M. Nourbese Philip) is structured by a radical diasporic genealogy with African, East Indian, European and Amerindian word roots.<sup>17</sup>

Creole is extensively used in Caribbean works, where it assumes both an ethnic and social connotation. Through their multilingual creative writing Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanophone and Dutch speakers and writers mirror the complex racial and social stratification of the different peoples of African, Chinese, Indian, European origin initiated since the colonisation of these territories. Creole is their mother-tongue, expressing the oral culture of the islands. The Trinidadian Samuel Selvon was the first West Indian novelist who adopted dialect, or 'nation language' according to Edward Kamau Brathwaite's definition, as a diegetic presence in his story-telling narrative form. His intention was to revitalise the English language by challenging and breaking the heart of metropolitan "Englishness". *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) wholly written in Creole was published in the translated Italian version in 1998 in the Oscar Mondadori original collection with great difficulty, as the translator herself humbly justifies in a note. She declares the impossibility of rendering the vivacity, musicality and the expressive energy of the original text.

<sup>17</sup> Addo, *Framing*, 76.

Therefore she attempted a very colloquial Italian by using a low register.<sup>18</sup>

The translator of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* recently published by Bompiani faced the same problem. This masterpiece of Black literature, which appeared in 1937, was written in the Afro-American dialect which had survived slavery. Spoken in Florida when Hurston was a child, it is a variant of English that reverberates the echoes and rhythms of the West African languages, full of iconic energy and dramatic expressivity. In a review published in *Leggere Donna* the loss of its sonority and richness resulting from the transference to an irreparably standard Italian was indeed pointed out, as the following examples clear up: "Ah don't want yo' feathers always crumpled by folks throwin' up things in yo' face. And Ah can't die easy thinkin' maybe de menfolks white or black is makin' a spit cup outa you: Have some sympathy fuh me. Put me down easy, Janie, Ah'm a cracked plate". / *Non mi va che tu debba arruffare le piume perché la gente ti rinfaccia qualcosa. E non morirei tranquilla pensando che gli uomini, bianchi o neri, ti usano come sputacchiera. Cerca di capirmi. Mettimi giù adagio, Janie, perché sono un piatto incrinato*, and "Ah was wid dem white chillun so much till Ah didn't know Ah wuzn't white till Ah was round six years old. / *Stavo sempre con quei bambini bianchi, tanto che fin verso i sei anni neanche sapevo di non essere bianca...*"<sup>19</sup>

The technical and theoretical challenges proper to Afro diasporic literature – fragmented syntax, wordplay, idiomatic phrases, repetitions and grammatical dislocations like irregular past tenses and participles, irregular plural of nouns – are signs of an alternative aesthetics which cannot be erased. In addition, the modulations, pauses and cadences in the texts cause a linguistic tension and revitalisation highly visible at a phonetic-orthographic level. How can such a rich and polyphonic poetics so culturally contextualised be evoked? The translator is forced to invent and have recourse to a variety of strategies.

Dialects cannot be superimposed lest falling into a caricatural parodical representation. It is known that Italian fiction generally turns

<sup>18</sup> "A great deal is lost through translation. The degree of loss depends a great deal on the culture and linguistic background of the translation as opposed to that of the original writer". *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>19</sup> Examples from Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (London: Virago Press, 1994), 37 and 21, reviewed in *Leggere Donna* 78 (January-February 1999), 8.

to dialect in order to portray socially degraded environments or to denote the cultural inferiority of tendentially negative characters. The choice of dialect is therefore questionable inasmuch as it would not break the linguistic taboos of the aseptic literary Italian.

Contemporary translation theory suggests a "pragmatic as well as semantic and syntactic equivalence",<sup>20</sup> the orientation being towards reciprocity, communication, the transference of what Lotman defines the 'effect of the sense' through the aesthetic functional equivalence. As Susan Bassnett states, "There is no universal canon according to which texts may be assessed ... any assessment of a translation can only be made by taking into account both the process of creating it and its function in a given context".<sup>21</sup>

At any rate it is important not to neutralise the dynamic wording of Creole and its social flavour, often obtained through code-switching, to achieve a semi-standardisation. Of course a meticulous analysis of what lexis, registers, varieties, styles the target language has at its disposal is needed. In addition, its attitude towards foreign languages must be examined, whether it accepts neologism, for instance. The extent to which the spoken language diverges from the written one, as to sonorous effect, hesitations, self-corrections, incomplete utterances and so on is also a factor to take into account. West Indian standard, Creole or Black English cannot be replaced with a flat, standard Italian, which would denaturalise the original plurilinguism. A difficult task for the Italian translators indeed. It is undeniable that Italian narrative language needs new models, new ways of operating to face the multiple communication and the deconstructing potentiality of 'otherness'. A renewing suggestion comes from the experimentalism of the young generation of contemporary Italian fiction writers, like Enrico Brizzi who has been using a mutable, unsteady language, which include many neologisms. The linguistic polisemy of women texts – as indicated by recent feminist scholarship – could also be taken as an example.

The magnetic power of the Creole lexicon, its unique use, along, with some special meanings given to idioms, phrases and terms, increase the difficulties when the translator is confronted with what Bill Ashcroft et al. call 'orature' which challenges the separation between orality and literary aesthetics.<sup>22</sup> Tales, songs, proverbs, jokes,

<sup>20</sup> Bassnett and Lefevere, *Translation*, 74.

<sup>21</sup> Bassnett-McGuire, *Translation Studies*, 9-10.

<sup>22</sup> Bill Ashcroft et al., *The Empire Writes Back. Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989).

legends, children's play language widely present in Caribbean women literature erect barriers in the translation because they are culturally bound. They are significant for the preservation and transmission of popular tradition, as "colonial institutions attempted to denude peoples of the richly textured cultural attributes that shaped communal identity and belonging, leaving a legacy of both trauma and resistance".<sup>23</sup>

In *The Unbelonging* by Joan Riley, for instance, there is a reference to "John Canoe", a sort of Christmas carnival, and to a children's stone game related to the Jamaican folk-song "Cobalik". These complexities often create zones of resistance to translation especially when the semantic areas do not carry over the same cultural descent, when there is no corresponding term. In such a case the translator could transcribe these terms and explain their meaning in a note.

Other obstacles are the rendering of a 'race-conscious language' which traces its roots back to the seventeenth century when negative labels about black skin were promoted: 'African', 'Colored', 'Negro'. What is interesting, however, is how the semantic value of these racially marked words have changed over time, like the Portuguese derived adjective 'Negro' which was elevated between the 1930s and the '60s. The word 'nigga', instead, embraces a range of nuances of meaning which extend from negative to positive to neutral, depending on context. If 'nigga' in the '70s reinforced Blackness and reminded of the struggle against *Ol Massa*, "neither ethnicity nor lineage determines its use anymore".<sup>24</sup> The wide adoption of this expression among Blacks has actually normalised it. In a rigorous analysis carried out by Arthur K. Spears, a subtle usage of this term emerges. 'Nigga' is considered offensive, if pronounced by Whites – in which case it could require the addition of a pejorative adjective in Italian, '*sporco negro*'; however it may carry a positive connotation in very informal and intimate situations – 'my nigga'; but it can also assume the new general and neutral sense of person, used as a synonym of 'guy', even in Hispanic and Asian communities.<sup>25</sup> The same is true of 'coolie' (untranslated in Italian) which, from being an insulting term of Indian origin to name Asian unskilled labourers, becomes positive for instance in Olive Senior's short story "Arrival of the Snake Woman", where an intimate and friendly tone can be singled out: "And so I

<sup>23</sup> Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, 17.

<sup>24</sup> Salikoko S. Mufwene et al., eds., *African-American English. Structure, History and Use* (London: Routledge, 1998), 233.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 238-242.

became Miss Coolie's guide and friend. Everyone came to call her Miss Coolie ... Later ... they came to call her Auntie Coolie and finally ... we all respectfully addressed her as Mother Coolie".<sup>26</sup>

The translations of such terms would elide differences of meaning deriving from constructed racial categorisations which "can vary with time, location and context", or, worse, may appear to be discriminating, when in reality they are not.<sup>27</sup>

Another important issue to be considered is how to convey terms describing skin tone, a space of identity and racial tensions, which move away from the totalising Eurocentric grid, based on the Black/White opposition. The widely varied shades used in Creole societies reflect the racial and ethnic mixture deriving from the overlapping migratory streams which started in the late fifteenth century – European settlers, millions of kidnapped Africans imported as slaves and, later, indentured labour from Ireland, India and China. This *métissage* has created a vocabulary which could denote all the possible inter-racial combinations. The terms currently used in Italian, like *meticcio*, *mezzosangue*, *quarterone* would be inappropriate today, as they are negatively connotated. Indeed, they derive from the English, French and Spanish history of colonisation and their racial politics and practices. *Moreno*, *mestizo*, *mulato*, *creolo*, *half-caste*, *cuarteròn* are words introduced by the Negro Codes, based on sexual mixing taboos, like the French Negro Code of 1685, in which racial identity was measured and determined through the percentage of black and white blood. "They divided the offspring of white and black and intermediate shades into 128 divisions", C. L. R. James reports.<sup>28</sup>

These stigmatised chromatic hierarchies have influenced the social construction of identities since the days of plantation slavery. As Olive Senior indicates, "colonial society was stratified into white, brown and black, which corresponded to the social and economic power structure", from the proprietors to the slaves.<sup>29</sup>

The political and ideological force of racism is still evident in the English-speaking Caribbean. Power and leadership are indeed concentrated among the white and light-skinned minorities, while the majority of the population are blacks belonging to the lower classes.

<sup>26</sup> Olive Senior, *Arrival of the Snake Woman and other stories* (Essex: Longman Group UK Ltd., 1990), 10.

<sup>27</sup> Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, 18.

<sup>28</sup> C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (London: W. H. Allen & Co, 1989), 38.

<sup>29</sup> Olive Senior, *Working Miracles. Women's Lives in English Speaking Caribbean* (London: Indiana University Press, 1991), 106.

Alecia McKenzie describes this situation: "Now the house had been bought by a light-skinned businessman and his Indian wife". / *Ora la casa era di un uomo d'affari con la pelle chiara e della sua moglie indiana* (sic).<sup>30</sup> Joan Riley as well: "She had seen a picture of Manley in the Guardian and thought he looked really nice. He had beautiful skin and the sort of 'pass for white' colour she had always wanted". / *Aveva visto una sua foto nel Guardian e le era parso davvero bello. Aveva una bella pelle e quella sorta di colore che poteva passare per bianco che lei aveva sempre desiderato* [my translation].<sup>31</sup>

Colour/class distinction has been termed 'pigmentocracy', by which the closer to the 'white ideal' the more beautiful, the better-off, the more socially accepted a person is. This is well exemplified in the popular African-American dictum: "If you're white, you're all right/ if you're yellow, you're mellow/ if you're brown, stick around/ but if you're black, stay back".<sup>32</sup>

Works by authors as diverse as Derek Walcott, Jamaica Kincaid, Alecia McKenzie, Edwidge Danticat translated into Italian, reveal many colour gradations which represent the ethnic chameleonic crossings in the Caribbean islands. This mixage often reproduced linguistically through hyphenated adjectives is rendered literally in several cases: 'light-skinned' / *dalla pelle chiara*; 'light-brown colour' / *colore marrone chiaro*; 'brown-skinned girl' / *ragazza dalla pelle marrone*. Sometimes, however, the context indicates a specific meaning which requires a strongly connotated translation, be it negative or positive.

The adjective 'yellow-skinned', which, on occasion, can be a term of abuse, poses some problems. *Giallo* in Italian would be immediately associated with a Chinese, rather than with a very light-complexioned person. A similar ambiguity occurs when faced with 'red people'. *Rossi* would evoke red-haired people and not light-skinned or dark-complexioned people with some European features like light eyes or blond hair. On the other hand the phrase 'red nigger', present in Derek Walcott, has been translated in the Adelphi edition with a literal but not evocatory *negro rosso*. Other options are possible depending on the translator's position: whether s/he decides to take a strong ideological stand with reference to colour/class distinctions – supporting the practice of racial discrimination or, on the contrary,

<sup>30</sup> Alecia McKenzie, *Satellite City and Other Stories* (Essex: Longman, 1992), 10.

<sup>31</sup> Joan Riley, *The Unbelonging* (London: Women's Press, 1985), 111.

<sup>32</sup> Shoat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, 324.

using a language which discourages inequalities – or, again, tries to find a neutral option.

Caribbeans are very conscious of race and ethnicity, as they interplay with socio-economic status. Either one might determine the kind of education children receive as well as their achievements as in McKenzie's short story *Bella Vista*: "He say Father Gilliams always picking on the dark-skin boys in the class and that he only give high marks to the Chinee and Syrian boy-them".<sup>33</sup> In addition, within the family itself skin-tones are often emphasised, with a clear discrimination towards the darker skinned children. "Thus from an early age children are able to see and probably internalise the disadvantages in the society of being black as opposed to being white or fair-skinned".<sup>34</sup>

The interiorised Caucasian or white prototype of physical beauty which has existed for centuries and has been approved by the social system implies the denigration of any model different from the European standard: "They could never understand what it was like, how much she hated her brittle hair, the thickness of her lips".<sup>35</sup>

These attitudes have, however, changed since the U.S. Black power movement of the '60s, which extended to the Caribbean, in the sense that light 'skin' has lost some of its 'power'. Therefore, at times, a reversal strategy is at play in fiction, and dark skin is celebrated as synonym of beauty. It is the case of Edwidge Danticat, who adopts a completely different expedient to connote positively the colour of the skin: metaphors and similes taken from the vegetable world, especially from fruits and flowers, which obviously facilitate the translator's work, inasmuch as the question of ideology does not come into play. In 'honey-almond skin' / *con la carnagione color mandorla al miele*, a positive connotation has already been made explicit by the writer. The same is true of expressions like "coconut-cream colored" / *aveva la pelle bianca come il latte di cocco*; "Your son favors your cherimoya milk color" / *Tuo figlio ha preso la tua pelle di latte*; "How do you find my dusky rose?" / *Come ti sembra la mia rosa scura?*; "her skin was a deep bronze, between the colors of tan Brazil nut shells and black salsify" / *la pelle era intensamente bronzea, di una sfumatura tra il guscio delle noci brasiliane e la salsefrica nera (sic)*.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> McKenzie, *Satellite City*, 161.

<sup>34</sup> Senior, *Working Miracles*, 28.

<sup>35</sup> Riley, *The Unbelonging*, 78.

<sup>36</sup> Edwidge Danticat, *The Farming of Bones* (Broadway: Soho Press, 1998).

Beyond their sociological implications, it is important to keep these nuanced tones of the colour complexion which are indicators of the identities and history of Caribbeans. Translation should tune in and respect the presentation of Caribbean multiracial society in order not to perpetuate a stereotyped, representation of cultural abuse but to start an anti-racist pedagogy able to generate a multicultural process of transformation in an anti-Eurocentric perception and understanding of the 'other'. The hard experience of translating, in its peculiar aspect of mediating and renarrating, can foster emancipatory discourses and participate in the decolonisation of Western minds.

Only then would the polyphonic encounter through translation lead to a 'mutual illumination', a process which "takes place both 'within' and 'between' cultures and thus provides a model for dialogical cross-cultural study".<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Shohat and Stam, *Eurocentrism*, 241.

Maria Teresa Prat Zagrebelsky

## Watching English Expressions – and Genres – Enter Italian. “Briefing” and “Question Time”

### Introduction

The study of language contact and, in particular, of the influence of English on Italian is a well-established area of research. Numerous studies present the historical development and the different stages of the phenomenon of anglicisms in Italian.<sup>1</sup> To simplify considerably, the attitudes to English in Italy have evolved from elitist Anglomania in the 18th century, to the 19th century's prevailing concerns with national identity and purist and neopurist standpoints, from the Fascist policy against foreign loans to the growing cultural and political influence of the Anglo-Saxon world, and of the US in particular, after the Second World War. At the end of the 20th century, Italian is no exception to the rule that sees English as the most important source of lexical borrowings. According to Petralli,<sup>2</sup> among European languages Italian appears to be more “open”, “democratic” and “extrovert” not only than French, but also than Spanish and German.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Among the many, see in particular Ivan Klajn, *Influssi inglesi nella lingua italiana* (Firenze: Leo Holschki Editore, 1972); Gaetano Rando, *Dizionario degli Anglicismi nell'italiano postunitario* (Firenze: Leo Holschki Editore, 1987) and Gabriella Cartago, “L'apporto inglese”, in *Storia della Lingua italiana*, a cura di Serianni e Trifone (Torino: Einaudi, 1993-94).

<sup>2</sup> Alessio Petralli, “Tendenze europee nel lessico italiano. Internazionalismi: problemi di metodo e nuove parole d'Europa”, in *Linee di tendenza dell'italiano contemporaneo*, a cura di B. Moretti et al. (Roma: Bulzoni, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> An extremely useful source of data against which to measure such comparative judgements will be the forthcoming *Dictionary of European Anglicisms, A Usage Dictionary of Anglicisms in Selected European Languages UDASEL*, edited by Manfred Gortlach, OUP. The dictionary will be accompanied by two forthcoming volumes with the titles *English in Europe* and *An annotated bibliography of Anglicisms in selected European languages* (ABASE: OUP), both edited by Manfred Gortlach. The Italian section in all these publications has been written by V. Pulcini.

However, in several overviews of the present situation, the statistically insignificant number of English words in "general" Italian is emphasised – from 0.2 per cent to 1.5 per cent according to different searches carried out on commonly used vocabulary.<sup>4</sup> At the same time a much higher frequency of use of anglicisms is acknowledged in specialist areas such as computer science, marketing, advertising, business and economics, and also in the language of journalists and young people. Bureaucratic and legal registers appear to be the most reluctant to accept foreign words and expressions.

The prevailing attitude of present-day Italian linguists tends to be neutral and descriptive, if not of positive acceptance. The phenomenon of foreign loans is interpreted in terms of vitality rather than pathology by Beccaria.<sup>5</sup> Fanfani even sees a decrease in the influence of English due to the decline of the American myth and the Italians' more widespread competence in English as a foreign language.<sup>6</sup> Other scholars and opinion-makers, instead, warn against the acceptance of loans that do not conform to the phonological and morphological structure of Italian. From an English expert's point of view, Gorlier proffers very strong criticism of the bad use media make of foreign words in an article with the title "*Se il gate è sexy la strage è fonetica*",<sup>7</sup> where "question time" is given as an example of the constant subordination of Italian to English.<sup>8</sup> However only a few, such as Castellani, are strongly critical of what he describes as "*morbus anglicus*", and do their best to provide Italian substitutes for English words, just as the French do.<sup>9</sup>

The Italian context, where no linguistic policy is seriously enforced, unlike the case of France, provides a good background for the observation of the 'spontaneous' selection and integration of English words into the language. What follows will be a little exercise in "word watching", which will allow me to throw some

<sup>4</sup> Virginia Pulcini, "The English language in Italy", *English Today* vol. 10, No.4 (October 1994); Virginia Pulcini, "Attitudes towards the spread of English in Italy", *World Englishes*, vol. 16, no.1 (March 1997); Carla Marello, *Le parole dell'italiano* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Gianluigi Beccaria, *Italiano* (Milano: Garzanti, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> Arrigo Castellani, "Morbus anglicus", *Studi Linguistici Italiani*, XIII, 10 (1987), 137-153.

<sup>7</sup> Henceforth, square brackets signal notes or translations by the editors. ["The Gate may be sexy, but the slaughter is phonetic"].

<sup>8</sup> In *La Stampa*, *Tuttolibri* (6 August 1998), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Massimo L. Fanfani, "Sugli anglicismi nell'italiano contemporaneo", *Lingua Nostra* LII (1991), 11-24.

more light on the processes of lexical and semantic change happening around us.<sup>10</sup>

## 1. The cases of "briefing" and "question time"

The two loans which will be considered in the present study refer to two well-established "Anglo-Saxon" political practices, which at the same time constitute discourse genres, and which have recently been transferred to similar situations in Italy. We shall observe their processes of adaptation to the Italian context and their integration from a formal, semantic, cultural and textual point of view.

The observations will be carried out on newspaper language, which is particularly rich in new formations and loans. With the help of recently available CD-ROM facilities,<sup>11</sup> six years of the Italian daily newspaper *La Stampa* can be examined, from 1992 to 1998; the data for 1999 has been gathered *al naturale*.

### 1.1. "Briefing"

#### 1.1.1. The 'Anglo-Saxon' tradition

According to *The Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles (OED)*, "brief" as a noun derives from the Latin *brevis* (short, usually in time). The word appears to have entered English through French in the Middle English period. Through the centuries it has developed two main senses: that of a written text sent by an official, legal or religious authority, and that of a short statement or account that might be more fully developed. The conversion to the verb "to brief" in the 19th century has retained the meaning of "giving instructions and providing information" both in a specialist, legal sense and with reference to specific tasks to be carried out within precise time limits. In the 20th

<sup>10</sup> See, in particular, the recent volumes on language change by Laurie Bauer, *Watching English change. An Introduction to the Study of Linguistic Change in Standard Englishes in the Twentieth Century* (London and New York: Longman, 1994) and April M. S. McMahon, *Understanding Language Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> The search needs to be extended to other important Italian dailies such as *Il Corriere della Sera*, *La Repubblica* e *Il Sole 24 Ore*, in order to see whether *La Stampa* is representative of the Italian press or whether different editorial policies are to be found in various newspapers.

century the derived verbal noun "briefing" has confirmed the meaning of "action of giving information and instructions", and was used in the Second World War to refer to pre-flight conferences in terms of both the meetings themselves and the information that was given during them.

In the American political context, President Woodrow Wilson is said to have introduced regular briefings at the White House and given them the traditional structure of an initial general statement by the President, followed by the journalists' questions. Whether the questions were agreed upon in advance or known to the questionee is hard to say.

Current usage in English has considerably widened the range of situations to which "briefing" applies beyond the legal, political and military ones. Briefings are used in business, advertising, entertainment and sports. Briefing has moved from an initial prevalently written genre to a partly oral one, where speakers deliver from drafts or pre-prepared documents. A briefing is not simply a meeting, a conversation, an interview or a press conference. It has the connotation of a communicative event which is at the same time quick and efficient, and given by people in authority, be they the President of the USA, his spokesperson, a politician, a manager or a trainer.

### 1.1.2 The Italian interpretation

On 10th November 1998, many Italian newspapers reported on a new minor event in Italian political life: "*il primo dei briefing settimanali del Presidente del Consiglio D'Alema*".<sup>12</sup> What was presented as the new style of communication of the government had been given an English name. It is difficult to know who was initially responsible for this choice (D'Alema himself, the Government's communication experts or the journalists?). However, the article with the title *Ore 19, Lezione di briefing* quoted an official statement which used the English expression to announce the first of the briefings that the Head of the Government would give regularly on the most relevant political events of the week.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *La Stampa* (10 November 1998). In this paper from now on all the quotations will be taken from *La Stampa* (hereafter cited as LS). ["The first of the weekly briefings by Prime Minister D'Alema"].

<sup>13</sup> LS (8 November 1998), 3. ["19.00 hours: Briefing Lesson"].

The lack of both inverted commas and the plural form ("*nel primo dei briefing settimanali*") signalled that "briefing" had already a good degree of adaptation to the Italian language, and was already considered familiar to a wider audience.<sup>14</sup> In fact, "briefing" is included as an Anglo-American loan in many Italian standard reference dictionaries from Garzanti (1993) to Sabatini Coletti (1997) to Zingarelli (1998). It entered Italian sometime between the 1950's and the 1970's.<sup>15</sup> It is currently described as "*una breve riunione dove vengono impartite istruzioni a ciascun partecipante*".<sup>16</sup> The concise and efficient nature of the event is particularly suitable to advertising, managerial and financial enterprises. The present meaning of the loan in Italian appears to match that of the English source word.

### 1.1.3 The data from *La Stampa*

"Briefing" is to be found regularly in *La Stampa* from 1992 to 1997 (twenty-one occurrences in 1992, twenty-four in 1993, fifteen in 1994, eighteen in 1995, nineteen in 1996, twenty-four in 1997) to reach a peak of thirty-six in 1998 when, as already said, the practice of weekly government briefings was introduced into Italian political life.

Most occurrences before 1998 referred to political and military contexts in the USA and in Europe, especially in connection with the wars in Somalia, Albania and former Yugoslavia. The word was also used in contexts referring to sport. The use of "briefing" in car racing appeared to be fairly neutral and "technical".<sup>17</sup> In football circles, instead, the connotation of "briefing" is often ironical to refer to a new, and not positively viewed, style that has entered the field and substituted the good old traditional way. In "*Arrivano i nuovi padroni del calcio*",<sup>18</sup> one can read about the Cremona club president who still behaves as in the "good old days", "*col cuore in mano e nessuna*

<sup>14</sup> LS (10 November 1998), 6.

<sup>15</sup> Manlio Cortelazzo and Ugo Cardinale's *Dizionario delle parole Nuove, 1964-1984* (Torino: Loescher, 1986) quotes the year 1974, while the Italian dictionary by Sabatini Coletti (1997) puts it as far back as 1954.

<sup>16</sup> ["a brief meeting where instructions or guidelines are given to each participant"].

<sup>17</sup> E.g. "*In ogni caso Schumi non risponde alle provocazioni. Preferisce chiudersi nel briefing tecnico con la Ferrari*" ["Anyway, Schumi [an affectionate nick-name for Schumacher] is not reacting to the provocation. He has shut himself off in a technical briefing session with the Ferrari team"], in *Villeneuve punge Schumi* ["Villeneuve niggles Schumi"], LS (May 1997), 32.

<sup>18</sup> ["The New Football Bosses Enter the Scene"].



*concessione a parole come marketing, briefing e joint venture*".<sup>19</sup> Similarly in a description of the Sanremo music festival the use of "briefing" in alternation with "press conference" stresses the hectic and empty nature of the event ("*l'allucinante sequenza conferenza stampa-briefing coi giornalisti-conferenza stampa*").<sup>20</sup> In the article with the title "*Barzini flop*" a character in a film is made to say "*ci ho un briefing* (sic)" to mean "I've a 'love' meeting with my girl friend".<sup>21</sup>

While several Italian politicians and V.I.P.'s are said to give, or take part in, "briefings" (occasionally even Bossi and the Pope), it appears that Berlusconi is the most frequently quoted in connection with the word. He is referred to as "*il padre di tutti i briefing*" by Paolo Guzzanti, who exploits the popular Gulf War expression "The mother of all battles",<sup>22</sup> and makes fun of him for his preference for American managerial expressions such as "meeting, briefing, timetable".<sup>23</sup>

In 1998, several articles dealt with the innovation brought about by the D'Alema government. The first of D'Alema's briefings was described in detail with reference to the American model of "news conference" in an article with the meaningful title "*Tregua Armata*" ["Armed Truce"].<sup>24</sup> The structure and contents of D'Alema's first performance were reviewed positively and he was described as "confident, calm, and less disdainful than usual".<sup>25</sup> He appeared to be well-prepared to deal with the questions, and to adopt an effective answering strategy that moved from detail to the building of a final simplified statement or slogan. Other consequences of the event were also suggested by the author of the article, F. Ceccarelli, such as the amount of information made available to all journalists which would create better relationships with the press as well as the growing visibility of the head of the Government in line with the tendency towards presidentialism. In another article the same event was ironically commented upon by the American writer K. Botsford in an imaginary conversation between an American spin doctor and an Italian communications expert, where some cynical guidelines, drawn

<sup>19</sup> LS (March 1992), 6. ["with heart in hand and no concessions to words like 'marketing', 'briefing' and 'joint venture'"].

<sup>20</sup> In *Alba: Lorella e io? Come Coppi e la Callas*, LS (13 February 1993), 24. ["the crazy sequence of press conference, briefing with the journalists, press conference"].

<sup>21</sup> LS (11 September 1992), 19.

<sup>22</sup> In *Salutami Pino e dammi l'imput* (sic) ["Say goodbye to Pino from me and give me imput" (sic)], LS (29 February 1992), 18.

<sup>23</sup> In *E la Pivetti sgrida Silvio* ["And Ms. Pivetti tells off Silvio"], LS (21 May 1994), 2.

<sup>24</sup> LS (10 November 1998), 1.

<sup>25</sup> "*Sicuro di sé, tranquillo e assai meno sprezzante del solito*", in *ibid.*

from the American experience, are given to avoid the risks of an open confrontation.<sup>26</sup>

#### 1.1.4. Discussion of the data

The growing degree of formal adaptation of "briefing" to Italian is shown by the decreasing use of inverted commas (or italics) since 1992 – inverted commas are, however, still used in some cases – along with the total lack of the original plural form. One can also find "briefing" in a growing number of compounds and derived forms. Next to the only occurrence of "briefing room", there are several occurrences of "*la sala del briefing*", "*la sala di briefing*" and, more often, "*sala briefing*" or "*sala-briefing*". One can also find "*dopo-briefing*" ["the after-briefing"] and "*contro-briefing*" ["counter-briefing"] and some unusual idiomatic expressions. ("*Berlusconi li convocava a briefing*", "*stare a lungo in briefing*").<sup>27</sup> "*Sbriefing*" ["unbriefing"] and "*ri-briefing*" ["re-briefing"] (respectively the sudden suppression of the Prime Minister's weekly meeting with the Press and its possible renewal) signal both the high degree of integration of the loan through its combination with the Italian prefixes "s-" and "ri-", and its uninhibited and playful exploitation in newspaper language.<sup>28</sup>

The words that are most frequently used with "briefing" refer to the elements of the event, those who 'do' it (e.g. Clinton, the Pope, Rutelli, General Powell, the Ferrari team and *La Protezione Civile*),<sup>29</sup> those to whom it is addressed (usually the Press, or sportsmen or army officers), the place (in most cases indoors in a special room, but sometimes outside in the garden). Unsurprisingly, time expressions are the most recurrent collocations such as "*quotidiano, giornaliero, solito, straordinario, di mezzogiorno, pomeridiano, mensile, primo, ultimo, ripetuti*",<sup>30</sup> followed by descriptive or evaluative expressions such as "*tradizionale, classico, tecnico, informativo, di routine, ufficiale, militare, aziendale, a porte chiuse, informale, amaro, tempestoso, accurato, alla giapponese e di riguardo*".<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> In *Ore 19, lezione di briefing*, LS (8 November 1998), 3.

<sup>27</sup> ["Berlusconi called them to briefing", "to be a long time in briefing"].

<sup>28</sup> In *Lo sbriefing* ["The Unbriefing"], LS (22 September 1999), 1.

<sup>29</sup> [*La Protezione Civile* is the government agency which coordinates operations in the case of disasters like earthquakes, floods, etc.].

<sup>30</sup> ["daily, usual, exceptional, at midday, afternoon, monthly, first, last, repeated"].

<sup>31</sup> ["traditional, classical, technical, informative, routine, official, military, company, behind closed doors, informal, bitter, stormy, precise, in the Japanese way, important"].

A "briefing" is sometimes singled out for its brevity. "*Il breve briefing di ieri pomeriggio*"<sup>32</sup> provides a nice alliteration and an example of semantic redundancy.<sup>33</sup> Briefings can also be "*veloci*" ["quick"], "*di soli sette minuti*" ["lasting only seven minutes"] and even "*rachitici*" [rachitic, i.e. stunted, poorly developed]. Quite unexpectedly, a briefing can also be "*lungo*" [long], "*lungo due ore*" [two-hour long], or even "*lunghissimo*" [very long]. The collocation creates an oxymoron where brevity is no longer a necessary semantic trait of the word.

In textual terms "briefing" is generally in the body of the article, only twice in the headlines.<sup>34</sup> It is usually employed only once in the same article, often as a textual synonym of "*conferenza stampa*", "*incontro*", "*lezione*", "*replica*", "*intervista*", and even "*esternazioni*",<sup>35</sup> or, ironically, in a sequence of English words, such as "summit/ meeting/ warm-up".<sup>36</sup>

The cultural reasons for the introduction and use of this English borrowing are clearly linked to the prestige of the American model in politics and in business. However, as often occurs with other English borrowings, there is an undercurrent of irony which counteracts the aura of modernity, efficiency, professionalism and even democracy which surrounds the word "briefing". So the connotation of the loan goes from the very serious to the ironical and the sarcastic.

## 1.2 "Question time"

### 1.2.1 The English tradition

"Question time" is a very old English parliamentary practice according to which the Prime Minister must come and sit in The

<sup>32</sup> ["Yesterday afternoon's brief briefing"].

<sup>33</sup> LS (16 June 1998), 2.

<sup>34</sup> Not counting the title with "sbriefing" mentioned above, cynically and ironically coined, apparently, by the journalist.

<sup>35</sup> ["press conference, meeting, lesson, reply, interview", "externalisation" (a neologism referring ironically to an extemporaneous expression of opinion by an important figure)].

<sup>36</sup> "*Tra summit e briefing si è trascorsa la giornata a cercare la pezza ...*" ["the day was spent in a merry-go-round of summits and briefing trying to patch things up"] in *L'Uefa bada ai soldi non ai tifosi* ["Uefa cares for money not fans"], LS (13 May 1998), 29; or "*Nel calcio ipertecnologico del Duemila, schiavo dei summit e dominatore delle TV, vittima dei briefing e comandato dal marketing ...*" ["in the hyper-technological soccer of the year 2000, the slave of summits and dominator of TV stations, and the victim of briefings and controlled by marketing ..."], in *L'empirico calcio del Duemila* ["The pragmatic soccer of the year 2000"], LS (2 October 1997), 28.

House of Commons to answer MPs' questions, and as such it is recorded in the *OED*. It appears to play a symbolic role in the relationship between the executive power and the Parliament. The institution goes back to the 18th century, and has been modified several times since then. Some of its characteristic features are brevity (only fifteen minutes are allowed the Prime Minister) and punctuality (the Prime Minister is expected to arrive a few minutes before the beginning of Question Time). It appears that the question and answer exchange takes place on the spot. The atmosphere is reported by British newspapers as "heated" at times, with interruptions on the part of the MPs, and even censure addressed at the Prime Minister on the part of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Recently there has been a certain amount of disagreement as to the value of this practice, which was seen as a "sign of democracy" by Margaret Thatcher, and no more than a violent exchange of accusations, verging on a pub quarrel, by others. The need for its reform has been stressed by politicians of different parties such as John Major and Tony Blair.

"Question time" is also the name of a British political TV programme, where two small groups of people with different political standpoints debate in front of an audience.

### 1.2.2 The Italian interpretation

In 1996, along with other reforms taking their inspiration from Great Britain and the USA, a proposal was put forward to introduce the practice of "*svolgimento di interrogazioni a risposta immediata*"<sup>37</sup> into the Italian Parliament. It was to be an addition to an already fairly wide range of "*interrogazioni*" or "*interpellanze*" addressed to the Government by MPs, which can be either "*a risposta orale in Assemblea o commissione*" or "*a risposta scritta pubblicata negli atti parlamentari*".<sup>38</sup>

The new practice was described as a special procedure modelled on the British one where questions and answers are meshed more rapidly, and more immediately and spontaneously than in the usual

<sup>37</sup> ["the taking place of questioning with immediate answering"].

<sup>38</sup> ["with answers occurring either orally in Assembly or in Commissions", "writing to be published in official documents of parliamentary proceedings"].

manner.<sup>39</sup> It was to take place once a week on a fixed day, for about one hour, between the members of the Italian Chamber of Deputies and the Prime Minister and/or his cabinet, depending on the matters concerned, and it was to be shown live on TV. Question and answer were to follow according to a very tight schedule: one minute to put the question, three minutes to answer it, one more minute for the questioner to comment on the answer. The effects of the time constraints are clearly visible in the minutes of this "Question time" session, where interventions are often left incomplete, and some of the participants, even the Head of the Government, at times complain about the strict time limits. Apparently the questions, which are usually specific and detailed, have to be presented in written form the day before to allow for the gathering of evidence and information on the part of the Government. Some comments reflect a spoken style, while others have clearly been prepared in advance.<sup>40</sup>

### 1.2.3 The data from *La Stampa* 1992-98

Between 1992 and 1995 the expression "question time" was very rarely used (only five times) and only to refer to the English parliamentary practice in articles dealing with British politics. The expression was always in inverted commas and accompanied by an explanation,<sup>41</sup> or by clear references to the British political context.<sup>42</sup>

From 1996 the expression "question time" has become much more frequent (from four occurrences in 1996 to sixteen in 1997 to thirty-seven in 1998). With few exceptions it has been used to refer to the new Italian political practice. The expression is sometimes in inverted commas and sometimes without. It appears in most cases in the body of the article and also six times in the headlines. Its status of recent

<sup>39</sup> "Una procedura particolare (sul modello del 'question time' inglese) ... in cui le domande e le risposte si intrecciano con un ritmo più rapido e una maggior immediatezza rispetto a quelli ordinari".

<sup>40</sup> See "Regole di Funzionamento della Camera" ["Rules for parliamentary procedure in the Camera"] (<http://www.camera.it/deputati/funzionamento>) and the minutes of some question time sessions.

<sup>41</sup> "Nessuno dei sessanta parlamentari della destra del partito conservatore ha preso la parola durante il 'question time' (le interrogazioni dei parlamentari ai comuni) ..." ["None of the Conservative Party right-wingers took the floor during QT (the questioning by the members of the House of Commons ...)"], LS (28 October 1992), 10.

<sup>42</sup> "Major è stato duramente attaccato durante il 'question time'" ["Major was strongly 'attacked' during Question Time"], LS (15 April 1994), 9.

loan is shown by either the presence of "*il cosiddetto*" ["the so-called"], and/or of explanations.<sup>43</sup> The expression is almost always accompanied by contextual clues.<sup>44</sup> Only in one case is the official denomination used to clarify the English expression.<sup>45</sup>

Several of the articles considered stressed the importance of punctuality and of time constraints: it is worth recalling one of the first sessions which was immediately declared closed because the then Head of the Government, Prodi, was half a minute late.<sup>46</sup> The debate was sometimes described as "heated", ending, in one case of a sports controversy, in a fist-fight among MPs, duly broadcast on television. The using of "question time" with groups of young students ("*il question time a misura di teenager ...*") has offered grounds for some criticism of its format, which appears to be too rigidly prepared and controlled to be really meaningful and useful, but also for the clarification of its role, which is not that of a political debate, but of questions and answers on specific and concrete issues.

### 1.3. Discussion of the data

The examination of the data has revealed some uncertainty regarding the use of inverted commas in a loan which has entered Italian very recently, as well as a limited but noticeable wavering in the attribution of gender. While the adoption of the masculine gender is the most common choice ("*durante il question time*"), there are two instances where the feminine gender is used (e.g. "*Ciampi ... l'altro giorno alla 'question time' alla Camera*").<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> "Sono le cinque del pomeriggio, l'ora del 'question time'. Il Parlamento italiano ha infatti introdotto 'la prassi anglosassone per la quale, a un determinato orario di un determinato giorno della settimana, il governo, presidente del Consiglio in prima fila, risponde direttamente ai quesiti dei parlamentari'" ["It's five o'clock in the afternoon, the time for question time. The Italian Parliament, has, indeed, introduced the 'Anglo-Saxon' practice where at a certain time on a certain day of the week, the government, with the Prime Minister, in the front-row, responds directly to the House members' questions"], LS (25 October 1996), 2.

<sup>44</sup> "Andreatta durante il 'question time' alla Camera" ["Andreatta during Question Time in the Camera"].

<sup>45</sup> "È sì che in calendario c'erano le interrogazioni a risposta immediata su un tema caldissimo come il caso Parenti- Bocassini" ["And on the agenda there were even those 'interrogazioni a risposta immediata' on the 'hot' Parenti-Bocassini case], LS (10 July 1997), 6.

<sup>46</sup> LS (25/31 October 1996).

<sup>47</sup> LS (28 June 1997), 3.

The case of "question time" shows the resistance of legal and bureaucratic written language to the introduction of foreign expressions, with the choice of an extremely long expression in Italian ("*Svolgimento di interrogazioni a risposta immediata*") which is, however, coherent with the system of parliamentary debates and their specialist denominations. At the same time the new parliamentary regulations have acknowledged the prestigious foreign model by quoting the English expression "question time". And it is this expression which has become the most common way of referring to the institution in newspapers and media language in general, thus becoming a convenient shorter synonym for the official Italian expression.

## 2. Final discussion

The borrowing of "briefing" and "question time" to name two 'new' Italian political practices, raises the, often debated and still open, issue of whether this is the sign of a subordinate and provincial frame of mind or, on the contrary, evidence of a mature and open cultural attitude towards the prestigious or useful models that may come from abroad. Or, again, whether it is preferable to create a more internationally-oriented atmosphere or make our internal political life more intelligible, primarily to all Italian citizens.

Many linguists and opinion makers have now not only abandoned both the purists' simplistic refusal of foreign words and the absolute permissivism of 'anything goes', but also the hard-to-apply distinction between 'necessary' and 'luxury' loans, and now take the stand of looking at individual cases and judging their comparative effectiveness in relation to native options and to their adaptability to the Italian language.

Both "briefing" and "question time" imply and suggest brevity and acceptance of time limits, which is typical of modern life and usually adopted in 'Anglo-Saxon' countries. Living in a country like Italy where punctuality is not always considered a positive value or at least a necessary social rule, one can see the point of using English expressions to suggest efficiency and precision.

In terms of linguistic adaptability the two loans do not imply major difficulties in pronunciation for Italian speakers, and thus require a very limited degree of phonological adaptation. "Briefing", a morphologically well-adapted and flexible English loan, fits well with

other already established and frequently used expressions such as "meeting" and "marketing". In the case of the more recent "question time", instead, the data, as mentioned, has shown a certain amount of uneasiness in the attribution of gender.

The argument of effectiveness due to brevity is certainly valid for "question time", which is very likely to become the usual stylistic variant for the very long and specialistic "*svolgimento di interrogazioni a risposta immediata*".

In the case of "briefing", its more recent use in the Italian political context instead of, or along with, "*conferenza stampa*", "*incontro con i giornalisti*" or "*intervista*", appears to be intended to signal a new relationship between the political power establishment and the press, one based on a more explicit and professionally correct exchange. However, the word may also evoke the recent controversial image of the presidential power in the USA, the euphemistic rituals of war and the overextension of managerial values to far too many areas of life, and, indeed, shows an undercurrent of ironical and sarcastic interpretations.

The depth and the complexity of the cultural references and connotations that surround "briefing" and "question time" may prove to be an effective remedy against what is often seen as an acritical and passive use – or, at times, overuse – of English loans in present-day Italian.

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Mark A. Reid

### (Con)Fronting the Tattoo. Sexing the Colonial Fantasy in *The Piano*

Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993) is typically discussed as a Victorian romance. The film portrays a mute Scotswoman, Ada McGrath (Holly Hunter), who arrives in 1850 New Zealand with her daughter Flora (Ana Paquin), and a piano. In comparing Ada to another Victorian heroine, Caryn James writes, "Like Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*, the refined Ada ... is torn between her cold and respectable husband ... and the passionate but socially improper Baines ... whose affinity with nature is suggested by the Maori tattoos on his face".<sup>1</sup> Like many critics who write about *The Piano*, James focuses on the film's dramatization of Ada's relationship with two men, her dispassionate husband Stewart (Sam Neill) and her lover George Baines (Harvey Keitel). The critics generally find that Baines is everything that Ada's husband is not. Baines is passionate, illiterate, and strong but gentle. Stewart on the other hand is frigid, respectable, and self-seeking. In short, Stewart has all the elements that make him an unlikely romantic partner for Ada.

Through the monochrome of the in-between character of Baines, I discuss the silent voice and nearly absent presence of the Maori. The film presents another recycled colonial romance in which indigenous people are displaced and their land, like Maori presence in the film's mise-en-scene, is eradicated of the very indigenes who first populated this geographical place. In this particular film, Maori inhabit the edges of lands belonging to the two most *visually* prominent male settlers. The visual surplus of these and other white settlers naturalizes whiteness and their settler status while it simultaneously obscures, and makes foreign, the Maori people in what was once Maori land. In the

<sup>1</sup> Caryn James, "A Distinctive Shade of Darkness", *New York Times*, sec. 2 (Nov. 28, 1993), 13.

case of George Baines, the white settler physically adopts the tattoos of the Maori people and, thereby, becomes a double settler of Maori land and Maori body. Not only does this permit two forms of colonialism, but it also permits the narrative to obscure the interracial-class intimacy that would transpire if Baines were a Maori and not a European gone Maori.

From a classical feminist reading of this film, this essay would focus on the 'selling' of Ada through marriage to a formerly unknown man, and then analyze the exchange of her body between two British settlers, a land speculator and the manager of his lands. It might be more fruitful to ruminate on how a Victorian romance, a few *black* keys and Maori tattoos intersect to produce interesting contradictory meanings.

In recognizing the importance of previous feminist readings of this film, this analysis of the film will show how patriarchy, colonialism and racism conjoin to ally Stewart with Baines. I employ a womanist approach that is interested in how characters interrelate as gendered, sexual, class, ethnic and religious groups and individuals. Womanism, like any other progressive analytical method, scrutinizes discourses that flatten and conflate the complex mixtures that any one group or individual may have. What seems to be a sensible conclusion, as might be the perception that Baines' moko tattooed face signifies his solidarity with the Maori people, may also be a sign of his ability to deceive both the Maori and the audience who desires and celebrates cultural hybridity.

Baines appropriates the moko markings only to silence the marginal Maori voices and return them to the policed exterior edges of the film's mise-en-scene. This study moves from the singularly focused analysis of Victorian romances in whiteness, which tends to frame most discussions about this film, to study the film's depiction of colonialism and patriarchy. For beyond the popular interest in moko tattoos, there is little interest in the interconnectedness of colonialism as structuring the filmmaking process as in the function of Maori caricatures in this film. As the Maori feminist Leonie Pihama indicates,

It is Maori women who cook for Baines in line with a colonial agenda that focused on Maori girls as house servants. Maori men are irrational, naive, simpleminded and warlike.

These are the types of colonial discourses that have informed filmmakers, in particular Pakeha [white New Zealander] film makers, as to how we

should be represented. These are the colonial discourses that find contemporary expression in feature films like *The Piano* and which are then sold to the world as an authentic depiction of our people. These are the portrayals that add to the perpetuation of belief systems that undermine not only our position in this country but also our intelligence.<sup>2</sup>

The nexus between colonialism, patriarchy and ahistorical hybridity will be expanded on later in the essay. Now, I turn to analyze Ada's precarious position within the film's construction of Victorian patriarchy and colonialism in nineteenth century New Zealand.

Ada and Baines' adulterous romance begins in a mutually agreed on exchange of black piano keys for Baines' moderately controlled groping and viewing of Ada's body. After all black keys have been exchanged, the piano that is now in the possession of Baines will be returned to Ada, its proper owner. Since Baines owns Ada's piano and its black keys, he may exchange them for sexual services. He contracts Ada as a piano teacher only to entertain his voyeuristic curiosity, fondle her undergarments, and caress parts of her body, usually the neck and legs. The audience is complicit in Baines' voyeurism since they view Ada through the perspective of Baines' upskirt low-angle shot. These particular shots occur as he pokes his finger into her torn stocking. "The peculiar lessons that Ada gives Baines on her treasured piano – earning it back in bargain exchanging one sexual favor for each black key – are eccentric, not crazy. But the sexual jealousy that explodes as a result of Ada and Baines' liaison carries the film around the bed into Gothic violence".<sup>3</sup> A European man who also performs violence on the natural surrounding metes out such Gothic violence and, by his 'moko' facial tattoos, makes a parody of Maori culture.

European commentators have generally found Polynesian art provoking .... The most arresting of these indigenous expressions were probably Maori tattoos, particularly the full facial *moko* of men ... but more important, in this context, is the fact that tattooing transposed to a white man's face became a diagnostic of the condition of the so-called Pakeha Maori, or white Maori, the resident castaway or indigenised settler, who personified the flotsam and jetsam of the colonial Pacific.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Leonie Pihama, "Are Films Dangerous? A Maori Woman's Perspective on *The Piano*", *Hecate* 20,2 (1994), 241.

<sup>3</sup> James, "Shade", 13.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Thomas, "Kiss the Baby Goodbye: Kowhaiwhai and Aesthetics in Aotearoa New Zealand", *Critical Inquiry* 22,1 (Autumn 1995), 93.

Many critics have overlooked New Zealand's social history and have taken Baines as a cultural hybrid. I, however, view Baines as similar in narrative function as Rudyard Kipling's character Kim who,

as a cultural hybrid, Kim is what Kipling called a "two-sided man." But here mimicry is neither a flawed identity imposed on the colonized, nor is it a strategy of anti-colonial resistance. The transvestite Kim blurs distinction between colonizer and colonized but only in order to suggest a reformed colonial control. The urchin mimic man embodies symbolic ambiguity and ethnic hybridity, but employs his ambiguity not to subvert colonial authority but to enhance it.<sup>5</sup>

In the academy, there are theoretical debates on the subversive value of redefining, through biological, psychological and other means, one's sexual, racial, ethnic or national identity. Certain intellectuals, for instance, would celebrate a white character like Baines, because he disrupts dominant social norms by sporting moko facial tattoos. In their ahistorical mind, he is neither a white colonial, a European subject nor a Maori, a colonized racial other. In a very minor way, their conclusion is valid since Baines is the middleman in the colonial exchange. Similar to the system of slavery, Baines is merely a slaver who captures humans to sell them to the plantation owners, as is Stewart.

Throughout this essay, I hold that cultural styles can be borrowed but colonized cultures, as are the Maori in this film, are not just a set of owned and disowned things that can be lost or gained by a 'moko-up' colonial. Here, I am not arguing against the possibility of fluid identity formations. But I do want to underline the importance of New Zealand's specific historical situation at the time when the British Empire's colonial project was administered by mimic men like Baines and land speculators like Stewart.

What exactly was the nineteenth century sociohistorical setting that *The Piano* attempts to replicate? Well, the Maori were the only indigenous group on the island when the British arrived. The British settlers slowly occupied the best grazing land and, in doing so, pushed the Maori onto infertile and desolate areas. In describing the colonial conquest, its history and why New Zealand is not a multicultural pot of fluid cultural change, Nicholas Thomas explains,

<sup>5</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 69-70.

The Maori population was and is comparatively homogeneous (in contrast, say, with Australian Aborigines and Native Americans in Canada or the United States) and because New Zealand lacks both the sheer extent of non-British and non-European migration to Australia and other major differences of culture and ethnicity comparable to those arising from francophone Quebec, the ramifications of the original, essentially binary character of settler colonialism have been profound. While multiculturalism has long been officially adopted in Australia and is widely debated in the United States, Aotearoa New Zealand must be unique in officially redefining the nation as a bicultural formation, one in which a kind of parity between indigenous and white settler cultures becomes crucial.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, Baines and Stewart are like a Janus *double-faced* coin. In the case of Baines, he masks his Stewart-like patriarchal and colonial privileges under his 'noble savage' moko tattoos – the simulacra of his Maorihood – which is very much like the characters Kim in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) and Tarzan in Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914). Baines also resembles the nineteenth century minstrel shows in which white *and* black actors blackened their faces and performed roles that caricatured Blacks. This particular type of musical theater gained immense popularity during the nineteenth and early twentieth century in the United States and abroad. Interestingly, and concurrent with the popularity of the nineteenth-century American minstrel theater, blackface minstrel characters also enjoyed fame in movies made during this same period.

By masquerading in blackface whites objectified African-American life experiences. From the viewpoint of an assimilative gaze, blackface minstrelsy allows whites to take pleasure in the hostile or sexual aggressiveness of black while the white race escapes the harm that such dramas assign to the African-American community.<sup>7</sup>

This entertainment form directly ridiculed African diasporic people the world over and provided the system of racism and colonialism *its necessary rationale* for their abusive and murderous actions toward people of color.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas, "Kiss the Baby Goodbye", 116.

<sup>7</sup> Mark A. Reid, *Redefining Black Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 19-20.

A hundred years or so ago, when (high) modernism was in vogue, apparently so were imperialism, ethnography, and blackface.... They all – the imagists, the surrealists, the symbolists, the Dadaists – were voyeurs of the primitive, the elemental, the original, and the tribal. They were all *modernists*, actors in blackface. And their act was contemporaneous with the making and unmaking of imperialism and colonialism. Both events are the prime markers of Western modernism.<sup>8</sup>

As Flora caught with the Maori children rubbing against the trees,<sup>9</sup> Baines is able to play out his erotic desires, and Ada is able to reciprocate but only on her white piano keys. The black keys and Baines' moko tattoos function as atavistic charms that permit their performance of sexual fantasies.<sup>10</sup> These charms, like Flora's youthful innocence, permit a momentary distance from Stewart's policing eye and punishing reprimands. Stewart is a sexually repressed Victorian censor that Baines would be if not for his moko tattoos.<sup>11</sup> Hence, Baines does enjoy many 'not-so-Maori' but quite uncivilized privileges with a married British woman and her piano.

First, Baines purchases Ada's piano from Stewart who sells it without consulting her. He has sold an instrument that Ada uses to communicate. Second, Baines as a European man with moko tattoos has an extra-marital affair with Ada and, unlike Ada, escapes Stewart's

<sup>8</sup> Michael J. C. Echeruo, "Modernism, Blackface, and the Postcolonial Condition", review-essay in *Research in African Literatures* 27,1 (Spring 1996), 127.

<sup>9</sup> See Harvey Greenberg, "The Piano", *Film Quarterly* 47,3 (Spring 1994), 46-50. He writes, "The arrogance and ignorance of the colonizing consciousness toward the native culture and the parallel bewilderment, silent contempt, and resentment of the Maori toward their English masters constitute a less visible, but no less crucial ideological subtext of *The Piano*. Stewart is horrified when he sees Flora and her Maori friends in semi-masturbatory play. What he takes for licentiousness betokens the Maori absence of Victorian childhood sexual repression (their taboos lie elsewhere)" (49).

<sup>10</sup> In "The Return of the Repressed? Whiteness, Femininity and Colonialism in *The Piano*", *Screen* 36,3 (Autumn 1995), Lynda Dyson explains the erotic function of the Maori and Baines as the following: "With their bold, sexualized chat, the Maori provide the textual echo for all that has been lost through 'civilization'. Baines bridges this nature/culture divide. His facial tattoos and his ability to speak Maori signify that he has 'gone native', while his 'self-fashioning' and attachments to the land construct him a *pakeha*: a 'real New Zealander'. While never relinquishing his Whiteness, he is able to arouse Ada's passions because he is closer to nature than Stewart" (271).

<sup>11</sup> In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock explains the displacement of fetishes in writing: "Far from being merely phallic substitutes, fetishes can be seen as the displacement onto an object (or person) of contradictions that the individual cannot resolve at a personal level. These contradictions may originate as social contradictions but are lived with profound intensity in the imagination and the flesh. The fetish thus stands at the cross-roads of psychoanalysis and social history, inhabiting a threshold of both personal and historical memory" (184).

jealous rage that concludes with his chopping off part of Ada's right index finger. Baines is a white man who belongs to the managerial class of a colonial system. He retains his finger-like appendage and his sexual ability to perform. He also keeps his wandering, adventurous, surveying finger to rediscover Ada's stockings that at the same time protect her legs from real Maori men and other non-European *naturalized* elements surrounding Ada as she strays in the thick New Zealand jungle. Tellingly, when Stewart severs Ada's index finger, Baines' penis may have been psychically displaced onto her now missing (indexically significant) finger. That is, Ada's finger in exchange for Baines' intact penis, as sort of indexical sign. Yet and still, Ada suffers a loss to her body and her ability to play the piano. Later, after much moral anguish, Stewart gives Ada to Baines just as he had earlier given her piano to the same man who had formerly managed his colonial lands.

This romance begins with nothing more than a typical patriarchal exchange between an innocent woman and two lusty men. *The Piano* ends on a too comforting note, and it must end like this for the appeasement of audience expectations. The story conforms to generic and moral conventions and, thus, it legitimizes an adulterous romance not according to Victorian sensibility but to the rule of twentieth-century family-oriented narrative closure. The adulterous lovers must leave the wilderness – an Edenic place but in amoral flux. Like their ancestral counters, Adam and Eve, they are tempted by an apple-like piano and its black seedily keys. Baines provides a necessary accomplice to Ada, a single-parent that has recently received too much unnecessary attention. Now, Flora, Ada and Baines become a morally reconstructed family who can live happily ever after in a predominantly European township.

In *The Piano*, Baines exemplifies a sort of fluid postmodern type. Yet and still, he is boss man to the Maori and boss lover to Ada. As Kim's 'white blood' allows him to contain the ambiguities of culture and gain privileged status that puts him 'beyond all castes'.... Kim is the other side of mimicry: the colonial who passes as Other the better to govern. In this way, the regeneration of the Anglo-Irish orphan becomes an exemplary allegory for a reformed and more discreet style of imperial control.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.



Many scholars have rightly discussed *The Piano* in the above terms and used feminist reading strategies to analyze how circumstance forces Ada, a single-mother, into marriage with Stewart, a British settler-farmer, and then practically into sex to win back her piano and discover her sexuality. Ada's arranged marriage to Stewart, her arrival in New Zealand as Stewart's bride-to-be, his selling of Ada's piano to George Baines, the manager of Stewart's colonial estate, and later Baines' seduction of Ada, are all rich with elements that call for a feminist reading of this film. Such critics have correctly viewed Stewart and Baines' barter of Ada and her piano as one of the film's most insidious examples of patriarchal commerce. But there are more fruitful ways to view this film without dismissing interpretations that focus on its dramatization of Victorian values and patriarchal treatment of Ada.

### Patriarchy and Colonialism

The film also presents the Victorian world of colonialism and its interrelationship with patriarchal values. In *The Piano* and because it is Ada's piano, patriarchy and colonialism conjoin to dictate who acquires material wealth, who creates legislation to protect such wealth, who polices and manages it, and who can trade and be traded in this patriarchal and colonial game. As Edward Rothstein explains,

The piano's presence is partly a sign of the colonization with which the movie is so preoccupied. Ada's husband and her lover have marked off borders and boundaries in New Zealand's unbound forests, trading bourgeois clothing – top hats, buttons and vests – for the Maori's land. Historically, the piano had a role in this activity wherever it took place; its presence, redolent of the home left behind, represented a claim for a domestic future. Broadwood sent its piano to every corner of England's empire. (Kipling referred to such an instrument as a "Broadwood on the Nile").<sup>13</sup>

Disagreements between European countries over their colonial possessions in Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands do not appear in this film. Yet the nineteenth-century extra-narrative elements of slavery,

<sup>13</sup> Edward Rothstein, "A Piano as Salvation, Temptation and Star", *New York Times*, sec. 2, (Jan. 4, 1994), 15 and 19.

imperialism and colonialism are present in both Stewart and Baines. Stewart resembles an authoritarian but sexless plantation owner. Baines is his more liberal and atavistic counterpart but still he is ever so much an owner of both the piano and Ada the player, than a marginal white man gone truly primitive. Stella Bruzzi analyzes how voyeuristic pleasure determines role reversal. She writes,

There are two scenes in *The Piano* which most notably demonstrate female desire of the male body and the subsequent feminization of that body as the conventional scopophilic roles are reversed: one which positions Ada as the subject of the gaze, and one in which the intermediary figure is dispensed with and Baines is placed 'in direct erotic rapport with the (implicitly female) spectator'. The latter scene, showing the naked Baines dusting and caressing the piano (which is, but its direct association with her, a fetish substitute for Ada), directly confronts the spectator with an unconventional representation of masculinity: the heterosexual male object of the female gaze. The former scene shows Ada stroking Stewart's body as he is half-asleep, emphasizing his passivity and her manipulation of him.... The similarities between these scenes are indicative of the relative positioning of Stewart and Baines throughout the film as oppositional images of masculinity. Baines, with his Maori markings, hybrid clothes and unkempt hair repeatedly functions to confront Stewart with his own lack. When spying on Baines with Ada, Stewart perceives in Baines his unobtainable and idealized double, whom he then (by trying to rape Ada or by wanting to hear her play the piano) tries to emulate.<sup>14</sup>

Baines' tattoos, bilingualism and sensitivity are devices that hide his important patriarchal and colonial role. Similar to the contemporary camaraderie between like nations, Stewart and Baines have a special relationship. They peacefully coexist because, to make the colonial system work, they must exchange goods, lands and services. They must also respect the other's control over women and other colonial folk. The British invasion of the Falkland Islands, the U.S. invasion of Grenada and Panama, and the former Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan exemplify how this relationship is made contemporary. Colonies are populated and governed by landowners like Stewart who employ estate managers and depend on colonial administrators.

<sup>14</sup> Stella Bruzzi, "Tempestuous Petticoats: Costume and Desire in *The Piano*", *Screen* 36,3 (Autumn 1995), 261.

However, men like Baines must know when to use blackface and the local vernacular and when to distance themselves by race, class and gender. For instance, *before, during and after* the two World Wars, European nations decided who controlled most of Africa. Thus, different African people and their lands were exchanged between such European nations as Belgium, England, France, Germany, and Portugal. The West African territories and the ethnic people who compose the present Cameroon, were under British, French and German rule. Sometimes these African people found themselves in world wars in which they were forced to battle members of their family and ethnic community because European nations had drawn territorial boundaries that separated family and ethnic communities.

Possession of land, women and people of color, for the most part, has been legislated and enforced by patriarchs and colonizers. Mail-order brides and concubines, like Ada, and colonial subjects, like the Maori, are important to the maintenance of patriarchal and colonial systems. Together, they provide the labor and leisure activities of the managerial class of Baines, and the land owning and speculating class of Stewart. Mail-order brides, concubines and colonial subjects are rarely complicit in their own lowly colonial status. They do not legislate, manage or police the colonial system in which they inhabit and sometimes endure.

Stewart's dismembering part of Ada's finger is no less psychically brutal than is his partitioning of communal Maoriland for his individual possession. Baines is Stewart's go-between in this brutal appropriation of lands and its people. Ada's body is abused like the Maori landscape. Thus, when Stewart sells Ada's piano to Baines, a piano that Ada not Stewart owns, the film introduces a system of fraudulent exchanges. Fraudulent sales are *The Piano's* central metaphor which is recycled in Stewart's partitioning of Maori land as he possesses and abuses Ada's body, finger, and piano. Similar to the frauds of Stewart, Baines appropriates moko tattoos. His knowledge of Maori culture and language makes him a fitting middleman for Stewart's land dealings with the Maori people.

I am not criticizing Baines' ability to translate and explain the Maori anymore than I would fault a Maori who performed excellently in both British and Maori worlds. I do fault, however, the purpose of Baines' border crossing because it enhances Stewart's dispossession of Maori land and their cultural heritage – the spiritual sites. Baines' moko facial tattoos create, for certain audiences, a primitive exterior that masks his important 'civilizing' role in patriarchy and colonialism.

He obstructs Ada's path to self-empowerment because he becomes her surrogate husband to aid and protect. His moko make-up becomes a travesty of both its meaning and the Maori people who wear it. In each of these encounters with Ada and the Maori, Baines heightens his patriarchal and colonial importance. Yet he does little to enhance the Maori whom he knows so well and Ada whom he loves. This dilemma surely represents the limits of the Victorian world of the colonies and the ahistorical function of hybridity.

Maori moko tattoos augments Baines' outsider status. He is the odd European who dresses and lives between two cultures – civil European and the 'uncivil' Maori. He is an exotic barrier reef island between landed gentry and the dispossessed Maori. Yet and still, he is white, European, male and in Stewart's service. Baines has superficial facial markings that would lead one to view him as more Maori but he is not. He reminds one of the 'gone primitive' Tarzan. Baines has 'gone native' and, like a New Zealand Tarzan, he is just another Victorian posturing and orchestrating the colonial renewal of the jungle.

Tarzan's body [Baines' frontal nudity] is *not* defined by sexual difference – Jane [as Ada] is merely there to support its narcissistic properties – but it does express an absolute identity with its class and racial ancestry. For 'breeding will out' and Tarzan is soon Lord of the Jungle, master of all he surveys. And, like all clever colonizers, he learns the natives' (that is, the animals') language in order to get them to do his bidding.<sup>15</sup>

Baines is Tarzan the Apeman but in this film the 'Apeman' becomes a moko-up white in the service of the British Empire. Baines is the colonial answer to the liberal facade of England's civilizing mission in New Zealand. In a low-angle shot, under Ada's frock he finds the last frontier that awaits his sexual conquest. Once more, he acts as other white conquering heroes have. He tames Ada's wild jungle that was previously uninhabitable by respectable god fearing colonials like Stewart whose eagerness to survey and contain Moari land has dulled his passions.

*The Piano* is as much about colonialism as it is about the taming of women like Ada. Baines is so talented at marking off Ada's

<sup>15</sup> Philip Cohen, "Tarzan and the Jungle Bunnies: Class, Race and Sex in Popular Culture", *New Formations* 5 (Summer 1988), 28.

bodyscape, because he has learned from Stewart, his alter ego, who is as skilled partitioning Maori land. Stella Bruzzi is quite correct to find that, "Stewart perceives in Baines his unobtainable and idealized double, whom he then (by trying to rape Ada or by wanting to hear her play the piano) tries to emulate".<sup>16</sup>

The appearance of Baines in moko provides similar functions which commentators either overlook or celebrate as his oneness with the Maori people. Luckily, there are *Maori and progressive* critics, who find fault with this film's depiction of Maori culture.

### (Con)fronting Tattoos: Sexing Colonial Fantasy

Baines in moko entertains a western audience while it exoticizes the Maori and other South Pacific Islanders. One need only to consider how *The Piano* depicts the Maori as an atavistic childish group of slothful adults whom Jane Campion has figured in a Victorian plantation melodrama.

Generally, plantation melodramas articulate sexuality on two different levels. The first level confines white women, with the exception of her birthing babies, to a dispassionate life. Conversely, it forces black women into a demeaning life of satiating the carnal desires of white men as well as being one of the primary vehicles for the reproduction of slavery.... Both white and black women ... are determined by this patriarchal narrative that enforces white nationalism and female passivity.<sup>17</sup>

Reflecting the nineteenth-century stage with whites performing in blackface, now an international film audience enjoys a very similar voyeuristic pleasure – Harvey Keitel in moko. Save for a few bad reviews, the film received international awards which indicate that Baines and others were blinded by Ada McGrath and Jane Campion's hoop skirts and laced corsets of too-much-importance. Luckily, a few critics, as Leonie Pihama and others have voiced the rightful indignation with the Maori caricatures in *The Piano*. bell hooks argues that, "[t]he nineteenth-century world of the white invasion of New

<sup>16</sup> Bruzzi, "Tempestuous Petticoats", 261.

<sup>17</sup> Mark A. Reid, *PostNegritude Visual and Literary Culture* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 25.

Zealand is utterly romanticized in this film (complete with docile happy darkies – Maori natives – who appear to have not a care in the world)".<sup>18</sup>

Leonie Pihama echoes hooks' conclusion in stating,

What we have in *The Piano* is a series of constructions of Maori people which are located firmly in a colonial gaze, which range from the 'happy go lucky native' to the sexualised Maori woman available at all times to service Pakeha men. The perception of Maori people given in *The Piano* is that our tipuna were naive, simpleminded, lacked reason, acted impulsively and spoke only in terms of sexual innuendo, with a particular obsession with male genitalia. For Maori people *The Piano* is dangerous. It is dangerous in its portrayal of Maori people linked solely to a colonial gaze that is uncritical and unchallenging of the stereotypes that have been paraded continuously as 'the way we were'.<sup>19</sup>

Pihama also presents a vastly different understanding of how Maori are figured in the film's mise-en-scene:

The Maori characters are the backgrounds against which images of white are positioned. We remain the 'natives' who provide the backdrop for the 'civilised.' Our dialogue is centred upon sexual service which is 'raw' and 'crude' as opposed to what is (supposedly) 'erotic.' The images presented in *The Piano* say much about colonial perceptions of the indigenous people, as these perceptions have endured to the 1990s.<sup>20</sup>

It should not and does not take individuals who were once enslaved or colonized to see the sham Baines puts forth. In repeating hooks and Pihama's critique of the film's parodic use of Maori and their culture, Lynda Dyson writes,

This romantic melodrama is set in a landscape where 'natives' provide the backdrop for the emotional drama of the principal white characters. The Maori are located on the margins of the film as the repositories of an authentic, unchanging and simple way of life: they play 'nature' to the white characters' 'culture'.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representation* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 119.

<sup>19</sup> Pihama, "Are Films Dangerous?", 240.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 240-241.

<sup>21</sup> Dyson, "The Return of the Repressed?", 268.

Baines' moko tattoos permit him an escape from repressive Victorian sexual norms. He seduces the wife of his boss and takes her off to Nelson, New Zealand that is cinematically shot as an exclusively white racial space and time. Baines is the blackface double of Stewart. Both males perform services for the British colonial apparatus. They settle on Maori land with the same agility that they tame wild white women like Ada. They are the good and bad cops of patriarchy and colonialism.<sup>22</sup>

The Maori are the indigenous people of New Zealand while Stewart is a landowner and Baines is his second because he manages his lands and Ada's mind and body. Consequently, the Maori, their land and Ada are objects of colonial and patriarchal systems. As mentioned earlier, Maori land, its people, and Ada share an ambiguous relationship with the two male protagonists since Stewart is both husband to Ada and colonizer to Maori people. In like degree, Baines manages Stewart's colonial estate and Ada's passions – though Baines parades in Maori facial tattoos and seems to be less patriarchal than the feminized Stewart. Yet, and similar to most Kim-like characters, his race, gender, colonial and bicultural artifice permit certain privileges which Ada and Maori will never enjoy then and now. Ada and the Maori present the limitations and re-circulation of women and (post)-colonial people in middle class romances.

<sup>22</sup> In her article "Are Films Dangerous?", Leonie Pihama provides the best way to understanding Baines. As a white male, he might be at the least a reluctant benefactor and at the most a tawdry tattooed white man but still a colonizer. Pihama writes: "It is Maori women who cook for Baines in line with a colonial agenda that focused on Maori girls as house servants. Maori men are irrational, naive, simpleminded and warlike. These are the types of colonial discourses that have informed filmmakers, in particular Pakeha film makers, as to how we should be represented. These are the colonial discourses that find contemporary expression in feature films like *The Piano* and which are then sold to the world as an authentic depiction of our people. These are the portrayals that add to the perpetuation of belief systems that undermine not only our position in this country but also our intelligence" (241).

Rebecca Suter

### "Sorry, I don't speak Japanese". Interculturality in Kazuo Ishiguro's Novels

In 1989, shortly after publishing *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro went to Japan for the first time since leaving the country at the age of six. He was there on an 'official' visit, invited by the Japanese Foundation. He said later in an interview that during his stay he didn't speak Japanese at all to avoid misunderstandings as he is not very skilled at using *keigo*, the honorific language.

I spoke English all the time and I was advised to do so. Really just to avoid this confusion – that was my way of saying I'm not a regular Japanese guy. My Japanese isn't good enough anyway to speak correctly. I could make myself understood, but in Japan that is not enough. There are about seven or eight different ways to say the same thing, depending on how you perceive the status of the person you are speaking to, vis-a-vis yourself. To get this kind of thing even slightly wrong produces a tremendous offence.<sup>1</sup>

This is a good example of the difficulty in defining Ishiguro's cultural position, which makes for many misunderstandings by both critics and readers. His novels have often been read through stereotypes, be they English, Japanese or postcolonial.

Ishiguro's works do not fit any of these readings, for two reasons. On the one hand, Japan's relation to the West is different from that of other Asian countries, and, on the other, Ishiguro's 'liminal' position forbids any easy assimilation to either Japanese or English culture.

Therefore Ishiguro's works provide an interesting point of view on Western critical interpretive categories, particularly those using some

<sup>1</sup> Allan Vorda and Kim Herzinger, "An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro", *Mississippi Review* 20,1-2 (1991), 132.

key concepts of postcolonialism in the interest of the opposite ideology of multiculturalism. On another level, however, Ishiguro's novels can be fruitfully approached through Gayatri Spivak's interpretation of postcolonialism in the light of deconstruction, and, more broadly, through some features of postmodernist fiction, even though one must be careful not to make too direct a connection between Ishiguro's writing and postcolonial categories, since he is not, strictly speaking, a postcolonial writer.

In this essay I will discuss how Ishiguro uses his inter-cultural position in his novels to subvert Western stereotypes about Japan, and, in a broader sense, some features of Western common sense, while at the same time highlighting his own implications with both Japanese and Western culture.

### Cultural misinterpretation

Ishiguro has often complained about being stereotyped by critics as a Japanese writer. As he said in an interview,

They praised me, I thought, for the wrong things. Often I felt like a charlatan. People thought that I was some kind of authority on Japaneseness.... They were very keen to push a role on me of explaining this rather mysterious culture. I grew up in England and I was in no position to explain Japaneseness to people.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time he is also stereotyped by the Japanese: on his visit to Japan in 1989, he said he received unexpected attention by the media because of his cultural position.

This has suddenly become a live wire issue. This idea that somebody who is racially Japanese and looks very Japanese could go to England and have lost his Japaneseness in some ways is at the same time fascinating and I think rather threatening. So there was all this interest in what kind of person I was and what messages I could bring and what the West thought about Japan. They somehow thought that I was somebody they could actually ask. So I found myself put in that sort of false territory there.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Jeff Matsuda, "Personalities: Kazuo Ishiguro", *The Rafu Shimpō* (<http://www.rafu.com>).

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Vorda, 132.

These misinterpretations are partly due to his complex inter-cultural position, since, as he says, "I had no obvious social role, because I wasn't a very English Englishman, and I wasn't a very Japanese Japanese either".<sup>4</sup>

Most critics tend to read Ishiguro's works in an ethnic-cultural light, trying to find traces of his 'Japaneseness', or else to separate in his novels what is in the 'English tradition' from what derives from his 'Japanese sensibility'. Caroline Patey, for instance, finds similarities between *The Remains of the Day* and the works of traditional English novelists like Henry Fielding, Thomas Hardy and Jane Austen, while also noticing many elements which are reminiscent of Japanese aesthetics as illustrated by Roland Barthes in *L'Empire des signes*.<sup>5</sup> Those traits supposedly come from Ishiguro's 'Japanese sensibility', which would have remained with him even though he has been living in England for a long time.

Another 'ethnic' reading is to be found in Cynthia Wong's "The Shame of Memory", which analyses *A Pale View of Hills* through another typical Western *cliché* about Japan, the nuclear holocaust. According to Wong, "rather than regard Etsuko as an unreliable narrator, it may be more fruitful to see how her 'madness' is a testament to the fatal outcomes of nuclear ruin".<sup>6</sup>

Even critics who choose to focus on Ishiguro's use of narrative techniques cannot avoid interpreting them through Japanese

<sup>4</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro and Kenzaburō Ōe, "The Novelist in Today's World. A Conversation", *Boundary 2*, 18,3 (1991), 115.

<sup>5</sup> As Caroline Patey says, "Barthes' words on the Japanese theatre ... may help one to understand how Ishiguro's conception of sign/expression is suspended between two acceptations and cultures". In *L'Empire des Signes*, the French scholar draws a radical opposition between the function of western theatre, which is to express what is secret, feelings and conflicts, and the Bunraku master of the Japanese tradition: "his face is offered to the spectator's reading, but what is accurately, preciously given to read, is that there is *nothing* to read; we find here again that exemption of sense, which we can hardly understand, since for us, to attack sense, is to hide it or to subvert it, never to absent it" (my translation); the written face of the Japanese actor does not express anything, betray any emotion, convey any hidden meaning: his essence rests in his appearance". Thus, according to Patey, "Stevens' role playing ... seen through a Japanese filter ... is only the blurring of the distinction between form and content, in and out, ethics and aesthetics". Caroline Patey, "When Ishiguro visits the West Country - An Essay on *The Remains of the Day*", *ACME, Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università degli Studi di Milano* 44,2 (1991), 152 - the quotation from Barthes is from *L'Empire des Signes* (Paris - Genève: Skira - Flammarion, 1970), 81.

<sup>6</sup> Cynthia Wong, "The Shame of Memory: Blanchot's Self-Dispossession in Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*", *CLIO, A Journal of Literature, History, and the Philosophy of History* 24,2 (1995), 136.

stereotypes. Peter J. Mallett compares the narrator's indirectness to the traditional Japanese style of architecture: "This seems to be a feature of Japanese culture in general; the whole is not presented at first viewing".<sup>7</sup>

Interestingly, a Japanese critic has a totally different opinion about the same stylistic feature. Okamura Hisako, after discussing narrative techniques in *A Pale View of Hills*, argues that "Stevens demonstrates that this way of narration, this silent eloquence, is not simply a characteristic of Japanese women", thus questioning any attempt to ascribe the narrator's reticence to his – or even the author's – 'Japaneseness'.<sup>8</sup>

Other critics stereotype Ishiguro in still another way, seeing him as an 'international' and sometimes even a 'postcolonial' writer. Pico Iyer, for instance, speaks of Ishiguro as "a paradigm of the polycultural order... at the center of [a] new movement of 'World Fiction'", similar to Timothy Mo, Michael Ondaatje, and other writers all "not of Anglo-Saxon ancestry, born more or less after the war, and choosing to write in English".<sup>9</sup>

Randall Bass goes further in considering him a postcolonial writer, seeing the relationship between Stevens and Lord Darlington in *The Remains of the Day* as "An individualized model for the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized".<sup>10</sup> These interpretations are rejected by Susie O' Brien, who chooses instead to read *The Remains of the Day* as an "exemplary product of a burgeoning 'world' industry".<sup>11</sup> In this respect,

The commodification of Stevens as a "genuine old-fashioned English butler" may be compared with the commodification, in different terms,

<sup>7</sup> Peter J. Mallett, "The Revelation of Character in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and *An Artist of the Floating World*", *Shoin Literary Review* 29 (1996), 2.

<sup>8</sup> Okamura Hisako, "Kazuo Ishiguro: *The Remains of the Day* – Stevens ga kataranai koto", *Kōnan Joshi Daigaku bungakukenyū* 28 (1992), 26.

<sup>9</sup> Pico Iyer, "The Empire Writes Back", *Time* (8 Feb. 1993), 54-59. The title of the article is significant, all the more since Iyer does not acknowledge its genealogy: in 1980 Salman Rushdie wrote an article, entitled "The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance" (*The Times* 3,7), 8. Rushdie's title has become a kind of catch phrase in postcolonial studies, and the most famous quotation is *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* (London: Routledge, 1989), by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, who acknowledge Rushdie as the source of their title.

<sup>10</sup> Randall Bass, "Stevens as Ideal Colonial Subject", *Postimperial and Postcolonial Literature in English* (<http://dynaweb.stg.brown.edu/projects/hypertext/landow/post/ishiguro.html>).

<sup>11</sup> Susie O' Brien, "Serving a New World Order: Postcolonial Politics in Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*", *Modern Fiction Studies* 42,2 (1996), 788 (hereafter cited as "NWO").

of Ishiguro as a genuine new-world "international" writer... Thus, the rhetoric of hybridity and polculturality mediates a narrative of desire as obvious as that which Stevens attempts to conceal under his mask of old world dignity.<sup>12</sup>

O' Brien notes that most critics read Ishiguro mainly in ethnical terms, praising his insight into both Japanese and English culture, and neglecting the most significant stylistic features of his novels.

Kazuo Ishiguro is often put together with writers such as Shiva Naipaul, Salman Rushdie and Timothy Mo, as part of a "New Internationalism". Bruce King says about these writers that "although they are concerned with cultural and racial dignity, and although at times they find themselves torn between their two cultures, they seem to criticise the Third World both as insiders and as Westerners".<sup>13</sup>

While this ambivalence is surely to be found in Ishiguro's novels, and is related to his inter-cultural position, it is difficult to consider him a 'Third World Writer'. All these writers can be put in the same category only from a Western point of view. As Susie O' Brien puts it, "What remains concealed under the story of World Fiction is the continuation, in the realm of American publishing, of a colonial narrative of desire for an exotic to satisfy a jaded empire's craving for novelty".<sup>14</sup>

Thus, this kind of reading reveals to what extent some critics are still influenced by Orientalism as exposed by Edward Said.<sup>15</sup>

### Orientalism and Postcolonialism

According to Said, the Orient has been both one of Europe's richest colonies and one of the most recurring Western images of the Other, an image in contrast with which the West has constructed its own. At the same time, this 'Orient' is not an imaginary place, but "an integral part of European material civilization and culture".<sup>16</sup>

The term 'Orientalism' includes different realities. Its first meaning is an academic one; according to Said, anyone who teaches,

<sup>12</sup> O' Brien, "NWO", 797.

<sup>13</sup> Bruce King, "The New Internationalism: Shiva Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Buchi Emecheta, Timothy Mo and Kazuo Ishiguro", in James Acheson, ed., *The British and Irish Novel since 1960* (London: MacMillan, 1991), 209.

<sup>14</sup> O' Brien, "NWO", 797.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

writes about, or researches the Orient, either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she says or does is Orientalism.

But there is a broader meaning of 'Orientalism', which has to do with Western representation of the East and of itself:

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 who are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate accounts concerning the Orient, its people, custom, 'mind', destiny, and so on... 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 ... despite any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a 'real' Orient.<sup>17</sup>

A study of this category, and a critical response to it, can be found in postcolonial literature and theory which attempt to recover specific cultural features beyond Eurocentrism, and to uncover colonial ideologies, past and present (with particular regard to neocolonialism in its various forms).<sup>18</sup>

Yet in the field of literature, the term 'postcolonial' has been applied to works that are often more dissimilar than alike. Using postcolonialism

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>18</sup> The postcolonial debate is very broad and contemplates different positions. In particular, this kind of neo-orientalism is criticised by Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak who, taking advantage of the instruments of deconstruction and of Foucault's analysis of discourse, highlight the ambivalence of the colonised subject's position, partly in disagreement with Said. According to those critics, while 'ethnic' identity is always constructed by colonial discourse, it is also a kind of Derridean 'différance' which escapes the rules of that ideology. Colonial discourse is confronted with this pattern of both identification and refusal of hegemonic culture on the part of the colonised subject. Thus they refuse Said's idea that the colonised subject cannot exist outside colonial ideology and cannot be the subject of political action, and insist instead on the need to make decolonisation both a critical method and a political practice. (see Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: the Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse", *October* XXXIV (1984), 125-322; "Postcolonial Criticism", in Gunn and Greenblatt, eds., *Redrawing the Boundaries* (New York: the Modern Language Association of America), 437-465 and *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Words: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987); Sarah Harasym, ed., *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).

as a literary category carries the risk of oversimplifying, paying insufficient attention to the texts' specific positionings and stylistic features and conveying the wrong idea that postcolonial literature, being separate, is also in some sense homogeneous.

Some scholars have contested precisely this homogenizing effect. Aijaz Ahmad, for instance, complains that the term colonialism, being stretched to comprehend the conquest of America and the Indonesian occupation of Timor, becomes "a transhistorical thing, always present and always in process of dissolution in one part of the world or another", thus losing a specific meaning.<sup>19</sup> Stephen Slemon has argued that the term 'postcolonialism' is now used to describe an exaggeratedly heterogeneous set of subject positions, professional fields and critical enterprises.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, many critics have complained about the potentially homogenizing effect of the term 'postcolonial'.<sup>21</sup> As they contend, any definition of postcolonialism needs instead to include a consideration of local and specific ongoing concerns and practices.

Some critics tend to label every cultural difference under the term of 'postcolonialism'. Could this be considered a new form of Orientalism?

### Ishiguro's position

In this respect, the case of Ishiguro is particularly illuminating. First of all, he is Japanese. And if every postcolonial country has its own specific history and does not perfectly fit postcolonial theory's

<sup>19</sup> Aijaz Ahmad, "The politics of literary postcoloniality", *Race and Class* 36,3 (1995), 9.

<sup>20</sup> "It has been used as a way of ordering a critique of totalising forms of Western historicism, as a portmanteau term for a retooled notion of 'class', as a subset of both postmodernism and post-structuralism (and conversely, as the condition from which those two structures of cultural logic and cultural critique themselves seem to emerge); as the name for a condition of nativist longing in post-independence national groupings, as a cultural marker of non-residency for a Third World intellectual cadre, as the inevitable underside of a fractured and ambivalent discourse of colonialist power, as an oppositional form of 'reading practice'; and - and this was my first encounter with the term - as the name for a category of 'literary' activity which sprang from a new and welcome political energy going on within what used to be called 'Commonwealth' literary studies". Stephen Slemon, "The scramble for post-colonialism", in C. Tiffin and A. Lawson, eds., *De-scribing Empire: Postcolonialism and Textuality* (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> See B. Hodge and V. Misra, *The Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), and L. Chrisman and P. Williams, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

categories, Japan fits them even less. It would be hard to consider it a former colony. Yet it is true that since Commodore Perry forced it to open its ports in 1853, and more significantly in the years 1945-53 with the American occupation, Japan has absorbed many Western ideas and values. Thus, it shares some of the postcolonial countries' concerns while not fitting them all, and it provides an interesting basis for questioning some of postcolonial theory's assumptions.

Furthermore, Ishiguro's specific experience duplicates in some sense that of Japan. If Japan could be considered neither a Western country nor an ex-colonial one, and yet has something in common with both, Ishiguro himself could not be assimilated either into English or into Japanese culture, while being influenced by both.

Ishiguro's relationship with Japanese culture is complex. He went to England at the age of five when his father, an oceanographer, was invited to participate in a British government research project. It was originally meant to be a temporary stay, but the family kept extending it indefinitely. Although he did not go to Japanese schools, as most Japanese children living in foreign countries do, he spoke Japanese at home and kept strong ties with Japan. Ishiguro has said that he prepared to go back to Japan throughout all of his childhood:

So I grew up with a very strong image in my head of this other country to which I had a strong emotional tie. My parents tried to continue some sort of education for me that would prepare me for returning to Japan. So I received various books and magazines, these sort of things. Of course, I didn't know Japan, because I didn't come here.<sup>22</sup> But in England I was all the time building up this picture in my head, an imaginary Japan, if you like.<sup>23</sup>

Interestingly, his approach to Japan is textual – the “various books and magazines” he read – and imaginative. In a way, Japan is for Ishiguro what the Orient has long been for Europe: an imaginary place, and a basis for self-definition. However, Ishiguro *is* Japanese: even if Japan is for him the ‘Other’ with respect to England, it is an ‘other’ to which he belongs and to which he hopes to return.

Ishiguro says that this position gave him an estranged point of view, “that stance, if you like, of sitting in a corner of the room and

<sup>22</sup> The interview was held during Ishiguro's visit to Japan in November 1989.

<sup>23</sup> Ishiguro and Oe, “The Novelist in Today's World”, 110.

looking at everyone else although you're part of the room”, which is reflected in his work as a writer.<sup>24</sup>

But rather than regarding this as a psychological feature of his style, it is interesting to see how Ishiguro uses his position of ‘exile’ and at the same time of intermediary between two cultures to subvert Western stereotypes from within *and* from without. As he said in an interview about *The Remains of the Day*:

With *The Remains of the Day* it's like a pastiche where I've tried to create a mythical England. Sometimes it looks like or has the tone of a very English book, but actually I'm using that as a kind of shock tactic of this relatively young person with a Japanese name and a Japanese face who produces this extra-English novel or, perhaps I should say, a super-English novel. *It's more English than the English*. Yet I think there's a big difference from the tones of the world in *The Remains of the Day* and the worlds created by those writers you mentioned because in my case there is an ironic distance.... I think it's almost impossible now to write a kind of traditional British novel without being aware of the various ironies.... I actually think it is one of the important jobs of the novelist to actually tackle and rework myths.... I've deliberately created a world which at first resembles that of writers such as P.G. Wodehouse. I then start to undermine this myth and use it in a slightly twisted and different way.<sup>25</sup>

This strategy is a very postmodern one; as Linda Hutcheon says, “postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that *uses and abuses, installs and then subverts*, the very concepts it challenges”.<sup>26</sup>

Ishiguro's choice of using parody in *The Remains of the Day* is therefore significant; since, in Linda Hutcheon's words,

Parody has perhaps come to be a privileged mode of postmodern formal self-reflexivity because its paradoxical incorporation of the past into its very structures often points to these ideological contexts somewhat more obviously, more didactically, than other forms. Parody seems to offer a perspective on the present and the past which allows an artist to speak to a discourse from within it, but without being totally

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Susan Chira, “A Case of Cultural Misperception”, *New York Times* 1,13 (October 28, 1989).

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Vorda, 139-140.

<sup>26</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1988), 3, my italics.



recuperated by it. Parody appears to have become, for this reason, the mode of what I have called the ex-centric, of those who are marginalized by a dominant ideology.<sup>27</sup>

Ishiguro's narrative decisions are strictly related to his inter-cultural position: his parody of the traditional English novel uses his Japaneseness as a basis for critical irony – "a person with a Japanese name and a Japanese face who produces an extra-English novel" – while also distancing his role as a 'Japanese writer' stereotyped by both critics and public.

And it is precisely in this strategy of 'questioning from within' an ideology from which 'there is no outside' that Ishiguro's novels could be considered postcolonial in Gayatri Spivak's deconstructive sense: "The impossible 'no' to a structure, which one critiques, yet inhabits intimately, is the deconstructive philosophical position, and the everyday here and now named 'postcoloniality' is a case of it".<sup>28</sup>

In this sense, Ishiguro's texts could be read through categories of postcolonial theory such as 'alterity' and 'hybridity' as defined by Homi Bhabha. One of the most frequently employed terms in postcolonial theory, 'hybridity' designates the creation of transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization. Homi Bhabha stresses this idea of hybridity as the most potentially destabilizing feature of postcolonial literature. He argues that all cultural statements are constructed in a 'Third Space of enunciation', a space of deferral similar to the 'différance' of deconstruction. It is a contradictory and ambivalent space, in which cultural meanings and identities always contain the traces of other meanings and identities.

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory ... may open the way to descend into an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 35.

<sup>28</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Poststructuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value", in Peter Collier and Helga Geyer-Ryan, eds., *Literary Theory Today* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1990), 225.

<sup>29</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 38.

Although strictly speaking Japan is *not* a postcolonial country, and Ishiguro is not a postcolonial writer, it could be said he is in a similar ambivalent position, neither Japanese nor English and yet both. From this location, he uses interculturality as a dynamic space to denaturalize cultural categories, highlighting their constructed and historical nature.

Ishiguro, in fact, explicitly takes as subject matter the idea of subverting the Western reader's expectations about him as a 'Japanese' writer. This irony is found throughout all his novels, both in the themes and in his narrative strategies.

Interculturality is particularly used in the first three novels, *A Pale View of Hills*, *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day*, both at the diegetic and narrative levels.<sup>30</sup>

#### Interculturality on the thematic level

Niki, the name we finally gave my younger daughter, is not an abbreviation; it was a compromise I reached with her father. For paradoxically it was he who wanted to give her a Japanese name, and I – perhaps out of some selfish desire not to be reminded of the past – insisted on an English one. He finally agreed to Niki, thinking it had some vague echo of the East about it.<sup>31</sup>

Those are the very first lines of Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*; the novel opens on interculturality, a complex relation between cultures. Particularly significant is Mr Sheringham's attitude towards Japan,

<sup>30</sup> Although in *The Unconsoled* there are many destabilising narrative strategies which lead to similar effects, it is less concerned with cultural problems.

<sup>31</sup> Ishiguro, *A Pale View of Hills* (New York: Vintage, 1982), 9 (quotations from now on will be from this edition). The novel starts with a visit paid to Etsuko, a Japanese woman living in England for the last twenty years, by her younger daughter, Niki, shortly after her elder daughter's suicide. Her visit lasts five days, during which Etsuko remembers two episodes from her past in Nagasaki, shortly after the war; her friendship with Sachiko, a neighbour with a young daughter who thinks of leaving for America, and a visit of her father-in-law, Ogata. Through these two stories, which constitute the real plot of the novel, some glimpses of Etsuko's past also emerge, of which she does not like to talk, neither to her daughter nor to the reader. Sachiko's plan to leave Japan and her concerns for her daughter's sake are probably the same Etsuko would experience years later, when she left for England, something of which she doesn't want to speak. And probably her daughter's suicide has to do with her coming to England, but the narrator never speaks directly of these matters, thus impeding the reader from figuring 'what really happened', and making him/her question the very idea of a definite reality.

which is clearly one of sham interest – he sees it mainly as ‘interestingly exotic’.

In the next page the reader finds another main feature of cultural relations as exposed in the novel: the impossibility of understanding Japan by approaching it through stereotypes.<sup>32</sup> All of Ishiguro’s works seem to be concerned with this idea. They try to subvert, parody, and criticize the simplistic Western approach to Japan.

### First steps in Japanese

The irony about Japanese stereotypes is not limited to the narrator’s explicit references. It can be traced throughout the text, in the representation of a ‘Japan for tourists’ made of *tatami*, bowings and chopsticks – all the ‘Japanese’ elements which a Western reader would expect to find in a novel by someone called ‘Kazuo Ishiguro’.

In *A Pale View of Hills*, there are many ‘Nipponisms’ in setting descriptions, which seem wilfully unnatural and stereotyped.

Etsuko lives with her husband in an area east of Nagasaki, devastated by the bombings, in one of four concrete buildings, each containing forty or so apartments. The apartments are all alike, with *tatami* in the rooms and western-style kitchens and bathrooms. It is the image of post-war Japan as told by history books or seen in movies such as those of Yasujiro Ozu.

The Japanese aspects of the apartment are constantly underlined: *fusuma* (‘partitions’) which ‘slide open’ every minute, *tatami*, chopsticks, bowls, and so on; the characters seem to be ‘playing Japanese’ for a Western public.

This whole set of expressions characterizes the novel as a hybrid, like the compromise represented by Niki’s name. In a ‘normal’ Japanese novel, common actions like stepping up and down the *tatami* or taking one’s shoes off when entering a room are taken for granted and not described. Their being always mentioned in the text connotes it as written from – or for – Western eyes.

On the diegetic level, a reason for this way of narrating could be that Etsuko is writing in England (and presumably in English), and

<sup>32</sup> “Keiko, unlike Niki, was pure Japanese, and more than one newspaper was quick to pick up on this fact. The English are fond of their idea that our race has an instinct for suicide, as if further explanations were unnecessary; for that was all they reported, that she was Japanese and that she hung herself in her room” (10).

many years have passed since she left Japan: her modes of narration could come from the temporal and spatial distance which separates her from the narrated events. But in this narrative strategy there is also some irony on Western stereotypes about Japan.

In *An Artist of the Floating World* Japanese *clichés* are more clearly uncovered. Ono, the narrator, is an artist, and he speaks explicitly of artistic products for Westerners. One cannot help thinking that his ideas reflect some of the author’s. For instance, when working for the Takeda firm, he says:

We were also quite aware that the essential point about the sort of things we were commissioned to paint – geishas, cherry trees, swimming carps, temples – was that they look ‘Japanese’ to the foreigners to whom they were shipped out, and all finer points of style were quite likely to go unnoticed.<sup>33</sup>

Benjamin Sahel wrote about Ishiguro: “If you wish to discover a Japanese writer in the original version, reading Ishiguro’s novels is a dream made true”. And speaking of *An Artist of the Floating World*: “*Uki-yo*: the floating world. We have here a novel which could well be a *watakushi shosetsu*, a real first-person Japanese novel”.<sup>34</sup> This probably reflects the attitude of most readers, who seek from Ishiguro’s novels some easy way to understand Japan.

In order to avoid this kind of misunderstanding, while he had set *A Pale View of Hills* in postwar Nagasaki, for his second novel Ishiguro chose an imaginary setting:

<sup>33</sup> Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 69 (quotations from now on will be from this edition). The novel is divided into four sections, each corresponding to a period of time, from ‘October 1948’ to ‘June 1950’, in which are alternated reflections on the past and the present of Masuji Ono, a former painter and an activist in nationalist propaganda in the thirties and forties. The novel starts with Ono’s younger daughter’s marriage negotiations, on which occasion his other daughter Setsuko suggests that he should visit ‘some acquaintances of the past’. This forces Ono to come to terms with his past, which is very hard for him to do. His difficulties are reflected in the complex structure of the novel, proceeding through digressions and interruptions. At Noriko’s marriage meeting he seems to admit to his responsibilities towards the war, but subsequently in a dialogue Setsuko tells him everybody was very surprised at his declarations that evening. This leads the reader to question once again the narrator’s dependability, already destabilised by his way of narrating. A final version of the ‘facts’ is presented as unattainable.

<sup>34</sup> B. Sahel, “De la littérature japonaise en langue anglaise” (<http://www.polytechnique.fr/eleves/binet/xpassion/xp6japoL.html>), my translation.

It's just an imaginary city, for various reasons. Once I set it in an actual city, then the obligation to actually check up would become boringly relevant, and there seemed to be no point. It was of no value to me if I could claim that it's authentically set in Tokyo or not. In fact, in many ways it would play into the hands of a certain kind of misreader, who wished the book to be simply some kind of realist text telling you what Tokyo was like after the war. By setting it in an unspecified venue, I could suggest that I'm offering this as a novel about people and their lives, and that this isn't some piece of documentary writing about a real city.<sup>35</sup>

### *The Remains of the Day* – universality and cultural specificity

While in *An Artist of the Floating World* and in *A Pale View of Hills* the narrators criticize the Western approach to Japan, in *The Remains of the Day* the strategy is somewhat more subtle.

Stevens at times seems the most Japanese of Ishiguro's narrators, in the mode of narration – reticent, indirect, formal, vague; even more than Ono he seems to be speaking Japanese – as well as in his ideology.

Many of his digressions about the English landscape and English people are reminiscent of *Nihonjinron* – Japanese scholarly studies about 'Japaneseness'. With a significant shift of this cultural paradigm, in trying to describe the essence of Britishness, the unique quality of the English landscape which comes to represent English people's dignity, Stevens creates a sort of *Igisujinron* (from *igirisu*, the Japanese word for 'English'). Furthermore, he often uses expressions like 'We English', which echo the famous 'Wareware Nihonjin' (We Japanese), one of the most common features of *Nihonjinron*.

It is sometimes said that butlers only truly exist in England. Other countries, whatever title is actually used, have only manservants. I tend to believe this is true. Continentals are unable to be butlers because they are as a breed incapable of the emotional restraint which only the English race is capable of. Continentals – and by and large the Celts, you will no doubt agree – are as a rule unable to control themselves in moments of strong emotion.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> "An Interview with Kazuo Ishiguro", conducted by Gregory Mason, *Contemporary Literature* 30,3 (1989), 342.

<sup>36</sup> Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), 43 (all quotations from now on will be from this edition). The novel is the story of the six-day travel of an English butler, Stevens, in his new American employer's car. The journey takes

The idea of self-control as a monopoly of their race is a very Japanese one, but is also very likely part of an English butler's ideology.

### Stevens as *samurai*: subverting a cultural stereotype

Stevens reveals his Japaneseness even more clearly in his relationship with Lord Darlington, very similar to the bond between a *samurai* and his master. Their relation is based on total loyalty which prevails on the servant's every personal tie. This explains why Stevens is so keen on the inappropriateness of romance between servants, as he says, "I have always found such liaisons a serious threat to the order in a house" (51).

Professionalism, duty, loyalty to his master must come first, and in this respect, his relationship with Miss Kenton can be compared to a conflict between *giri* (duty) and *ninjo* (passion, human feelings), which is at the core of most Kabuki plays of the Tokugawa period.<sup>37</sup>

Stevens's ethic is the same of the *samurai* society – in his devotion to his master, whose actions he can neither discuss nor judge, to whom he owes an eternal loyalty and on whom his own identity is based. Even after his master's death Stevens seems unable to forget what he calls 'Lord Darlington days', naming an era after him. It is very likely he will consider Lord Darlington his master for 'the remains of the day'.

The episode Stevens' father used to tell to explain what a 'great butler' is, is very similar to Zen anecdotes exemplifying a monk's or a warrior's impassiveness. And the same goes for another episode meant to highlight the essence of 'butlerness' – this one really happened to Stevens's father. Driving two of his master's guests around the country, he remains perfectly calm as long as his passengers make fun

place shortly after Lord Darlington's – his former master's – death. The purpose of the trip is to see Miss Kenton, former housekeeper of Darlington Hall, and to convince her to take up her old post. But Stevens's travel diary gives way to reflections on his past, as well as on the nature of 'butlerness' and on the meaning of his life. We learn thus about Lord Darlington's political activity, and, despite the narrator's reticence in speaking about it, we come to realise he favoured nazis before the war. In his remembrances of the past Stevens has to come to terms with his master's responsibilities as well as his own, and the unreliability of his memory is related to his difficulties in confronting his past.

<sup>37</sup>According to M. Muccioli, one of the main themes of Kabuki plays is "the irresolvable contrast between human nature's needs (*ninjo*) and duties (*giri*) imposed by Confucian ethics which considered the individual only in relation to his duties towards society, ignoring human feelings". M. Muccioli, *Il Teatro Giapponese: Storia e Antologia* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1962), 138.

of him, but, when they start criticizing his employer, he stops the car and silences them by the sole force of his 'dignity'. As an authentic *bushi*, Stevens senior can tolerate anything but an offence to his master.

The novel demonstrates that it is possible to read these types of behaviour equally through two different cultural paradigms, thus destabilizing cultural stereotypes as a whole. Human behaviour is related to specific cultures, but not in the obvious way one would like to think.

The characters are deeply influenced by their surroundings. They are in fact constructed by the dominant 'discourses' of their culture, but to label a person as Japanese (or English) is to not understand him/her.

Keiko's suicide has clearly to do with her being Japanese and with her coming to England, but it is not enough to say she killed herself because she was Japanese. In the same way, Ono's responsibilities towards the war are best understood in the context of pre-war Japan's ideology, but cannot be reduced to that. Similarly, with Stevens, who can be equally interpreted as a traditional English butler and as a *samurai* dominated by his sense of loyalty towards his master, the complexity and elusiveness of cultural categories is once again revealed.

Ishiguro criticizes the use of cultural categories as a means to give simple explanations to human problems, and chooses instead to employ them in an ironic way, inscribing and subverting them to enhance the complexity and 'confusion' of the texts, thus showing the impossibility of a simple and straight reading of events. This effect is greatly enhanced by his use of narrative techniques.

#### Narrative techniques: distancing effects

The narrative strategies of Ishiguro's novels construct various degrees of distance between different levels of the story, and between story and narration.

In *A Pale View of Hills*, the narrator remembers her past from a distance which is temporal as her story is set about twenty years before the time of narration, spatial – Etsuko is now living in England – and cultural: Etsuko no longer believes in the 'old Japanese way'.

To underline this distance, the narration is always very indirect. Present events remind her of a past which she does not want to

remember. The novel begins with her daughter's visit "earlier this year, in April". All of the Nagasaki story is a sort of digression, or rather a series of digressions seemingly unwanted and interrupted abruptly by phrases like "there's no point in going over all that now".

The story has two distinct spatio-temporal levels: the 'present' of Niki's visit, shortly before the narration, in England, and the past in Nagasaki, with two stories intertwined: those of Sachiko and Mariko, "No more than a matter of some several weeks one summer many years ago", and that of her father-in-law, Ogata.

Each of those three stories has an almost linear time sequence, but they are often alternated, and this gives a fragmentary structure to the text.

This distance between narrator and narrated story is constantly underlined: Etsuko tells the reader from the very start that she has a "selfish desire not to be reminded of the past", and concludes most digressions about the past with expressions clearly aimed at distancing herself from it: "But such things are long in the past now and I have no wish to ponder them yet again ... there is nothing to be gained in going over such matters again" (91).

The novel is the story of the emergence of this past in spite of her will to forget it; so the mode of narration is characterized by the utmost indirectness.

#### Differing: Sachiko's story

One means of this distancing can be found in the character of Sachiko, a woman Etsuko met when living in Nagasaki, shortly after the war. Through Sachiko's story, Etsuko is in fact telling her own. The link between the two women grows stronger as the novel goes on, and in a central scene the reader is led to doubt whether they are not one and the same person.<sup>38</sup>

Ishiguro said in an interview about *A Pale View of Hills*:

<sup>38</sup> In *The Remains of the Day* there is a similar strategy: Stevens often seems to tell Lord Darlington's story (not) to tell his own. In that novel the reader does not doubt Lord Darlington's diegetic existence, as in Sachiko's case, but the situation is complicated by the relationship between the two characters, since Lord Darlington is Stevens' employer, and this has important effects both on narrative and diegetic levels. Stevens is sometimes closer to Henry James's 'reflectors' than to an autodiegetic narrator: he tells his own story but also his master's, and from a very biased point of view, since his own self-esteem depends on Lord Darlington's position.

In that book, I was trying something rather odd with the narrative. The main strategy is to leave a big gap. It's about a Japanese woman, Etsuko, who is exiled in Britain in middle age, and there's a certain area of her life that's very painful to her. It has something to do with her coming over to the West and the effect it has on her daughter, who subsequently commits suicide. She talks all around it, but she leaves that as a gap. Instead, she tells another story altogether, going back years and talking about somebody she once knew. So the whole narrative strategy of the book was about how someone ends up talking about things they cannot face directly through other people's stories. I was trying to explore that type of language, how people use the language of self-deception and self-protection.

And when asked about the pivotal scene on the bridge, when Etsuko, talking to her friend's Sachiko's daughter Mariko, switches without warning to addressing the child as if she herself were actually the child's mother, Ishiguro replied:

What I intended was this: because it's really Etsuko talking about herself, and possibly that somebody else, Sachiko, existed or did not exist, the meanings that Etsuko imputes to the life of Sachiko are obviously the meanings that are relevant to her (Etsuko's) own life. Whatever the facts were about what happened to Sachiko and her daughter, they are of interest to Etsuko now because she can use them to talk about herself. So you have this highly Etsuko-ed version of this other person's story; and at the most intense point, I wanted to suggest that Etsuko had dropped this cover. It just slips out: she's now talking about herself. She's no longer bothering to put it in the third person.<sup>39</sup>

The narrator does not talk about herself but about another person, as the author of a kind of autobiographical novel: but Etsuko and Sachiko are (probably), on the same diegetic level, they exist in the same reality. Yet in that scene the reader is not so sure Sachiko 'really' existed, or, as Ishiguro says, s/he realizes it doesn't matter whether she existed or not.

This leads to a blurring of the distinction between fiction and reality, making us reflect on how what we call reality is often itself a 'story', subject to interpretation and manipulation. This effect is

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Mason, 337-338.

enhanced by the role of memory in the novel, and by the narrator's reflections on the subject.

#### Etsuko's indirectness: "memory can be an unreliable thing"

Memory is probably the structuring principle of the text, and it is significantly often referred to as 'unreliable'. The narrator distances herself from her story underlining the scarce dependability of her memory, which forbids a direct access to her past.

Memory, I realize, can be an unreliable thing; often it is heavily coloured by the circumstances in which one remembers, and no doubt this applies to certain of the recollections I have gathered here. For instance, I find it tempting to persuade myself it was a premonition I experienced that afternoon, that the unpleasant image which entered my thoughts that day was something altogether different – something much more intense and vivid – than the numerous day-dreams which drift through one's imagination during such long and empty hours. In all possibility, it was nothing so remarkable. (156)

Throughout the text there are continuous references to memory, ranging from a constant use of 'I remember' – 'I don't remember', to more complex uses and whole digressions on the nature of memory as that quoted above. Memory is clearly the texture of the novel, creating a filter between Etsuko and her past as well as between the reader and the text.

The narrator constantly distinguishes what she remembers "quite vividly" from what she is not sure of; of an episode she often remembers some things very well – the light, the setting – and not others, underlining the selective nature of memory.<sup>40</sup> Yet seeing things in retrospect can also bring more clarity of vision:

I can see now, with hindsight, how typical this was of the way Jiro faced any potentially awkward confrontation. Had he not, years later, faced

<sup>40</sup> Cfr.: "The conversation comes back to me *quite vividly*; it was one of those dry windless mornings of mid-August ... *I cannot remember* where it was we were going that day, or where we had left Mariko – *for I recall* the child was not with us" (101), my italics). "By that point, we must have already known each other by name, for I remember calling to her as I got nearer" (13). "As far as I remember, that was the first occasion I spoke to Mariko. Quite probably ..." (16).

another crisis in much the same manner, it may be that I would never have left Nagasaki. However, this is by the way. (126)

It is not just memory which carries distortions; sometimes it is only after a while that one can understand the deepest meaning of an event – or believe that s/he understands it. A ‘true’ version of the ‘facts’ is impossible to achieve; there are only many and contrasting interpretations, through which one can get a general image which approximates reality in its very lack of linearity.

### Ono’s indirectness: linguistic filter

In *An Artist of the Floating World* there is another distancing strategy which has to do with interculturality. Ishiguro said that he made Ono narrate in a kind of ‘translation from Japanese’:

The thing about Ono in *An Artist of the Floating World* is that he’s supposed to be narrating in Japanese; it’s just that the reader is getting it in English. In a way the language has to be almost like a pseudotranslation, which means that I can’t be too fluent and I can’t use too many Western colloquialisms. It has to be almost like subtitles, to suggest that behind the English language there’s a foreign language going on. I’m quite conscious of actually figuring these things out when I’m writing, using a certain kind of translationese. Sometimes my ear will say: “That doesn’t quite ring true, that kind of language. Fine if this were just English people, but not here”.<sup>41</sup>

There is here yet another filter to break the text’s unity and to impede an easy reading. A novel written in a kind of ‘translationese’ contains a separation immanent to the text.

Furthermore, behind Ono’s English there is Japanese, a language considered by Westerners intrinsically evasive, and which seems to be a reason for the narrator’s indirectness. In fact, Ishiguro uses this characteristic of Japanese to create a narrative effect.<sup>42</sup>

For instance, in a dialogue with Setsuko, Ono says her son Ichiro could drink a little *sake*, since his own son Kenji drank it for the first time at the same age; his daughter replies a little briskly:

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Mason, 345.

<sup>42</sup> In fact, Stevens is no less indirect and uses even more litotes and modalizing expressions.

... it seems to me she said something like: “There is no doubt Father devoted the most careful thought to my brother’s upbringing”. Nevertheless, in the light of what came to pass, we can perhaps see that on one or two points at least, Mother may in fact have had the more correct ideas.

To be fair, it is possible she did not say anything quite so unpleasant. Indeed, it is possible I misinterpreted entirely what she actually said.... Besides, I would not have thought Setsuko capable of introducing so gratuitously such a note to the conversation. Then again, when I consider the sort of insinuations Setsuko had been making in Kawabe Park earlier that same day, I suppose I have to admit the possibility that she did say something along such lines. (158)

Both Ono and Setsuko use extremely involved expressions that could be translations of Japanese formal language, and Setsuko’s utterance certainly is to be interpreted in this way, since the narrator takes offence at her words in spite of all their attenuations, and wonders if Setsuko, generally so shy, could really have introduced “such a note to the conversation”. But when the same kind of language is used by the narrator, its indirectness rather than being attributable to formality contributes to create his unreliability.

With his litotes – “it is possible she did not say anything quite so unpleasant” – and modalizing expressions: “it is possible ... in any case, it seems to me... to be fair, it is possible ... I suppose I have to admit the possibility that ...”, Ono seems to be speaking as a normal Japanese, and this allows him a high degree of vagueness. Between the narrator and his past there is not just the filter of a hazy memory but also that of elusive language. We have once again an interesting use of cultural distance: Masuji Ono’s ‘Japaneseness’ makes him an uncommon unreliable narrator.

### *The Remains of the Day*: from ‘translationese’ to ‘butlerese’

To underline once again the relative quality of cultural categories, in *The Remains of the Day* the narrator’s language is even more involved and formal, (“I can say I am in agreement with those who say that ...” (5); “His conclusions were not necessarily those that compelled agreement, sir.” (210)), and it is at the same time very English, very Japanese and totally idiosyncratic. If Ono was speaking

'translationese', then it would not be inappropriate to say Stevens speaks 'butlerese'.<sup>43</sup>

And his language grows even more reticent and involved when he speaks about himself, as in Japanese, where one *must* speak of himself in an humble way.

Of course, it is not for me to suggest that I am worthy of ever being placed alongside the likes of the 'great' butlers of our generation, such as Mr Marshall or Mr Lane – though it should be said there are those who, perhaps out of misguided generosity, tend to do just this. Let me make clear that when I say the conference of 1923, and that night in particular, constituted a turning point in my professional development, I am speaking very much in terms of my own more humble standards. Even so, if you consider the pressures contingent on me that night, you may not think I delude myself unduly if I go so far as to suggest that I did perhaps display, in the face of everything, at least in some modest degree a 'dignity' worthy of someone like Mr Marshall – or come to that, my father. Indeed, why should I deny it? For all its sad associations, whenever I recall that evening today, I find I do so with a large sense of triumph. (110)

Ishiguro once again subverts the reader's expectations. After playing the Japanese writer in the first two novels, he now presents us with the least exotic of settings, a butler's small world, yet as far from us in ideology and social structures as Etsuko and Ono's Japan was. If in the first two novels Ishiguro used 'Japan as a metaphor', he can now use an English butler's world as a different kind of metaphor, thus underlining and undermining the cultural paradigms through which we interpret reality.

<sup>43</sup> As Caroline Patey says: "Why is Stevens' syntax so elaborate, so un-English in its lack of concision, its continuous incapacity to refer directly to its object and its mania for delay and procrastination? A form of impotence, for sure; but could it not be also the shadow of the Japanese language with which Ishiguro is familiar enough to know that 'the proliferation of functional suffixes and the complexity of enclitics suppose that the subject advances into the enunciation through precautions, reprises, delays and insistences, whose final volume makes the subject a great void envelop of the word' (my translation) (Patey, "When Ishiguro", 154). The quotation from Barthes is from *L'Empire des Signes*. I think Ishiguro is not so much 'influenced' by a Japanese language with which he is supposed to be familiar (Ishiguro said his Japanese is almost that of a five-year old's), as to subvert a stereotype constructed with the first two novels (the narrator-reticent-because-Japanese) and to divest himself of the label of 'exotic writer'.

Richard Swiderski

### Some Exchanges between Persons of Unequal Power

Two men wearing caps and workpants came to the door of the classroom and looked in, hesitant to enter. Frances, one of the people seated there, interrupted a conversation she was having with the woman seated beside her and gestured to the men, "*veng'qui, teacher no esta, viene*"<sup>1</sup> but they looked as if she wasn't speaking to them and stood there waiting. Frances went back to listening to Yaneth who was having problems with her daughter she caught smoking a cigarette. "*Vestidos huelen ... tabaco, likker ... ella va y viene ...*"<sup>2</sup>

"*xb'ey heb' naj*", said one of the men still lingering in the doorway to the other. "*xa, xa, vamos*",<sup>3</sup> the other replied and they walked away. Inside the room there were seven separate conversations going on among the twelve people who had appeared for the class.

Bonifacio had returned from his trip to his cousins in L.A. and he was telling Fausto, another cousin, that the work there was not so good because the bosses were all Guatemalan and they like to give their own compadres the ground jobs while they make the Mexicans go up on the roof in the sun and they stand down there drinking until the American foreman shows up. Bonifacio used a word for "American" that made Rogelio laugh. He was talking to Juan Francisco and Jose Luis about how to send some money to El Salvador because you couldn't trust the Mexicans who run the bureau. They had cut him short on a phone call. "Cortato" and the word for "American" also was "cortado" because they're always cutting you short.

<sup>1</sup> [Eds.' trans.: "come here, teacher's not (here) (yet), come"]. [Ed. note: The ideological implications of metalinguistically framing foreign words, and especially code-switching utterances, is not lost on us. We have applied the convention of italicizing them because this publication 'happens to be in English'].

<sup>2</sup> [Eds.' trans.: "... clothes smell ... tobacco, liquor, ... she comes and goes ..."].

<sup>3</sup> [Eds.' trans.: "sure, right, let's go"].

All of the men laughed aloud at the word and went back to talking to each other in their separate conversations. Kuk and Doan both laughed when the men did, without stopping their own discussion of when to go to the community garden the next morning. It was time to mulch the long beans again and break out the compost that had been building up since they cleared the garden at the end of the rains.

Unknown to either group, two of the men seated nearby were also talking about gardening, only they were wondering where was the best place to stand to get picked up to do gardening work rather than construction, which they didn't like. Frances, the cousin of one of the men, broke into their discussion to tell them that they better be careful, the "*migra*" were catching men who stood by themselves.

Frances' child Juliana began wailing from the back of the classroom. She had knocked over a broom and the handle had hit her as it fell. Frances, not missing a beat in her talk, got up and gathered the child, both caressing and blaming her for touching things she shouldn't.

"I am going to the market", the instructor said, "what am I going to buy?"

"Water", Quoc said firmly. [hwa'er], she pronounced. One of the men rose up and walked to the back of the room.

This was a few minutes of an English class for adults offered by a community social service agency in San Rafael, California. During this time the instructor was the only person speaking English, yet the English description encompasses what is being said in three other languages.

Encompasses that in a particular way: the English might also have been dismissive, and simply pronounced the classroom a Babel of private conversations not emerging into English intelligibility. Or the English description might also be a painstaking phonetics of all the sounds everyone was making without any conveyance of their sense, in the form of a phonetic transcription or of a recording for playback. A phonetics is in English, as well, because English frames what it is.

Whether a dismissal, a review of the sounds or a dramatization of the what's being said, the description is in English though the verbal exchanges occurred in several languages including English. Any of the languages used might convey a description of this scene, and the phonetic writing is supposed to be a universal description of significant sounds without any specific language loyalty.

The description conveyed by any particular language, including English, would be confined to what is intelligible in that language in addition to assessments more or less generous of what is going on in the other languages. Someone capable of understanding English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Jacalteco Mayan would still be faced with the challenge of understanding them spoken simultaneously. Someone possessing this understanding and gift for simultaneous grasp and memory for it all would then be free to convey their description in any of these languages but then only to others sharing that understanding.

This multilingual situational omniscience is assumed to exist for the description of the classroom scene that begins this paper. The narrator reflects the exchanges taking place in the classroom in English. That the Mayan and some of the Spanish are set down in the words if not the phonetics only indicates that the sounds are recognized and associated with specific words.

The omniscience might be conveyed in any of the participant languages or in some other. It just might be. But it happens to be in English.

This is the subject of this paper, already a quarter over: it happens to be in English.

How did that happen? or how does it happen? that English often becomes the language of choice for descriptions of other languages. Or that English is the language that happens to pop up where a description of a set of other languages is taking place.

It can't just be that we are all English speakers/readers here and we can only convey our understanding of other languages to each other in English. There isn't anything special about the structure of English that makes it more encompassing than others. I suggest it's something other than structure: power, social and cultural. The gross fact that in any exchange the English speaker is often more likely to have the edge over monolinguals in other languages, confers power on the English speaker in that exchange and gives English the appearance of being the broader language.

This is speculation, of course, and demands investigation on two levels, that of the entire language and that of immediate interactions. Observing the attempts to assert the encompassing power of English makes a fascinating history of language policy, literature, publishing and broadcasting already documented.

The assertion of the power of English to encompass other languages, or its ability to encompass other languages taken as an assertion of power is more difficult to envision in the arena of the



immediate. English is often the language of the reporting or the instructing speaker, if not his or her only language, then the one used to convey the setting to others. The size of English, able to take in so many other languages without even acknowledging their differences (reflecting them without saying so), is due to the frequency English speakers are the ones doing the reporting, to a large English speaking audience. The relative wealth and technological sophistication of both reporters and audience is also an element.

This preponderance has its effects on any language exchange in which one of the speakers is an English first-language speaker but the others are not. The sense of English (at least for English speakers) as a dominant language is the result of these exchanges. One of the effects of this is to make English seem to be by nature a dominating language, to make the language the a priori of the power exchange.

The teacher who was at the front of the classroom trying to coax English sentences out of many language speakers then becomes the ideal observer making sense of the babble rather than one more speaker in the mass.

In the Battle of Hastings 1066 C.E. the Norman troops feigned a retreat to draw out the Saxons. The Saxons taunted the fleeing Normans in their language. The French-writing chronicler who described the battle said that the Normans thought the Saxon language was the barking of dogs. The Normans, of course, turned and in part through luck (the Saxon king was killed together with his brothers) won the battle and spent several centuries infusing the Saxon language with their expressions and pronunciations. This battle was a primordial power exchange for English: it came off at such a disadvantage that it seemed its speakers were servile animals that make a lot of meaningless noise.

Jacinto was pestering Maria to pay attention to him. While she was standing waiting for the bus, he came up to her and began talking about his lawn care business, that he had two trucks and five men working for him. Maria held the hand of Leo, her youngest boy, and told Jacinto to leave her alone. But Jacinto persisted talking, telling her that he was ready to give her a ride anywhere she wanted to go, that she didn't need to take her child on the bus. But Maria let him talk until the bus came.

This is what Maria told Hermina later. Maria said that Jacinto kept trying to speak English to her but that she hoped keeping quiet would tell him she wasn't interested in him or his propositions. Jacinto's version of the encounter reached Hermina by way of a

mutual friend of hers and Jacinto's, and it was, as far as Hermina was concerned, the same. Jacinto was trying to make progress with Maria by getting her to listen to his English, but she was refusing him and the language.

From Maria's point of view, which Hermina sympathized with, Jacinto was demanding that she accept his proffered gifts at the price of making a concession. Maria could speak English but she would do so only for transactions with people who couldn't speak Spanish. By not speaking English with Jacinto she was also refusing his invitation to relations on the terms of English speakers. Instead she turned him down in Spanish, and when he persisted in English she remained silent and boarded the bus.

Jacinto's English was a tool for him as well, one he was using to draw out Maria. They could have had a conversation in Spanish, or in Spanish with some English. Trying to attain and sustain an exchange with Maria in English only, was Jacinto's attempt to gain ground with her. His verbiage was that of persuasion and enticement, but the floor of communication he was trying to establish situated Maria apart from the connections with other Spanish speakers, relatives, friends and children that she relied on.

Jacinto's attempt to speak English was an assertion of power which he could no longer accomplish with Spanish alone. Maria's refusal, though tempted by the invitation to show her skills, and by Jacinto's blandishments, was her own assertion of power not to accede to Jacinto's demands or to male demands in general. Jacinto was using the new language to maintain the status quo of power relations between men and women, while Maria was using the traditional language, and silence, to assert her independence.

Maria's silence was silence in English, not in Spanish. She was cautioning Jacinto in Spanish not to pursue her. That Jacinto took it as a silence showed Hermina, when she learned of the event from two separate sources, how much Jacinto had accepted English as his style of communication, and how well Maria understood that.

Hermina spoke in Spanish with Maria and the friend who reported Jacinto's concerns, but she saw both of their versions projected against a backdrop of English. She told me, in English though at other times we spoke Spanish together, that she thought English was trying to sneak in and become the language for everyone. "The television, the radio, all in English ...", though there was a Spanish-language soap opera on the television with the sound barely audible while we discussed this.

Hermina expressed her understanding of the encounter between Maria and Jacinto in English as a reflection on the seeming inescapability of English. I convey her account here as a reflection on the shifting roles of different languages in encounters where the power of one over the other is being negotiated. The power of English or Spanish, the number of speakers, the use in technology, has only limited effect on the immediate relations between two people at play in using them. Hermina felt that Jacinto's effort was the consequence of his being 'sold' on the power of English to overcome resistance, and Maria's escape was due to her not recognizing that force. Hermina told me that in English, to underline its truth, because we are both bilinguals but she is a first-language Spanish speaker and I am a first-language English speaker.

Where all the parties to an exchange involving English are not equally conversant with all the languages being used, the position of a background language may be occupied only for those who use English. The others will transact power on a looser basis.

Two of the women in the clinic waiting room were speaking together in a language Elizabeth had never heard before. She only distinguished them from the others because they were separate from the others in the crowded room. What little space there was seemed to be between everyone else and the two women.

Elizabeth called out the name, Huot Ip, hoping that she was safe from mispronouncing a name that short. A woman holding two children seated on her lap said "Come again", and Elizabeth read out the name, her eyes fixed on the sheet. Again no one responded though a few of the women made impatient comments in English, Spanish and other languages Elizabeth recognized but did not understand.

After a pause, as she was about to read the next card, she heard a soft sound like an echo of the name she had read. One of the two isolated women was looking in her direction, not directly at her. She spoke to the other woman, then rose up and walked slowly toward Elizabeth. Feeling that asking her, "Are you Huot Ip?" would seem foolish, Elizabeth turned and went before the woman into the examining room.

Huot Ip entered the room and sat down in the chair alongside Elizabeth's desk. Elizabeth now noticed that this was the woman's first visit, and that there was no medical history on record. There was no information about her other than her name, address and telephone number. Elizabeth would have to ask her a series of questions which some English speakers had difficulty responding to.

"Do you speak English?", Elizabeth asked, facing the woman, who without looking at her directly made a slight turn of the head. To Elizabeth this alone meant that the woman was familiar with the question and knew how to make an answer that anyone would understand. "Does your friend speak English? Can she speak for you?" For the first time the woman looked directly at Elizabeth and simultaneously broke into a wide smile.

Elizabeth removed from her desk drawer a book of line drawings showing objects and women with a variety of health conditions. By letting the woman hold the book and put her hand on one picture or another, Elizabeth was able to piece together the woman's reason for coming to the clinic. As the woman touched each picture, she spoke words which by their emphasis and coloring Elizabeth could tell were the names of the things and states in her language. Elizabeth said the names in English but the woman did not repeat them after her. She did repeat the words in her own language, and waited a second, her hand still on the same picture, until Elizabeth repeated the word after her. A few times the woman laughed when Elizabeth spoke and she even seemed to scowl. But Elizabeth was too busy trying to use the woman's pointing to fill out the form so the nurse wouldn't be confused.

After about fifteen minutes of this exchange, the woman rose up suddenly, and left the room, returning with her companion, whom she instructed in the method of communication they had developed. The other woman's interview took even less time, and in fact less time than intake interviews usually take. Elizabeth passed both of them together to the nurse, who had a book of her own, and called the next woman for her interview.

For Elizabeth, English was necessarily the background language. Whether it was her own native language or not, she expected to render all her encounters in the clinic into English, because she had standard forms to complete and she needed to communicate crucial information in English to medical staff who themselves might not be English first-language speakers. English was the language of the administrators and politicians who had created the clinic and Elizabeth's position within it. They expected its transactions to be available to them in English.

There had been an incident that underlined that English was the base language for Elizabeth. For a time the receptionist/secretary, who was the first contact entering women had with the clinic, objected to women sitting in the waiting room speaking to each other in languages other than English. If a woman who did not speak English entered the

clinic, Nan had no trouble presenting her with a card in the appropriate language and finding someone who spoke the language to answer questions if necessary, but Nan refused to tolerate women speaking other languages aloud in the waiting room.

The clinic manager tried to reason her out of these sentiments by pointing out that it was, after all, a multilingual clinic and many of the clients came there because they had no other contacts with the health care system and needed to feel they were welcome in their own identities. Nan countered saying that she felt uncomfortable not understanding what they were saying and she thought they were talking about her. The manager asked, do you think so many people want to talk about you? That only made Nan more determined to assert her right, as she put it, to an English-language environment.

Nan complained to the board of directors of the non-profit organization that governed the clinic, and though they did not usually interfere with the operations of the clinic the board chair called the clinic manager and tactfully told her that English is the language of the clinic and that people should be encouraged to use English at all times. The manager then assured Nan that her wishes would be respected and that if she caught anyone communicating in languages other than English in the waiting room, she should complain to the manager. Nan did so the first opportunity she was able to find the manager in her office. The manager went out into the waiting room, stood before the two women who were speaking animatedly to each other and said, "Ladies, would you please speak only in English". The women looked at the manager, smiled pleasantly, and rose from their seats, thinking they should follow her for their examinations. The manager motioned for them to sit down again, at which point they glanced at her with fainter smiles and returned to their conversation.

This was the only time Nan complained about the language in the waiting room. She left the clinic soon afterward, and the new receptionist was a Spanish-English bilingual. From the response to Nan's complaint, however, Elizabeth learned how English was the main language. It was declared to be so to anyone who might ask, but English was the main language only in the sense that clinic staff had to communicate with each other in English. The clinic manager was communicating with Nan when she asked the two women to speak English; it didn't make any difference whether the women understood her or not. She used a gesture afterward to dissolve any misunderstanding that was created when she approached and spoke to them.

Elizabeth then learned that it was correct, according to the language standards of the clinic, to speak English to people who might not understand it, when another staff member was present. English was the medium, constantly present for the thoughts and intentions of the clinic workers; it was not the background against which everyone else's language had to be projected. There was little translating done in the clinic even by those who were bilingual in English and a language spoken by the clients. They simply spoke to them in their language, filled out the form in English and advised them as required.

Nan disrupted the English medium of the clinic because she demanded that all speech be translated into English. She was attempting to assert English as the medium of control. She demonstrated that by complaining to the body with fiscal and administrative control over the clinic, and demanding that they act to make English the language everyone spoke in the clinic, in effect providing simultaneous translation into English of all conversation. In her focus on this exercise of power, she did not consider that many of the speakers she suspected of discussing her impenetrably might not speak English. They had to be able to speak English but were not speaking it to evade detection and confrontation. That they were monolinguals like her did not accord with her sense of English as the dominant language in every way. Their act of speech, in a language other than English, was an unintentional interchange with her, asserting power within her space, and she attempted to turn the situation around and use the force of English to subject all their conversation to her monitoring.

Elizabeth had to conduct all clinic business in English, not because she was monolingual, but because English provided the field of technical communication she shared with other clinic workers, whatever their language skills. English was a channel and not the sole reference for all exchanges. She could use pictures where verbal communication was impossible. She was also able to accept the two women's language, whatever it was, and take part in the mode of communication they established with the pictures, repeating after them the words they associated with the objects shown while writing down in English what the woman was telling her.

Elizabeth knew she had to listen carefully to what the woman was saying as she went over the pictures, to be sure that the words were different. Another worker in the clinic had interviewed a woman whose language she didn't know, and realized part way through that the woman was pointing to one picture after the next and repeating

substantially the same words, probably: "what a pretty picture", "oh, what a nice picture", and so on.

English, or any other language, can be taken as the background language in interchanges between speakers of differing power, and it will be used in different ways depending on how the power is to be expressed. Adopting a critique of language imperialism, and saying that English speakers naturally dominate all speaking exchanges, is naive at best. The language changes between speakers, and so does relative power. The concept of a background language is an attempt to stabilize power relations in a pattern. It actually is a concept that some speakers hold and assume others do. It might even amount to what it means to speak English in some settings.

Jonathan had completed the schedules for the maintenance crews, when Vong and Leo walked into his office carrying their tools. They stood and waited until he looked up from the small desk, then both began to speak at once. Jonathan couldn't make out what either was saying.

Leo began to shout over Vong, "He's taking over my jobs again!" while Vong kept up a commentary that Jonathan still couldn't understand but which he assumed was the same thing. Jonathan said to them, "You have to work it out between you". But they both continued speaking more to get the word in over each other than to say anything.

Of all the crews Jonathan supervised, Vong and Leo worked the hardest and had the most problems. They mostly worked alone in a part of the building where there was a lot of work to do, and they shouldn't have to compete with each other. But they were always complaining about something neither of them could articulate.

Jonathan had long since stopped trying to get them to speak in turn and say exactly what the problem was. Leo was the louder of the two and made statements which he thought were clear, while Vong kept speaking words that Jonathan couldn't make out. He knew Vong could speak English because he had given him orders, and Vong had carried them out. Usually in silence, but when he had a problem, a tool didn't work or he needed paint, Vong expressed the need without coming out and stating it. Leo had learned to live with that, vocalizing aloud what Vong seemed to be indicating. But that disturbed Vong, because Vong knew Leo was expressing his own feelings in making statements of Vong's wishes. The pair had a distinct sound in Leo's shouted English phrases. "You want a gallon of white over there ... You want a two by four ..." and Vong's rising mumble. Every once in a while, Vong's resistance to Leo's

verbalizing outgrew their arrangement and they both came to Jonathan for a resolution.

But Jonathan was unable to break into their pattern of relations. For the most part, they did get their jobs done with minimum breakage and few complaints from the tenants, so Jonathan decided to let them sound it out in his presence. At first he had given orders to both of them which ended out weakening his ability to give them any orders at all. He discovered that they really were communicating with each other through this procedure, and even though it seemed like a quarrel, disrupting it authoritatively only turned them both against him.

Jonathan stopped listening to what Leo was saying and stopped trying to make out Vong's words. He accepted that as long as they were engaged in these exchanges in his presence, the work would get done on time. He didn't have complaints from anyone else about their procedure. He sat and listened to them, made a few remarks, and they went back to work.

What Vong and Leo exchanged amounted to English for Jonathan, whether the components were English sentences or not. Jonathan accepted that their speech and behavior had a normal state which they communicated by displaying themselves to him in the act of exchange. That was Jonathan's participation in their English.

An outsider happening upon the team might think that they were not speaking to each other at all because their exchanges were not uniform dialogue back and forth as in a script. A company official, who happened to be in Jonathan's office when they arrived for one of their sessions, thought that they made no sense at all. Jonathan could only mollify the official by saying Vong and Leo got the work done.

The exchange between Vong and Leo was constant, and it resulted in equilibrium of power between the two of them and between them as a pair and Jonathan as their supervisor. But not with anyone else. No one else could be included in their construction of English without creating a disruptive disequilibrium of power. What they spoke amounted to English only as long as they could rest in their own standards.

Instead of being the background language against which other languages are projected, with Vong and Leo, English was the foreground formed of various speech acts repeated without challenge. There was a level common to all participants in which it did not matter what languages went into the mix as long as the total could be English.

Any language might be the English of this exchange but it is more likely to be an imperial language which can be taken by all its speakers

as the ascending layer in any set of exchanges. I have observed Spanish and Chinese in the foreground even when English itself is one of the languages being used.

Where one participant in an exchange demands that the language of discourse actually be English, that destroys the consensus and power balance achieved where English is in the foreground of a number of other languages.

Rena sat at her desk in the office growing increasingly restive while two of her colleagues spoke together in a language she did not understand. She said to them aloud, "Stop talking that way, use English, I don't know what you're saying, for all I know you might be talking about me". The two women stopped speaking and silently went back to their tasks.

The environment of the office was multilingual: most of the workers regularly spoke languages other than English with each other, family and acquaintances outside of work, but all knew English, and conducted business in English. Though at times it was necessary to conduct business in one of the other languages spoken, it was necessary to translate everything into English.

The normal condition of life in the office was multilingual, with complex exchanges between speakers of different languages. The foregrounding of English was fixed by policy, Rena, who was monolingual in English, chose to appeal to that in demanding that others communicate only in English in her presence.

This created a Berkleyan condition of language for Rena: speech could be language but it wasn't *the* language unless it was English. It didn't meet the multilingual condition unless it remained one language. Rena didn't seek translation of what others were saying; she didn't ask them to say the same things in English. She expected the ascendant condition of language to be absolute in her presence. Other languages were by definition what was spoken outside her hearing.

I want to conclude by beginning to ask a question. Is monolingualism with its insistence on grammar and specified vocabulary the crystallization of the ascendant layer in a collection of languages? And is this crystallized layer likely to be English?<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> [Ed. note: Although the author has chosen not to make any bibliographical references, we would like to refer interested readers at least to his *The Metamorphosis of English: Versions of Other Languages* (New York: Greenwood, 1996)].

Sonia Torres

### Chicana Travelogues. Ana Castillo and Erlinda González-Berry

In the two novels by Chicanas proposed here for discussion, one written in English and the other in Spanish, I wish to demonstrate the manner in which Ana Castillo's and Erlinda González-Berry's nomadic narrators/protagonists take us to "places of subjectivity that shift and hyphenate into the worlds of others", creating spaces of interrogation of these feminine characters' positionality in relation to racial, cultural and subjective identities – and, by extension, of their creators' positionality in relation to tradition, writing and self-representation.<sup>1</sup>

In both Castillo's *The Mixquiahuala Letters* and González-Berry's *Paletitas de Guayaba* we are presented with itinerant feminine characters who, while weaving their ways through a series of cultural sites that consistently alienate them, weave the threads of their Chicana personal and collective histories through memory, traditions and translations; through letters, notes, poems; and through a great deal of imagination, in the form of fantasies, dreams and the subversion of mythologies.<sup>2</sup> As they revisit and seek to rearticulate their Hispanic cultural roots and their American traditions, through the narration of what Peter McLaren terms the "collision with otherness", these intercultural feminine figures generate a reflection on relations of power and articulations of local and cosmopolitan spaces. Questions such as cultural and political inclusion/exclusion, ethnicity and gender relations pervade both texts, reaffirming that "all spatialities are political because they are the (covert) medium and

<sup>1</sup> C. Sylvester, "African and Western Feminisms: World-Traveling the Tendencies and Possibilities", *Signs* 20,4 (1995), 946.

<sup>2</sup> A. Castillo, *The Mixquiahuala Letters* (Tempe, Arizona: Editorial Bilingüe/Bilingual Press, 1984). E. González-Berry, *Paletitas de Guayaba* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: El Norte Publications, 1991).

(disguised) expression of asymmetrical relations of power".<sup>3</sup> What I am attempting to suggest, then, is that the nomadic practices of Teresa and Alicia, in *The Mixquiahuala Letters* and Marina's travels to Mexico, in *Paletitas de Guayaba* are deployed as strategies of representation, in that the characters' incessant transit reflects the problematics of representing the construction of a fixed or static bicultural identity, on both sides of *la frontera*.

Both authors utilize second person narratives, in which "a first person compulsively buttonholes a second person who seems to be simultaneously inside and outside the fictional scene, inside and outside the speaking self".<sup>4</sup> Through this form of asymmetrical interlocution, the narrators interpellate the other(s), who remain silenced in the text, creating the effect of a monologue constructed in the present, through remembrance. These "autobiographical monologues" are composed through Teresa's letters to Alicia, in *The Mixquiahuala Letters*, or through Marina's "conversaciones con Sergio", in *Paletitas de Guayaba*.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, both works may be read as ethnic autobiographies, in that these 'remembering voices' are constructed around an ethnic search which plays out the act of re-visiting their imagined communities in order to exorcise the anxiety of ambivalence involved in living a bicultural existence.<sup>6</sup>

Due to their rich intertextuality, *Letters* and *Paletitas* elude any static or fixed classification. *Letters*, in spite of being an epistolary novel, may also be read, as Alvina Quintana has argued, as a metaethnography, in which the 'letters' composed by Teresa would be her "field notes".<sup>7</sup> However, Teresa's letters are frequently an exercise in literary practice, having, at times, no addressee and appearing in the form of poems or minimalist short stories. Castillo's novel also dialogues with a number of literary genres and works, most explicitly,

<sup>3</sup> M. Keith and S. Pile, eds., *Place and the Politics of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1993), 38.

<sup>4</sup> D. Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 178.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> M. Fischer, "Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory", in J. Clifford and G. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1986), 204-205.

<sup>7</sup> A. Quintana, "Ana Castillo's *The Mixquiahuala Letters*: The Novelist as Ethnographer", in H. Calderón and J. D. Saldívar, eds., *Criticism in the Borderlands. Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture and Ideology* (Durham & London: Duke UP, 1991), 72-83 and A. Quintana, *Homegirls: Chicana Literary Voices* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 75-92.

but not exclusively, with Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela*.<sup>8</sup> As to *Paletitas*, although Erlinda's novel opens with a letter from Marina to Steve, *el hombre de los cabellos dorados* – and although this letter reappears, in fragments, throughout the text – it is not exclusively epistolary, and is composed of a diversity of other fragments: Marina's conversations with her *latin lover* Sergio – the generating center of affect in the text – and a number of Marina's other 'conversations', either with the reader (frequently thematizing the construction of the text), with herself, or with a diversity of other characters (frequently fantasized versions of 'empirical' encounters). Erlinda's work also parodies eighteenth century travel journals; here the 'gentleman traveler' is replaced by a picaresque feminine figure. The choice of unsanctioned literary forms, such as diaries, journals, letters, and oral forms signal the authors' desire to problematize value by reinscribing these 'minor' genres.

In *Letters* this desire shows itself in the apparently paradoxical interface of Castillo's paratexts: the epigraph taken from Anaïs Nin's *Under a Glass Bell* ("I stopped loving my father a long time ago./What remained was the slavery to a pattern".) and the inscription, on the reverse side of the page – "In memory of the master of the game, Julio Cortázar". The positioning of these inscriptions, one on the reverse side of the other, leads to interesting speculations, since Castillo, in her *Letters*, like Cortázar, in *Rayuela*, also offers alternative ways for reading her novel (for the conformist/for the quixotic/for the cynic). On the other hand, the fact that the author has chosen a 'minor' literary form, suggests that Castillo intends to speak both to and against the 'master(s) narrative' of the Latin American 'boom' writers. Linda Hutcheon has pointed out that parody is doubly coded, since it both legitimizes and subverts that which it parodies: "Parody can be used as a self-reflexive technique that points to art as art, but also to art as inescapably bound to its aesthetic and even social past".<sup>9</sup> The "social past", in our present context, relates to the history of writing as being historically masculine. In the same way as numerous Latin American women writers, Latina writers in the U.S. have perceived that their position is not so much one of "confronting a dominant patriarchy with a new feminine position but rather one of unsettling the stance that

<sup>8</sup> J. Cortázar, *O jogo da amarelinha (Rayuela)*, trans. F. de Castro Ferro (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1970).

<sup>9</sup> L. Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London & New York: Routledge, 1989), 101.

supports gender power/knowledge as masculine".<sup>10</sup> This is frequently accomplished through postmodern aesthetics such as parody, pastiche and the blurring of genres as a counter-discursive strategy.

Given these considerations, we are inspired to compare the decentered, nomadic, feminine subject, and the letters narrating the everyday practices of two women in Castillo's novel with the highbrow characters in *Rayuela*; and, I would add, Castillo's low-profile narrator, Teresa, to the pedantically theorizing Morelli, Cortázar's alter-ego. John Beverly argues that the writers of the 'boom' period represent, in actuality, the equivalent of Anglo-American high modernism. He exposes his thesis in the following way: for Jameson, postmodernism is essentially a First World phenomenon, and its Latin-American correlate would be the literature of the 'boom' period, with its strategies of transculturation and hybridization. But, as Roberto González Echevarría had already pointed out, this is not a one-to-one correspondence. Since the aesthetic ideology of post-modernism is closely associated with the questioning of notions such as 'great author' or 'great works' – decisive concepts for the boom ideology – the moment of postmodernism in Latin American literature would be the literary production of what is usually termed as the 'post-boom'. Accordingly, Manuel Puig, testimonial literature and the *tallers literarios* would be postmodern, whereas Paz, Cortázar, Fuentes and Vargas Llosa are not.<sup>11</sup> I would like to argue, then, that through counter-discursive 'post-modern' intertextuality, Castillo's work both configures the slavery to a pattern – thematized through the use of Cortázar's *Rayuela* as a model – and stages the tension involved in attempting to escape from this slavery, in that it represents Teresa and Alicia in incessant transit and constant collision with patriarchal models on both sides of the Mexico-USA border.

Castillo's novel also dialogues with contemporary ethnographic models, based on nomadic practices. I would like to further develop Quintana's notion of metaethnography, and suggest that what may be noted, through Teresa's observations and remembering, is a series of oscillating movements that parody three distinct ethnographic models

<sup>10</sup> J. Franco, "Going Public: Reinhabiting the Private", in Yúdice et al., *On Edge: The Crisis of Contemporary Latin American Culture. Cultural Politics Collection*, vol. 4 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 72-73.

<sup>11</sup> J. Beverly, *Against Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 113.

discussed by Grossberg:<sup>12</sup> the characters are represented as tourists in search of the 'authentic native' (the hermeneutic model); as natives searching for a home (native ethnographers); and as 'detectives' in search of signs or clues which might lead them to the marginal inside the spaces of the center (urban-culturalist model). Whether in the 'local' cultures of Mexico, or in the 'marginal' cultures of the center, Castillo's *fembras placenteras* (here I am intentionally subverting the traditional sense of this phrase, to mean 'pleasure-seeking females' in order to establish an analogy with the characters' quest for agency) are destined to encounter resistance. The Mexican 'latin lovers'; the flamenco guitar player Teresa meets in New York; Alicia's lover, born in Harlem, but of Caribbean descent; the Vietnam veteran, who commits suicide to get even with Alicia, when, perceiving his parasitic tendencies, she asks him to leave ... Both the 'authentic' natives and the 'decentered' marginals reveal themselves as unsatisfactory, because all of these men, without exception, expect to be the center of the relationship and consider their own personal, professional and artistic activities as the main priority, relegating these same activities of their *compañeras* to an inferior plane.

Through the series of displacements represented in Castillo's novel, the protagonist reviews the paradigms of her generation, from the hippies, the first Chicana muralists in San Francisco and the Chicano *Movimiento* to the yuppification, and consequent commodification of the 80's. This reviewing, represented through the continuous crossing of borders, implies the constant interpretation and translation of experiences of inclusion/exclusion, permitting, at the same time, a continuous reassessment of her situation in relation to both local and metropolitan cultures. In *Letters* inter-location generates constant inter-locutions, to use Castillo's own words, "with all their seemingly irreconcilable complexities: woman with man, woman with woman, woman as daughter, woman as mother, woman with religion, woman with Chicano/mexicano culture, *mestiza* with Anglo society".<sup>13</sup>

Erlinda's *Paletitas de Guayaba*, contrary to Castillo's *Letters*, portrays an ideal, or idealized, *latin lover*, Sergio. Sergio is Marina's lover, best

<sup>12</sup> L. Grossberg, "Wandering Audiences, Nomadic Critics", *Cultural Studies* 2,3 (1988), 377-391.

<sup>13</sup> A. Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers. Essays on Xicanisma* (New York: Plume, 1995), 179.

friend, confidant, mediator in her process of searching for an identity throughout her repatriation to Mexico. However, the writer of the 'travelogue' makes a point of informing us that she has deprived this ideal interlocutor of *voz y corporeidad*, and offers a number of possibilities for having done so, one of which is the second sex finally seizing the opportunity to invent the first. Indeed, we conclude rather wistfully that men like Sergio do not exist, except as a figment of the feminine imagination. In this way, Erlinda's speakerly text 'talks back' to the representation of women in literature by men – mostly ideological constructs of the masculine imagination.

On the other hand, Marina's other encounters with masculinity are fraught with racial, cultural and gender trouble, from the passenger on the train – *Ay que chispa tienes pochita! ... Que lástima que no seas como las beibis güeras. Si lo fueras, tu y yo haríamos gud taim tuggeder tunait* (71-77) – and the 'politicized' figures from Casa Aztlán, who refer to her as "manita" because she is from New Mexico, and supposedly not identified with Chicanismo, due to the New Mexican myth of Spanish *pureza de sangre*, to the European tourists Hans and Peter, from whom Mari and her friends have a narrow escape, after a hilariously picaresque adventure, all the men she encounters exoticize her and regard her as a sexual object: *pochita, manita, de allá, del otro lado*. These experiences of constant exclusion reflect the anxieties of living a bilingual and bicultural existence, and foreground the complexities involved in the construction of feminine individual and collective ethnic identities. This process is shown to be especially problematic when it involves the search for authenticity, since, for Marina, her voyage to Mexico is a form of re-encountering a Mexican cultural 'past'. Once 'back' her efforts to be a "born again Mexican" are consistently frustrated – "*Aunque habláramos español, aunque fuéramos morenitos, éramos de allá, digo del outro lado*" (9).

The protagonist counters these displacements with an act of cultural construction through *mestizaje*. One very important sequence in *Paletitas* is constituted by a dream. In this dream, Marina is interpellated by Cortés's lover and interpreter, La Malinche (at this point in the narrative the reader will have made the analogy between the protagonist and Malintzín's name translated into Spanish). In Marina's dream, Doña Marina gives her reasons for having supposedly 'betrayed' her people, and foresees not only the end of her race, but the end of the Spanish empire. In this dialogue, the New World is emphasized as a utopian space, foreshadowing a new tradition of *mestizaje*. This episode in Erlinda's novel dialogues with other

contemporary texts by Chicanas that subvert the patriarchal interpretation of La Malinche as *tradtora* / traitor of her race, reinscribing this figure as *traddutora* / translator – one who 'brings' from one side to the other (*traslada*) two different traditions (two ways of *traer*, of bringing). Marina's 'conversation' with Malinche links to her last monologue in the novel in a very significant way. In this final monologue she undertakes a process of revising the true intentions of her trip to Mexico, concomitantly re-reading New Mexican historiography and language. Symptomatically, at this point the narrative voice undergoes a collapse, fusing the narrator into subject/object of Marina's discourse. This new movement suggests Marina's effort to arrive at a synthesis of the diverse identities being tried on throughout the narrative, or what Clifford describes as "unresolved historical dialogues between continuity and disruption, essence and positionality, homogeneity and differences":<sup>14</sup>

... Igual este momento a cualquier otro para preguntarte(me) por qué voy a México. Bueno lo de Steve resulta obvio pero eso de recuperar la niñez es pura bobada ... quizá si haya algo de verdad en eso que vas a recobrar tu pasado, pero no tu pasado particular, sino una historia, o más bien una pre-historia, a la cual sigues atávicamente atada y que obsesivamente necesitas conocer ... Mira ustedes (bueno, nosotros) los neomexicanos, nuestras raíces hay que buscarlas en nuestra misma tierra.

... Bueno, tienes, (o sea tengo) y no tienes razón. Es verdad que podemos y debemos hablar de una cultura distinta a la de México en lo que atañe a la raíz indígena pero no hay que olvidar tampoco que la raíz mexicana se extendió a través del espacio y llegó a las colonias septentrionales primero con los tlaxcaltecas que acompañaron a los primeros colonos ... Después aparecen nuevos retoños cuando la Reconquista de De Vargas ... En otras palabras, *minha filha*, ... en las venas de esos nuevos colonos ... fluía sangre espesa de mestizaje.

(87-88 – author's italics)

Erlinda's text operates within the tension between a desire to essentialize through a politics of location and the impulse towards mobility. In the above passage, at the same time that she tends to homogenize her New Mexican cultural roots, Marina also deconstructs

<sup>14</sup> J. Clifford, "Traveling Cultures", in L. Grossberg et al., *Cultural Studies: A Reader* (New York & London: Routledge, 1992), 108.



the New Mexican ideology of racial purity and reconstructs, through language, an ethnic identity composed of *mestizaje* – Spanish, *nuevomexicano*, *caló*, English, and even Portuguese co-exist in this process of revising and re-visioning her many languages, creating a new space that reaches out towards a contemporary transnational Latin American dialogue. As Donna Haraway writes: "... language and politics pervade the struggles of women of color, and stories about language have a special power in the rich contemporary writing by U.S. women of color".<sup>15</sup>

With reference to the use of Portuguese in the text, I would like to establish a link between Paletitas and Brazilian songwriter Caetano Veloso's *Língua* ("Tongue").<sup>16</sup> Caetano's song opens with the following verse: "*Quero que minha língua roce a língua de Camões*" ("I want my tongue to brush against the tongue of Camões"). He then proceeds to rap his way through a revisioning of Brazilian Portuguese, with all its linguistic and cultural traditions and translations, and consequent hybridity (the word *sambódromo*, for example, which is the fusion of the Afro-Brazilian word *samba* with the Greek suffix *dromo*, to designate the specific locality in Rio de Janeiro where the samba schools parade during *Carnaval*; or the last name Azevedo, which translated into English obtains Hollywood). An important moment in Caetano's text is his consideration of the word in Portuguese for Motherland, expressed through the oxymoron *pátria-mãe* (mother fatherland), which he converts to *mátria*. Although Caetano wants his tongue to brush against the tongue of our fatherland, he celebrates *mátria* as the space of constant translation, re-invention and re-signification. In a similar manner, Marina refers to Spain as her fatherland, and chooses the heterogeneously complex Mexico as her *mátria*: "*¡Alabado sea Dios, I have arrived in the motherland! ¿Cómo que the motherland? Yo creía que España era the true motherland of all manitos? Chale, querida, España is my fatherland*" (89). This realization is significant, because it signals the articulation between identity and identification: without denying the link between New Mexico and Spain, it opens up to a wider dialogic space of identification, through Mexico, with its tradition of hybridity, towards new spaces of possible alliances.

<sup>15</sup> D. Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s", in L. Nicholson, ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 217.

<sup>16</sup> C. Veloso, "Língua", in *Velô* (Philips. Polygram Records, 1984).

Marina's tongue may brush against the tongue of Cervantes, but it is through *mestizaje* that the hybrid cultural locations in Our America are imagined and constructed – in the spaces where the production of excess is refractory to essentialization or synthesis, due to the overwhelming number of objects we are faced with.<sup>17</sup> The synthesis Marina seems to be seeking throughout her 'return' to Mexico is never obtained; Mexico does not represent a homogenous cultural 'origin', but a heterogeneous space of translation/transculturation. On the other hand, translation often implies the conflicted social relations implicit in this process, and allows for a reflection on how asymmetrical relations of power between local and metropolitan cultures are articulated. Mari recognizes that she is a privileged traveler, and that the local cultures who do not share this privilege are represented in the enclaves and ghettos of the metropolis: "*Pero mira, chinita poblana, tampoco lo eres, así que no te hagas ilusiones, pochita, y hablando de ilusiones, no son esos los arrabales, las afueras, los suburbios, los satélites, las villas de miseria del D. F.?*" (89).

Both *The Mixquiahuala Letters* and *Paletitas de Guayaba* serve to illustrate manners in which hybrid cultures are (in)formed, especially when crossing borders, problematizing, at the same time, the specificities of gender and class. By presenting a constant experimentation with alternative identities, these writings by Chicanas "are descriptive of one way (or one set of ways) ethnicity works and suggests a writing tactic of fragments".<sup>18</sup> They also suggest that, when there is no way to get back 'home', spaces for the exploration and articulation of hybrid identities must be constructed, along with the conflicted dialogues that race, class and gender produce within systems of meaning and structures of power represented within these spaces.

<sup>17</sup> N. Garcia-Canclini, citing Luis Felipe Noé "Remaking Passports. Visual Thought in the Debate on Multiculturalism", trans. E. P. Quesada, *Third Text* 28/29 (1994), 143.

<sup>18</sup> Fischer, "Ethnicity", 212.

Jef Verschueren

### Pragmatics for International Communication Monitoring<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

In this paper I will be addressing a domain of application for linguistic pragmatics that is at the same time crucially dependent on systematic theory-formation. It is also strongly future-oriented in terms of motivation and content as well as in terms of its programmatic nature, referring to a course of research to be followed in years to come. The paper will be organized as follows. First I will define the domain of application, international communication. Second, the theoretical perspective from which international communication is approached will be identified. This perspective is a pragmatic one, where "pragmatics" is conceived as a fundamentally interdisciplinary (i.e., cognitive, social, and cultural) look at language use. A third part will be devoted to the role of language in international communication, as seen from a pragmatic point of view. It is at this point that the issue of language and ideology will be raised. Fourth, the topic of globalization – involving a special rôle for English – will be re-evaluated in the light of a pragmatic look at international communication. Fifth, conclusions will be drawn related to the need for international communication monitoring. Along the way, some English-specific examples will be given with reference to a single day of news reporting in some mainstream American printed media.

<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on a keynote lecture presented at the 12th World Congress of Applied Linguistics (AILA '99, Tokyo, 1-6 August 1999). I wish to thank AILA President Christopher Candlin and Professor Ikuo Koike, President of the Organizing Committee, for the kind invitation extended to me.

### International communication

Let me first define the domain of application in relation to which I want to situate the linguistic program of work which is the topic of this paper. As my title indicates, that domain is *international communication*. In order to prevent misconceptions, a good initial understanding is needed of the nature of "international affairs". It would be quite practical if we could restrict the field of international affairs to relations between nations or states. By doing so, however, we would probably miss the main point. Nations and states, just like empires, are not stable entities. They are the products of processes which may be put to rest for a while but which may resume their function of shaping and re-shaping the world whenever the circumstances are right. The recent unification of the two Germanies and the violent break-up of Yugoslavia are just two examples. The central issue, therefore, is simply the way in which a variety of identifiable or self-identified population groups relate (i) to each other, in the public sphere of civil society, and (ii) to institutionalized state-like structures. In the light of this remark, I will use the term "international affairs" as a shorthand expression for *various aspects of the relationships between different national, ethnic, cultural, or otherwise identifiable groups or communities, both at the intra-state and the inter-state levels, but always in the sphere of publicness, and often involving processes of nation-building and collective identity construction.*

Within the realm of international affairs, a wide range of topics have been closely investigated by sociologists and political scientists: matters of peace and security (including early warning, conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peace negotiations and agreements), arms control and military spending, geopolitical and strategic issues, foreign policy, economic development and its relation to security issues, the environment, the international response to emergencies (i.e., humanitarian and peace-keeping operations, prompted by natural disasters or wars), ethnic and communal conflicts, human rights and democracy, the role of the media (looking at information, disinformation, and propaganda), and the role of new information and communication technologies.

It is commonplace to say that most of these issues crucially involve communication and that, therefore, *international communication* deserves attention in its own right. The nature of international affairs itself, however, has undergone drastic changes

during the past few decades, both of which are related to communication, and both of which carry implications for the way in which international communication should be studied today.

First of all, there has been *an explosion of communication facilities*. This observation is also commonplace by now. Moreover, the observed phenomenon is not really new. It started centuries ago with the invention of printing, and as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a dramatic expansion of the role of the mass media, partly as a result of new printing technologies, partly due to a broadened base of literacy. Earlier in this century, radio and television were added, a development which showed that types of media are added cumulatively rather than to replace earlier types. The same will probably be true of the latest innovation in communication facilities, the Internet, which, by its very nature, can spread forms of discourse much faster and on a wider scale than was possible ever before, but which will not stand in the way of magazines (the number of which is still expected to increase), nor of newspapers (though they may have to adapt – as many already do – by targeting more specific and possibly more local audiences and by making online summaries and back issues available). Nor will the Internet stand in the way of television, though the two may converge in a variety of unexpected ways.<sup>2</sup> Interesting as the fact of this cumulative growth of the mass media may be in conjunction with the increased internationalization of the media themselves, far more interesting are its consequences for the nature of international affairs. For a long time, most people can be assumed to have been largely oblivious to the events and actions that we now perceive as the content of world history. When farmers in parts of northern France in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century fortified their churches as shelters for themselves and their cattle, their concern was their personal safety at a time when there were frequent border squirmishes between French soldiers and the Spanish who then ruled what is Belgium today. Probably they were largely unaware of the wider geopolitical issues involved in the relationship between France and Spain. Except for direct personal confrontations with the consequences, international affairs were the concern of a small powerful elite. The explosion of communication facilities has changed this drastically in the sense that *whatever happens today potentially enters the discourse world of many more people than in earlier*

<sup>2</sup> For some predictions of this kind, see Michael Wolf and Geoffrey Sands, "Fearless predictions: The content world, 2005", *Brill's Content* (August 1999), 109-113.

*periods of history.* Put differently, in international affairs *many more events are bound to get meaning for people in unprecedented ways and on an unprecedented scale.* In other words still, *public opinion* has potentially more content now than it used to have. Note that in the previous sentences I have used the adverb “potentially” twice. I will not come back to that issue explicitly later, yet my argumentation will provide some explanation. Let me point out first why this change at the level of communication is said to have changed the nature of international affairs. To give just one example from recent history, it is unlikely that the revolutionary changes that took place in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989, could have developed at the speed they did and with comparable results in so many different places in the absence of constant and immediate international media attention.<sup>3</sup> As Thompson says,

by providing individuals with images of, and information about, events that take place in locales beyond their immediate social milieu, the media may stimulate or intensify forms of collective action which may be difficult to control with the established mechanisms of power.<sup>4</sup>

A second change in the nature of international affairs in recent years is related to *processes of democratization*, again as exemplified in Central and Eastern Europe. Democracy is no doubt a relative notion. Sometimes I have considerable problems perceiving my own country, Belgium, as a democratic country. My most recent disappointment in that respect was when I found myself in a country at war in early 1999, without Belgium's entering the war against Yugoslavia having been preceded by any sort of political debate, neither publicly, nor in parliament. Even if the entering of an event into public awareness is only “potential”, and even if public opinion does not necessarily shape policies, a country's being perceived as democratic or its self-presentation as democratic crucially results in a higher dependence of political options on the possible influence of public opinion or on popular ideologies related to the inter-group relations that form the substance of international affairs (as defined before). In other words, *in view of the growing potentiality of an event's entering public*

<sup>3</sup> For this specific example, see Deirdre Boden, “Reinventing the Global village: Communication and the revolutions of 1989”, in A. Giddens, ed., *Human Societies: An Introduction in Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 327-331.

<sup>4</sup> John B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 116.

*awareness as a result of the increased reach of communication facilities, and in view of a democracy's constraints on the neglect of public opinion, a political course of action depends increasingly on whether it takes into account widespread or dominant opinions, ideas, and aspirations.* This results in a stronger need for explanation and legitimation, which will in turn affect the quantity and quality of international communication.

The conclusions that should be drawn from these observations in relation to the investigation of international communication will be spelled out later. A few more words are needed first about the actual object of investigation. It has often been assumed that the most interesting part of international communication takes place behind closed doors, in confidential diplomatic meetings or in secret talks setting hidden agendas. Though it would indeed be interesting to be able to study those, the foregoing remarks imply that it may be more important and more interesting to systematically scrutinize whatever forms of international communication are publicly accessible, as these are more and more at the center of what happens in international affairs. For the sake of clarity, *publicly accessible forms of international communication* include,

- international news reporting and commentary in a variety of media (such as the printed press, radio, television, and increasingly also the world wide web);
- some of the sources on which the reporting is based (such as press releases and policy statements, many of which are also directly accessible through the Internet);
- direct forms of international interactions to the extent that they can be witnessed (e.g. debates open to the press and the public);
- and the texts of (proposals for) international agreements.

These are the types of “objects” of investigation that we have in mind when defining international communication as a field of application for linguistic research.

Before going into a description of the pragmatic perspective from which I approach international communication, I want to make one side-remark about the term *intercultural communication*. Since my use of the term “international” does not only relate to the crossing of national or state boundaries, but as much to interaction between otherwise defined population groups, much of what I deal with is often called “intercultural”. In contrast to my usage of the term “international communication”, which deals with interaction in the public sphere at the level of groups, I tend to restrict the label

"intercultural communication" to *interaction among individuals or small groups of individuals belonging to differentially identifiable or identified groups*, whether or not in purely private or in institutionalized contexts, but not in the public sphere or at the group level as such. This practice has the advantage of freeing the notion of intercultural communication from its undesirable connotation with stable or fixed cultural entities (or "cultures") and placing the locus of variability where it truly belongs, i.e. at the individual level, with every individual necessarily belonging to many different types of groups, only some of which can be labeled "cultural", thus avoiding the attribution of communicative phenomena to cultural differences where they might be explainable in more general terms.<sup>5</sup>

### A pragmatic perspective

Let me now try to identify the linguistic perspective from which I approach instances of international communication. Briefly, this perspective is a pragmatic one, where "pragmatics" is conceived as a fundamentally interdisciplinary (i.e., cognitive, social, and cultural) look at language use. Its basic premise is that language use, both on the production and on the interpretation side, consists in the constant making of choices at all levels of structure, under a diversity of contextual constraints, differentially situated in relation to reflexive awareness, and contributing dynamically to a process of meaning generation. Put differently, the general concern of *pragmatics* is to understand *the meaningful functioning of language as a dynamic process operating on context-structure relationships at various levels of salience*. To make sense of the choice-making paradigm, it is important to understand three key notions: variability, negotiability, and adaptability. *Variability* is the property of language which defines the range of possibilities from which choices can be made – a range which is itself flexible and ever-changing. *Negotiability* is the property of language responsible for the fact that choices are not made mechanically or according to strict rules or fixed form-function relationships, but rather on the basis of highly flexible principles and

<sup>5</sup> Though the distinction is not made in the same way, some of the motivations underlying it will be found in Jan Blommaert and Jef Verschueren, eds., *The Pragmatics of Intercultural and International Communication* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamin, 1991), especially in the introduction and in Blommaert's discussion of the cultural content of intercultural communication.

strategies. *Adaptability*, finally, is the property of language which enables human beings to make negotiable linguistic choices from a variable range of possibilities in such a way as to approach points of satisfaction for communicative needs. This concept of adaptability does not contribute any new substance by itself, but it enables us to define four angles from which pragmatic research should approach its topics of investigation. First, *contextual correlates of adaptability* have to be identified, i.e. the ingredients of the communicative context with which linguistic choices, in a given instance of language use, are interadaptable. Second, the processes in question have to be situated with reference to the different *structural objects of adaptability* that are involved, i.e. different levels of linguistic structure at which the choice-making is located or to which it is otherwise attached. Third, any pragmatic description or explanation must account for *the dynamics of adaptability*, i.e. the actual processes of meaning generation. Fourth, differences in the *salience of the adaptation processes*, in relation to consciousness (vs. automaticity) or reflexive awareness, have to be considered.

While I would like to expand on the theoretical background, in this context I can only refer to its book-length treatment in Verschueren,<sup>6</sup> trying to devote as much attention as possible to its implications for studying international communication.<sup>7</sup> In this section I will mainly restrict myself to the need for taking seriously the *contextual constraints on the production of instances of international communication*, taking as my example *the news media*. The contextual and institutional embeddedness of the news media is an area in which linguists can safely rely on the work of others, while they run great risks by ignoring that work. I am referring here to the vast literature on news reporting practices and institutions and the consequences of these practices and their structural institutional embedding for the shape of international communication in the media. Many sociologists, media specialists, and political scientists (such as Thompson, Gans, Schudson, Hess, to name just a few) have carefully documented the growth of the media as institutions, as economic enterprises, and increasingly as vast media conglomerates, dependent for their survival on political forces, marketability, speed,

<sup>6</sup> J. Verschueren, *Understanding Pragmatics* (London: Edward Arnold/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Wherever useful, I will refer to passages in the book that provide further explanation for what I am saying. The enumerated key notions, for instance, are more fully explained in *ibid.*, ch. 2, 55-68.

and competitiveness.<sup>8</sup> Attention has been drawn to many of the negative effects of this embedding on media content. Thus it has been pointed out that a growing quantity of information does not always mean that the availability of information is evenly distributed. Hess points out that in the United States, for instance, international news is receiving less attention than a couple of decades ago, while American involvement in the world is as strong as ever, and while U.S. foreign policy is more dependent than ever on public opinion, largely formed by television.<sup>9</sup> He also draws attention to another aspect of uneven distribution: élites with the necessary time, interest, and money, have access to more international information than ever before, while those dependent on the evening news and a local paper "will not get the information that reflects the importance of the world for their lives".<sup>10</sup> It has also been pointed out that a growing quantity of information does not necessarily correlate with higher quality. On the contrary, quantity goes hand in hand with growing economic interests in media production. The possible effects of this could be witnessed in July 1999 in Berkeley, California, where, with a lot of local support, employees of the KPFA radio station went on strike. This legendary Berkeley station, established in the sixties as an alternative, listener-supported, and critical, free speech radio, had been so successful that it had become the basis for the establishment of a national network of similar stations, run by the Pacifica Foundation. More stations, however, meant that more economic interests were involved. As a consequence, the management wanted to provide the network with a more mainstream character than it had originally had, which led to restrictions on what could be broadcast and to the firing of whoever did not want to comply with the new directives. Hence the strike. This is an example, on a relatively small scale, of processes that must take place globally in a world where as few as four communication conglomerates (Time Warner, the Bertelsmann group, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, and Silvio Berlusconi's Fininvest) dominate the media.

It is impossible, in the context of this talk, to spell out all the ramifications of such contextual constraints on international communication. Let me, therefore, simply cite an analysis which

<sup>8</sup> See Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Stephen Hess, *International News & Foreign Correspondents* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1996); Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978); Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); Thompson, *The Media*.

<sup>9</sup> Hess, *International News*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

*Brill's Content*, a one-year-old monthly devoted to the critical analysis of media contents, recently gave of the American coverage of the latest Balkan war in an article entitled "War gets the Monica treatment".<sup>11</sup> The main point of the article is that the media have acquired a type of dynamics that determines the treatment of any hot topic, whether it is a trivial affair that catches the public imagination, or a matter of life and death, as in the case of war. I will exemplify the main aspects of this dynamics, as described by Brill, with reference to international communication materials from mainstream American printed media available on a randomly chosen day in the San Francisco Bay Area.<sup>12</sup>

The first point to which the author draws our attention is that because "the media machine is now so massive, so competitive, and so driven by financial goals", it "always needs new material, the more controversial or exclusive the better". This means, in practice, that whatever information is made available by any source, whether reliable or not, will be asserted in the media before it gets verified, though the 'assertion' will usually be indirect to avoid possible blame for false content. This process is easy to observe. Just consider (1):

- (1) BEIJING – The Chinese government has arrested nearly 1,200 government officials accused of associating with the banned meditation group Falun Gong, a human rights group reported yesterday. (SFC, 8)

It is clear that if the events in question were reported only yesterday, no independent verification can possibly have taken place before printing this piece of news. Possible criticism for this practice is of course easily averted by attributing the report to a named source, in this case the Hong Kong-

<sup>11</sup> Steven Brill, "War gets the Monica treatment", *Brill's Content* (August 1999), 99-107 and 136-137.

<sup>12</sup> The day was Tuesday, July 27, 1999. The city: Berkeley, California. I picked up the following papers, all available at the nearest major street corner from where I was staying: *San Francisco Chronicle* (henceforth SFC), *USA Today* (USAT), *Los Angeles Times* (LAT), and *The New York Times* (NYT), leaving behind the more local ones (such as the *Oakland Tribune*, *The Berkeley Voice*, and a few others) as well as the strongly business-and-finance oriented *The Wall Street Journal*. Similarly, I picked up the following news magazines from the nearest bookstore: *Newsweek* (henceforth N), *Time* (T), and *U.S. News & World Report* (USN), leaving behind quite widespread magazines with a more narrowly defined scope (such as *The New Republic*, which describes itself specifically as a journal of politics and the arts, or *The New Yorker*, focusing on commentary, or *Life*, which lets human interest stories dominate) as well as monthlies (such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's Magazine*) and weeklies based abroad (such as the London-based *The Economist*). The comments and overviews in this article will deal only with general international news (defined in accordance with our notion of international affairs), ignoring paper and magazine sections devoted exclusively to business, the arts, or sports.

based Information Center for Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China. This metapragmatic embedding, which now characterizes almost all reporting, takes the place of direct observation by journalists, demonstrating a further dimension of the fundamentally communicative content of whatever 'news' is available: for something to qualify as news, it is sufficient for it to have appeared in a world of discourse. A consequence of this is that often any anonymous source can become a player, or that any story that is made available is quickly picked up.

Second, in Brill's words, "The media machine is largely a one-ring circus and has a fickle, short attention span". Attention is momentaneous. One result of this is that there is not much patience for long stories. Even wars are expected to be fast and easy; if they take too long, media attention dwindles, along with possibly needed public support (whether for conducting the war, if the country of the target audience is involved, or for relief operations). Another result of the bias towards momentaneity is that parallels with earlier events are rarely drawn; events in Kosovo, for instance, were not compared with the ethnic cleansing of the Krajina at the hands of the Croats and carried out with American logistic support just a few years earlier in 1995. Not only is attention momentaneous, but especially on television, there is usually full emphasis on one story at the expense of whatever else might be happening. This is true to a lesser degree for the printed media. Still, in my one-day corpus, the leading story in all three *weeklies* (N, T, and USN) was JFK Jr.'s airplane accident (leaving little room for international news; see Table 1 below), as it had been in all newspapers the week before. JFK Jr. having been found and buried by that time, the *newspapers* had completely moved on to new topics by 27 July, the leading stories reflecting the assumed interests of the target audiences (murders in the Yosemite area for the two California papers, SFC and LAT, and a disastrous heat wave in the Midwest for the one national newspaper, USAT), and being mixed or less clearly identifiable only for the NYT. Apart from such clear foci, quite a range of topics is dealt with, as the following overview (in Table 1) will show. The overview also shows, however, that there is a very strong clustering of themes which, as far as the foreign topics are concerned, seems to obey two rules: the more direct recent US involvement is, or the bigger the stakes the US has traditionally had in a given area (e.g. the Middle East or China and Taiwan), if the specific topic does not imply direct involvement at the time of reporting, the more real *articles* will be found (as opposed to *brief notes*); most of the real articles that do not presuppose US involvement deal with *faits divers* (e.g. fox hunting in Britain, or chaos in the Brazilian telecommunications system).

## American topics of an "international" kind

	SFC	USAT	LAT	NYT	N	T	USN
<i>General</i>							
* Public housing and racial issues	p.2	[p.5]	-	p.14	-	-	-
* Proposition 187	-	-	p.12-3	-	-	-	-
* "Hate crimes"	-	-	/p.14/	-	-	/p.11/	-
<i>Latinos</i>							
* General	-	-	-	-	/p.16/	-	-
* Latinos and "hate crimes"	p.2	[p.2]	p.3-9	-	-	-	-
* Latinos and the elections	p.2	[p.13]	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Refugees</i>							
* Kosovar refugees flying home	-	-	-	[p.19]	-	-	-

## Foreign topics with direct US involvement

SFC	USAT	LAT	NYT	N	T	USN
<i>The Americas</i>						
* Anti-drug war in Colombia	[p.10]	p.7	-	p.4	-	-
* Cuba & US/Canada	-	-	-	[p.10]	-	-
<i>Europe</i>						
* Peace pact for Balkans	p.8-10	p.8	-	-	-	-
* Aid for Kosovo	p.10	-	p.1-4	p.8	-	-
* Ethnic violence in Kosovo	-	/p.14/	p.4	p.8	-	-
				{p.22}		
* Albanians & Russians in Kosovo	-	-	-	-	-	p.40
* Mines and bombs in Kosovo	-	-	-	-	[p.6]	-
* War criminals in Bosnia	-	-	-	-	-	[p.5]
* Relations Moscow-Washington	[p.10]	[p.9]	p.3-9	p.8	p.44-5	-
* Russian spies	-	[p.13]	-	-	-	-
<i>Asia</i>						
* Relations with North Korea	p.8	-	p.11	-	-	-
* Relations with Taiwan	-	-	-	-	-	p.63
* Trade with China	-	[p.13]	{p.14}	-	-	-
* Chinese spies	-	-	-	-	[p.6]	-
<i>Africa</i>						
* Clinton & Morocco	-	/p.14/	-	-	-	-
<i>Middle East</i>						
* Exports to Iran, Lybia, Sudan	[p.5]	-	-	-	-	-
* Clinton & Syria	-	p.9	-	[p.3]	-	-
* Clinton & Barak	-	-	-	-	-	p.64

## Foreign topics with no or less direct US involvement

	SFC	USAT	LAT	NYT	N	T	USN
<i>The Americas</i>							
* Party elections in Mexico	[p.10]	-	-	p.4	-	-	-
* Murders in Jamaica	[p.10]	-	-	-	-	-	-
* Elections in Venezuela	-	[p.9]	-	-	-	-	-
* Telecommunications in Brazil	-	-	p.1-4	-	-	-	-
* Argentina: Menem's future-	-	-	[p.10]	-	-	-	-
<i>Europe</i>							
* Prince William's driving lessons	[p.8]	-	-	-	-	-	-
* Fox hunting in Britain	-	-	-	-	-	-	p.42
* Slovakia (attack on Chinese)	-	-	-	p.10	-	-	-
* Relations Turkey & Greece	-	-	-	[p.10]	-	-	-
* Party elections in Spain	-	-	-	[p.10]	-	-	-
* Serb opposition	-	-	-	/p.22/	-	-	-
<i>Asia</i>							
* China's crackdown on Falun Gong	p.8	-	-	p.1-10 /p.23/	[p.6]	-	p.42
* Taiwan vs. China	p.8	[p.9]	-	-	-	p.62-3	-
* Violence in Indonesia	[p.10]	-	-	[p.10]	-	-	-
* Indonesian elections	-	-	-	[p.10]	-	-	-
* India: sainthood Mother Teresa	[p.9]	-	-	[p.10]	-	-	-
* India: Kashmir war	-	-	-	[p.10]	-	/p.11/	-
* Death of Manglapus in Manila	-	-	p.13	p.17	-	-	-
* Locusts in Kazakhstan	-	-	-	[p.10]	-	-	-
<i>Africa</i>							
* Morocco's King Hassan II	-	-	-	-	[p.11]	-	-
* New Moroccan king	-	-	-	p.3	-	-	-
* Horn of Africa	[p.10]	-	-	-	-	-	-
* Ethnic clashes in Nigeria	[p.10]	-	-	[p.10]	-	-	-
* Kenya and corruption	-	-	-	p.6	-	-	-
* Peace in Liberia	-	-	-	[p.10]	-	-	-
<i>Middle East</i>							
* Palestinian in Israel's Knesset	p.12	[p.9]	p.1-4	p.3	-	-	-
* Israel & Syria	-	/p.14/	-	-	-	-	-
* Peace prospects for Israel	-	-	-	-	-	-	p.35-8
* Israel & Turkey	-	-	-	-	-	-	p.38
* Relations Kuwait & Sudan	-	-	-	[p.10]	-	-	-
* Protest & press censorship in Iran	-	-	-	[p.10]	-	-	[p.8]

Table 1. Overview of international news topics

(Articles are unbracketed; [ ] indicates brief notes;

{ } indicates editorial comments; // indicates letters to the editor or guest opinions)

A third general trend is the present dominance of television over the printed media, to which Brill ascribes two consequences. One is that, "because TV talk is cheaper and usually offers more fireworks than real journalism, any story on cable television soon becomes one with two equivalent sides, so that two talking heads can fight about it on air".

In this way, journalists can avoid presenting any kind of analysis that might show that one side of an issue (if 'sides' can at all be identified) might be more legitimate than another. This practice of trying to be "impartial" (which is not necessarily the same as "fair" or even "objective") is prompted partly by the competitive speed which induces - as describe above - assertion before verification, and partly - as far as television is concerned - by the increasingly internationalized target audience (as witnessed, e.g., by the example of CNN) which the media concerns, as economic enterprises, cannot afford to alienate significant portions of. On that score, the printed media seem to be less constrained, though there is a marked difference between daily newspapers and weeklies. Though a weekly such as *Time* is much more widely spread than a daily such as the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the former tends to be more judgmental (i.e. less television-like in that respect) than the latter, as should be clear from the contrast between (2) and (3); the determining factor here may be the speed of production, which makes it harder to establish a "position" in relation to the events to be reported; alternatively, the reason may be that the SFC report in (2) seems to be simply adopted from Associated Press anyway which, as an international establishment, may have to operate under the same constraints as international television networks. The examples bear on the conflict between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China following Taiwan's President Lee Tenghui's suggestion that the two should deal with each other as separate states.

- (2) TAIPEI - President Lee Tenghui fired off new criticism of China yesterday; using his strongest language since drawing the Beijing regime's fury by saying that China and Taiwan should deal with each other as separate states.

Lee said China's angry response has been "regrettable" and that Beijing's threat to use military force against Taiwan reveals a "hegemonic" attitude.

... China's official Xinhua News Agency said in an editorial yesterday that Lee's statements have destroyed the basis for exchanges because



they canceled a previous understanding that Taiwan and China were to be regarded as one country.

Beijing's furious response to Lee's comments have driven tensions between the sides to their highest level since 1996.... (SFC, 8)

Whereas the two sides are more or less juxtaposed in (2) – and one could imagine this report as the basis for two talking heads debating the issue on television – this is not the case in (3), taken from an article entitled "Playing with fire":

- (3) Taiwan's President can't resist a good spark, but Asia is no place for nationalist pyromania. (T, 62)

The other consequence ascribed by Brill to the dominance of television is that "the only thing better than negative or counter-consensus material is a vivid picture". To the extent that policies are influenced by public opinion, it is usually public opinion based on television images. The most-cited example in recent history is the US intervention in Somalia: there was public support for the sending of troops in December 1992 because of vivid pictures of starving children, but they were pulled out again as soon as pictures had been broadcast of a killed American soldier being dragged through the streets. This practice of producing vivid pictures clearly rubs off on the printed media, not only by way of photographs (the more shocking the better, especially in the weekly magazines) but also in the wording of the text (often with the same nuance between the two types of printed media, and usually combining the two. Thus a very brief note on signs of military pressure on Iran's moderate President Mohammad Khatami from circles that are less patient with pro-democracy protests, is accompanied both by a suggestive title,

- (4) New intrigue roils Iran. (USN, 8)

and the nearest-available vivid picture of popular anti-Khatami sentiments in the form of a photograph taken during a rally in Washington.

Though a pragmatic perspective on international communication can never ignore these consequences of the structural contextual properties of communication media, their discovery as such is not the task of a pragmatic analysis. Some of the critical linguistic literature has in the past mistakenly made this into its goal, seemingly unaware

of the fact that these processes were being fully and adequately described by a variety of social scientists.<sup>13</sup> A truly pragmatic attitude simply takes knowledge of these contextual parameters as its analytical starting point.

Similarly, we should be able to make use of the available descriptions<sup>14</sup> of the way in which different *speech activity types* have evolved in the course of the history of the news media, from the straightforward reproduction of documents to "reporting" in its present sense, and to the use of "interviews", neither of which can be assumed to have been part of the repertoire of discourse practices for a long time, and both of which can be identified as historically created activities. These activity types provide the *frames of meaning* in terms of which specific *speech genres* in the media have to be interpreted.<sup>15</sup>

All this background knowledge will allow us to construct a model of the contextual phenomena which we may reasonably expect the dynamic choice-making in media discourse to be interadaptable with in the process of meaning generation.<sup>16</sup> The crucial question is, then: what further contribution can we make after this starting point? As suggested before, the real work does not start until the dynamics of meaning generation can be analyzed. In what follows I will try to spell out what the most useful approach may be in relation to the specific nature of international media messages, or international communication in general, as discussed earlier in this paper. This will be done with reference to some further remarks on the specific role of language in international communication.

### The role of language in international communication

Another mistake that has sometimes been made in the past was to take as a research goal the revelation of a lack of objectivity in, for instance, news reporting. Research would then result in the observation that reports were not at all objective but rather rooted in a dominant ideology shared by their producers and their audience. Let us leave

<sup>13</sup> For an elaborate example, see Jef Verschueren, *International News Reporting: Metapragmatic Metaphors and the U-2* (Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1985).

<sup>14</sup> As, e.g., in Schudson, *Discovering*; Schudson, *The Power*.

<sup>15</sup> For clarification of this terminology and the related perspective, see Verschueren, *Understanding Pragmatics*, 151-156.

<sup>16</sup> For the actual construction of such a model, we can use as a point of reference the various dimensions of communicative contexts reviewed in *ibid.*, ch. 3.

aside the rather naive implications on handling the notion of objectivity, which is necessarily a fiction in a social world which is made up of events that cannot be divorced from subjectivity at any level. The mistake was not in the research result but in setting as a goal what could easily be predicted from a sound theory of how language works. If pragmatics has established anything at all, it is the fact that communication is not possible without common ground. It is never possible to voice explicitly every aspect of what one means. Therefore it is necessary to make assumptions about what can be expected to be shared with an audience as anchoring point for further communication. If this dictum holds for face-to-face communication, why should it be any different for communication on a wider societal level, as in the largely unidirectional verbal flow from the producers of media products to their intended audience? Hence, the more mainstream the intended audience, the more mainstream and dominant the assumed common world of knowledge will have to be. It is easy to make negative statements about this, for instance with reference to Toynbee who said "The depth of a cultural phenomenon is inversely related to its power to spread". Indeed, the more people certain media are trying to reach, the less nuanced and complicated their message will tend to be. This does not reflect properties of the message producers, nor of the individuals that make up an audience, but it is a straightforward consequence of trying to reach as wide an audience as possible. The process is the same as the one that tends to make keynote lectures at a conference more general than highly specialized papers intended for a small group of listeners. This state of affairs is not to be deplored, but simply to be accepted as a fact, a basic premise or point of departure from which interesting lines of research can start.

Attention for ideology was not entirely misguided, however. In the field of international communication, the main meaning-generating role that language plays is probably to be found in the way in which it functions as a carrier of unquestioned ideas or ingredients of ideologies while overtly functioning as a channel of new information. The main question is again: how does this process work, and how can we investigate it?

All inter-group relations are deeply imbued with ideological content. Members of groups do not interact *in vacuo*, but in a context where international relations are shaped by, and policies are supported on the basis of, mutual perceptions and convictions related to a supposedly natural order of interaction. Once ways of thinking are felt to be "normal", they become powerful tools for legitimating attitudes,

behavior, and policies, whatever the consequences may be in terms of discrimination, patterns of dominance, and even violence. Changes of perspective, however, are possible. Such shifts usually require critical incidents, but since ideological struggle (and, by extension, most social struggle) centers around *meaning*, simple acts of *questioning* may be enough. Its power and its changeability turn ideology into a necessary object of systematic scrutiny in the social sciences. Research may not only help us to gain a better understanding of some of the processes of meaning generation that affect everyone's life, but it may provoke the kind of questioning needed to pave the way for attempts at improving the fate of the less powerful. This expression of hope is purposefully naïve, aware of the limited contribution a researcher can make, but refusing to be paralyzed by such awareness. The limitations are serious indeed. In order to have any impact, changes of perspective should extend beyond the individual. The only certain instruments to bring this about are education and the mass media – both entangled in the structures of power that will resist change. Moreover, any new perspective is susceptible to unpredictable transformations and applications. A permanent monitoring of ideological processes, therefore, is imperative. I will have more to say about that later (in the last section of this paper). Let me first address the issue of how such processes, indeed, can be studied scientifically.

As Hobsbawm says, ideological processes – such as the re-emergence of various kinds of nationalism in Europe – cannot be understood without access to "the view from below".<sup>17</sup> But

that view from below, i.e. the nation as seen not by governments and the spokesmen and activists of nationalist (or non-nationalist) movements, but by the ordinary persons who are the objects of their action and propaganda, is exceedingly difficult to discover.

In this domain, the traditional social and political sciences are confronted with a virtually insurmountable problem. The research instrumentarium at their disposal is suitable mostly for the interpretation of explicitly professed attitudes and positions, either voiced spontaneously (as in political rhetoric and debates) or elicited by means of questionnaires. The more fundamental ideological processes, however, are to be found at the less conscious or implicit

<sup>17</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

level of models of interpretation which every form of explicit communication is anchored into.

Here pragmatics presents itself as the scientific angle *par excellence* to provide a way out of the problem. The value of public discourse as a clue to underlying ideologies can only be assessed (i) if due attention is paid to the variable political and contextual factors which determine to what extent, e.g., the media in different countries are subject to restrictions other than assumptions concerning a world view shared with their audience, and (ii) if the interplay between explicit and implicit meaning is carefully scrutinized. The methodology used in order to meet these requirements must be a *pragmatic analysis*.

The methodology, about which I will say a few more words later, has been extensively applied to the debate concerning minority politics in Belgium,<sup>18</sup> and on a wider scale to European nationalist ideologies emerging from the reporting on conflicts as in ex-Yugoslavia.<sup>19</sup> It is impossible, in this context, to give a full description of the nature of the pragmatics of ideology research.<sup>20</sup> Let me just point out how crucial it is (i) to conduct an analysis at the widest possible range of structural objects of adaptability (from minute linguistic details to general patterns of argumentation and the interplay between different points of view), and (ii) to look specifically for the layers of meaning that are not overtly asserted, that are not questioned, or that are simply taken for granted. Thus, e.g., topic choice (as surveyed in Table 1), which provides one level of analysis, does not only reveal meaning through the choices that are actively made, but also by way of contrast with topics that are *not* selected. In much the same way, patterns of word choice acquire their categorizing function in contrast to the choices that were not made. Consider (5).

- (5) Hate crimes against Latinos are on the rise ... (SFC, 2)

What makes a "hate crime" different from an ordinary "crime"? Why are only hate crimes against members of ethnically or racially different groups given that label? Etc.

<sup>18</sup> See Jan Blommaert and Jef Verschueren, *Debating Diversity: Analysing the Discourse of Tolerance* (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., Michael Meeuwis, "Nationalist ideology in news reporting on the Yugoslav crisis: A pragmatic analysis", *Journal of Pragmatics* 20,3 (1993), 217-237.

<sup>20</sup> Some details are given in Blommaert & Verschueren, *Debating Diversity*, 32-36; Jef Verschueren, "Contrastive ideology research: Aspects of a pragmatic methodology", *Language Sciences* 18,3/4 (1996), 589-603 and Verschueren, *Understanding Pragmatics*, ch. 8.

On a different note (involving reference to markers of salience), close attention to the precise metapragmatic framing of reported content, whatever the attempt at neutrality may be, can show indirect forms of evaluation.<sup>21</sup> Thus, going back to example (2), which on the surface simply juxtaposes the respective contributions in the exchange between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China, a number of descriptive terms such as

- (6) ... the Beijing regime's fury ... China's angry response ... Beijing's furious response ...

contrast sharply with the suggestion of restraint in "Lee's comments", even if Taiwan's President Lee "fired off new criticism of China" using "his strongest language since ...", leaving little doubt as to the evaluative positioning of the report, however subtle it may be. "Criticism", after all, is a valued discourse activity when directed at a regime seen to be oppressive. This example also shows how dangerous it is to draw generalized conclusions from single examples. The contrast between (2) and (3) shows clearly that different evaluative frames can be expected to be evoked within a single society, both potentially contributing to the "meaning" that an event gets for the society in question. This is the rule rather than the exception. Ignoring it would be a gross underestimation of the dynamics and negotiability involved in meaning generation processes.

Before moving on, I should warn against what is probably the most common mistake in this line of research, which is to apply interpretation rules mechanically, as if there were fixed form-function relationships escaping the forces of negotiability and adaptability. Take example (7).

- (7) Hate crimes against Latinos are on the rise, the National Council of La Raza said yesterday, releasing a report at its annual convention that prompted President Raul Yzaguirre to say, "Private citizens and law enforcement officials feel they can harass or attack Hispanic Americans with almost complete impunity". (SFC, 2)

Concluding from this text that the use of quotation marks is a distancing device is not possible until this is supported by further evidence, as in the comment in (8).

<sup>21</sup> For a systematic analysis of patterns of metapragmatic framing in the reporting on a specific international incident, see Verschueren, *International News*.

- (8) Although the authors [of the report] rely heavily on anecdotal evidence, they say the study gives a first-of-its-kind look at an emerging pattern of hate activity against Latinos. (SFC, 2)

In other contexts, the use of quotes may be to invoke supporting authority, or its functionality can be purposefully indeterminate.

The pragmatic approach enables us to answer the following type of question: What are the ingredients of the world view which, in a given community, serves as the starting point for communication concerning interethnic problems, nationality questions, or other types of international relations? In other words, what models of society and what models of group relations in the public sphere form the foundation for discussions concerning the management of differences and disputes? Or, what common frames of reference (again, within given communities), can the search for political options and solutions rely upon? How are those frames of reference affected by flows of communication?

### International communication and globalization

The issue of ideology is commonly linked to patterns of hegemony and dominance. In relation to international communication, the term "globalization" has been in fashion for a while, combined with suggestions of American cultural imperialism. Some of the facts are clear and have again been documented profusely by social scientists. While four media conglomerates really are the key players in the communication industry, of the seventy-eight largest ones, according to data from UNESCO (in 1989), thirty-nine are based in the US, twenty-five in Western Europe, eight in Japan, five in Canada, and one in Australia. Moreover, the actual content of international news reporting is highly dependent on the activities of four major news agencies, the (British) Reuters, the (American) Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI), and the (French) Agence France-Presse (AFP). The effects of this in terms of content are hardly negligible (as should be clear, for instance, from Table 1). But what does this mean in terms of global unity and diversity, specifically in relation to the role of language in the world of international communication?

The cultural imperialism paradigm, though not entirely without ground, tends to be oblivious to two fundamental pragmatic

phenomena. First of all, it does not take variability and communicative dynamics completely seriously. Reports, even when originating in one place, get transformed in a variety of ways. Sometimes this results from reformulations or translations. Sometimes it simply results from being dropped in a different social and cultural context: the meaning potential of an unchanged text may dramatically change when transported from one context to another. This is a phenomenon that occurs in everyday interaction as much as in international communication, though it may be less noticeable.

Second, and probably more important even, the cultural imperialism thesis grossly underestimates the recipient's contribution to the meaning generation process. The recipients of media messages are not simply passive consumers (in the way in which they could be said to be consumers of Macdonalds hamburgers). They are active participants, appropriating and transforming aspects of meaning in ways that are far beyond the control of the producers of the messages. Especially in terms of ideological content, significant transformations may be expected to take place.

As a result, the role of language in international communication provides an excellent example of how a certain degree of unity (though in the form of economically and politically guided forces of globalization) combines with lasting diversity – and probably even the creation of patterns of diversity that have not existed before. In this context, a special place is no doubt occupied by English, the main medium for most of the dominant producers of many forms of international communication. But we should not be misled to believe that English is also where the story ends.<sup>22</sup> Much international communication somehow passes through the filter of English, a process which deserves close scrutiny, but which cannot be studied seriously without taking the metaphor literally: if English is the filter, we cannot understand its functioning without comparing the communicative "substance", often in a different language, before and after passing through.

Again, the main question is how these processes ought to be investigated empirically. This brings me, finally, to the main – and largely programmatic – topic of this paper: international communication monitoring.

<sup>22</sup> For a comparable line of argumentation, see Thompson, *The Media*, 149-178.

### International communication monitoring

In *The Pathology of Power*, Norman Cousins says in the context of his discussion of the nuclear arms race: "The world is connected in every way except through institutions capable of controlling power and its effects".<sup>23</sup> It is of course the nature of power that it can define its own controls. Nevertheless, various forms of global monitoring exist. Two obvious examples are the monitoring of respect for human rights by organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, and the monitoring of arms sales and the strategic-military balance by a variety of strategic studies institutes. Given the central role of communication in international affairs today, and the transformed nature of international affairs as described at the beginning of this paper, it seems to me that such efforts should be complemented by a global monitoring of flows of communication that may be relevant to preventive diplomacy. What is needed, in particular, is *the permanent monitoring of collective meaning generation and societal ideologies pertinent to the intra-state and inter-state experience of diversity in view of local, regional, and global issues of peace and security*. This should be done on the widest possible scale, paying as much attention to North-South relations and South-South interaction as to the issues preoccupying Europe and North America since the (relative) relaxation of East-West tensions.

Such an undertaking is at the same time easier and more difficult than other types of monitoring programs. It is easier because the data to be analyzed are not hidden but in plain view, namely the types of international communication that I have identified as being publicly accessible. On the other hand, it may be more difficult, because of the multitude of data, in many languages, that requires systematic scrutiny at different levels of analysis and with special attention for patterns of implicit meaning in their interaction with explicit layers. There is no doubt, however, that pragmatics – in its widest sense – may provide the realistic perspective on international communication and its contextual constraints that is required for such an undertaking, as well as the necessary theoretical and methodological backgrounds, even if we have only been able to give the roughest possible sketch in these few pages.

<sup>23</sup> Norman Cousins, *The Pathology of Power* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987).

Donald Winford

### "The Other Englishes". A Contact Linguistics Perspective

#### Introduction

The increasing spread of English world-wide over the last four hundred years or so has led to the emergence of a broad range of Englishes which function in various capacities – as primary vernaculars, *lingue franche*, and official languages – in communities across the globe. Some of these are regarded simply as continuations of the English varieties originally spoken within the British Isles, cases of "normal transmission" due to migration of native speakers of these varieties to places like Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, countries which have been referred to variously as English-Native-Language (ENL) communities, or as members of the "Inner Circle" of English-speaking communities. This expansion represented the first major diaspora of English outside the British Isles, though it might be argued that the spread of English from England to other parts of the British Isles represented the true first diaspora. English colonial expansion during the 17th to 19th centuries also led to the gradual emergence in the colonies of restructured or "indigenized" forms of English which serve as primary vernaculars or as *lingue franche* for intergroup communication, existing side by side with forms of standard English which function as official media of communication. The communities involved in this "second diaspora" of English include a wide variety of sociolinguistic situations, some multilingual like the ex-British colonies of Africa and South and South East Asia, some quasi-bilingual or diglossic, such as the countries of the Anglophone Caribbean. The former group of multilingual communities have traditionally been referred to as "English as a Second Language" (ESL) communities, while those in the latter group (the Caribbean and Pacific "creole" communities) have been placed in

the category of "English as a Second Dialect" (ESD) communities.<sup>1</sup> Both groups are included by Kachru in his "Outer Circle" of English-speaking communities.<sup>2</sup>

The growing dominance of English-speaking countries of the inner circle in global trade and economic expansion within the 20th century has led to the increasing spread of English into many other countries in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere. These countries have traditionally been referred to as "English as a Foreign Language" (EFL) communities, or members of the "Expanding Circle" of English. They include countries like China and Japan, Israel and Egypt, and most of Europe. In these countries, the primary motivation for the acquisition of English is that it is a means to economic and technical progress, modernization, higher education and so on. Also, particularly for the young, it is a way of identifying with youth culture, its music, fashions and anti-establishment ideology world-wide.

The growing demand for English as a tool for business, trade, politics, fashion, etc., has led, interestingly, to serious conflicts of loyalty in the expanding circle, where the hegemony of English poses an increasing threat to the status and prestige of the languages native to these communities. In many ways then, the issues raised by the spread of English in these communities reflect those that arise in the communities of the outer circle. My concern here, however, is only with the latter, the communities in which the "New Englishes" are spoken.

Most of the discussion about the history, classification and contemporary sociolinguistic status of the new Englishes has focussed on the so-called "indigenized" varieties which arose in multilingual settings such as those in India, Singapore, Malaysia and the former British colonies of Africa – all members of the "outer circle". Investigation of these forms of English has been conducted primarily within the framework of a fairly well-circumscribed field of study variously labelled "World Englishes" or "English as a World Language" (EWL). This field, like every sub-specialisation, has tended to define itself as separate from other areas of investigation,

<sup>1</sup> M. Gorlach, "English as a World Language – The State of the Art" (hereafter cited as "EWL"), in M. Gorlach, *Englishes: Studies in Varieties of English 1984-1988* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1991), 10-35. Reprinted from *English World-Wide* 9 (1988), 1-32.

<sup>2</sup> B. Kachru, "The Second Diaspora of English", in T. W. Machan and C. T. Scott, eds., *English in its Social Contexts: Essays in Historical Sociolinguistics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 230-252.

and has generated a distinctive set of issues and topics of enquiry which dominate the literature. However, it is clear that the field of EWL shares a great deal in common with the study of contact vernaculars in general, and that its theoretical and methodological concerns overlap considerably with those of researchers in the broader field of Contact Linguistics – the study of language contact and its consequences. One of the primary aims of the present paper is to explore some of the ways in which the study of World Englishes might be more fully integrated into this broader field of investigation.

The field of Contact Linguistics investigates language contact, its social settings and linguistic consequences. The phenomena it examines include different degrees of lexical and structural borrowing; dialect contact and koiné formation; cases of convergence, as in sprachbund and similar situations; code-switching; bilingual mixed languages, language restructuring under shift, including tutored and untutored second language acquisition (SLA); pidgin and creole formation, and so on. One of the major aims of this field of enquiry is to provide an empirical and theoretical framework within which to construct a unified theory of contact-induced change. Such a framework includes the sociohistorical and sociocultural setting of the contact, as well as the linguistic inputs, their structural relationships, and the linguistic constraints on their mutual influence. The area of Contact Linguistics most immediately relevant to research on the New Englishes is the study of language shift, that is, tutored and untutored SLA. Language shift can lead to varying degrees of change and restructuring of a target language under the influence of the L1 of the shifting group as well as other "universal" strategies of learning, including simplification and regularization. The New Englishes are themselves, of course, the result of language shift, and their study can therefore contribute directly toward our understanding of how shift occurs, as well as to a more general theory of how contact vernaculars arise.

The pervasive themes of the literature on World Englishes are in fact essentially the same as those of Contact Linguistics in general. Among the more important ones that can be singled out for discussion here are the following:

- Questions of classification and typology.
- Questions of origin, the kinds of restructuring and the mechanisms of change which produced these vernaculars.
- Questions of sociolinguistic status.

There are of course several other major concerns that can be identified, including the investigation of the contemporary sociolinguistic structures of the communities involved, on-going processes of language acquisition and change, the study of discourse structures, of literary genres and other aspects of literacy in the New Englishes, and so on. But my focus here will be on the three themes listed above.

### Questions of classification and typology

The classification of contact vernaculars has always been a primary concern of scholars in the field of Contact Linguistics, though consensus in this area has been hard to achieve. The same appears to be true of the classification of the new Englishes, with scholars generally torn between a typology of sociolinguistic situations and a typology of the varieties of English themselves. Classifications based on sociolinguistic profiles distinguish between ENL (English as Native Language), ESD (English as Second Dialect), ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) communities.<sup>3</sup> Other classifications distinguish between monolingual and multilingual situations, dividing the former into "ancestral" vs "contact variety" countries, and the latter into "ancestral" vs "scholastic" vs "contact variety".<sup>4</sup> All of these classifications seem to take the distinction between "native" or "ancestral" English-speaking countries and "non-native" or "contact-variety" countries as basic. Yet the distinction remains problematic since, in the first place, many communities do not fit any one category exactly, and second, there is a great deal of overlap across categories. For instance, as Gortlach points out, Scotland, which is placed in the "monolingual ancestral" category in some classifications, belongs more accurately in the ESD category along with other diglossic situations such as the creole communities of the Caribbean.<sup>5</sup> Arguably, this is true of Ireland and perhaps Wales as well, especially since the vernaculars of these communities are themselves descended from contact varieties of English shaped by original indigenous languages. It also remains problematic how far the label "second dialect" applies to the

<sup>3</sup> Gortlach, "EWL", 1-32.

<sup>4</sup> A. F. Gupta, "Colonisation, Migration, and Functions of English", in E. W. Schneider, ed., *Englishes around the World, Vol. 1 General Studies, British Isles, North America* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997), 53-54.

<sup>5</sup> Gortlach, "EWL", 1-32.

vernaculars of creole communities in the Caribbean and Pacific, as opposed to communities like Scotland and Ireland. Similar problems arise with typologies based on the varieties themselves.

As several researchers have pointed out, the distinction between "native" (meaning "ancestral") and "non-native" (meaning "colonial") varieties of English is a misnomer at best, since most contact varieties used in the ex-colonies are native languages in the true sense of that term. The distinction between "normally transmitted" (ancestral) and "non-normally transmitted" (colonial) is also of limited use, as Gupta points out.<sup>6</sup> It seems best to recognize that certain "ancestral" (e.g., Scottish and Irish) Englishes belong with colonial varieties in the general category of "contact vernaculars", and that they share much in common in terms of the sociohistorical and linguistic processes that shaped their genesis, development and use. This still leaves open the question of how the new Englishes fit into a typology of contact vernaculars in general. The answer to this is far from straightforward, since there is little consensus on this issue among scholars of Contact Linguistics. Thomason suggests a primary classification into pidgins, creoles and bilingual mixed languages, and leaves it to empirical investigation to determine how other types (including the new Englishes, simplified languages, and "non-radical" or intermediate creoles) might be related to the primary categories.<sup>7</sup> Except for the category of creoles, Thomason's typology is of little relevance to students of EWL. Moreover, even the category of creoles poses problems, since it is traditionally taken to include all of the vernaculars of the Caribbean (and lately the Pacific) despite the fact that these differ tremendously both in terms of their genesis and contemporary structure. They include "radical" creoles such as Sranan and Ndjuka in Suriname, less radical but still significantly restructured basilects such as those in Guyana, Belize and Jamaica which are highly divergent from Standard English, and finally "intermediate" varieties such as Barbadian (Bajan), urban Guyanese and Trinidadian. Only the last of these closely resemble the other New Englishes in both their origins and the degree of their contemporary divergence from Standard English. The category which these new Englishes seem to fit best are cases of shift, that is, untutored or "natural" second language acquisition. What they share in common is that they arose in similar

<sup>6</sup> Gupta, "Colonisation", 53.

<sup>7</sup> S. G. Thomason, "A Typology of Contact Languages", in A. Spears and D. Winford, eds., *The Structure and Status of Pidgins and Creoles* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997), 71-88.

sociohistorical circumstances, involving the imperfect learning and restructuring of settler varieties of English. There are therefore close affinities among the “intermediate creole” vernaculars of the Caribbean, the ESL varieties of multilingual communities like India, Singapore and Malaysia, and the vernaculars of Scotland, Ireland and Wales. From the perspective of shift-induced change, there seems to be no valid reason for distinguishing so sharply between ESD and ESL categories of new Englishes, or between “ancestral” and “colonial” varieties. Moreover, varieties such as African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Chicano English in the United States belong squarely within this group. The similarities in sociolinguistic history among all these forms of English would seem to dictate that they be classified alike, since they are the result of very similar processes of shift, and all function as primary vernaculars of their communities, in a diglossic relationship with forms of Standard English.

In short, the new Englishes constitute a special type of contact vernacular distinct both from “radical” creoles on the one hand and bilingual mixed languages on the other. This is not to say that the various categories share nothing in common. Clearly there are similarities in both the sociohistorical circumstances and the linguistic processes that produced them. Further study of these similarities (and differences) can contribute much to our understanding of the mechanisms of contact-induced change, and the role of social factors in regulating such change. Students of both EWL and Contact Linguistics can benefit much from mutual exchange of ideas and findings.

### Questions of origin and processes of change

The new Englishes might profitably be compared with a wide range of other contact vernaculars that originated through processes of shift. As Winford argues, the outcomes of shift might be placed on a continuum ranging from cases of relatively successful second language acquisition (SLA), to cases of untutored or “natural” SLA, to intermediate creoles, and finally to cases of more radical creole formation.<sup>8</sup> The new Englishes occupy the mid range of this continuum, though they do not constitute a completely homogeneous

<sup>8</sup> D. Winford, “Creoles in the Context of Contact Linguistics”, in G. Gilbert, ed., *Pidgin and Creole Linguistics in the 21st Century* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, to appear).

group. The differences among the outcomes on this continuum have to do essentially with the degree of input from the L1’s of the learners who created them in the first place. SLA scholars refer to such input as “transfer”, while creolists traditionally refer to it as “substratum influence”. I prefer to refer to this phenomenon as “L1 retention”, that is, retention of L1 strategies or features in the newly created vernacular. Figure 1 illustrates the continuum of outcomes:

Figure 1: A continuum of outcomes of shift

<----- Less L1 retention ----->-----> More L1 retention ----->

<i>Advanced SLA</i>	<i>Restructured settler dialects</i>	<i>“ESL” vernaculars</i>	<i>Intermediate creoles</i>	<i>Radical creoles</i>
Scots Native-like command of TL	Indian English Hiberno-English AAVE etc.	Bajan Singapore English Malaysian English etc.	Jamaican Urban GC Trinidadian etc.	Belizean Rural GC etc.

The close similarities between (especially) intermediate creoles and the “ESL” varieties have already prompted some researchers to refer to the latter as “creoloid”. Thus Ho & Platt note that “basilectal” Singapore English shares many of the features of a creole, e.g., serial verb structures (SVCs), variable marking of past tense, variable occurrence of articles and replacement of articles by other items, variable copula and auxiliary be.<sup>9</sup>

The fact is, of course, that the features in question are not “creole” (that is, uniquely characteristic of creoles) at all, but rather the result of very similar processes of restructuring which the new Englishes and other contact vernaculars share with creoles. If basilectal Sg.E has serial verb structures, for example, it is because the substrate languages of the learners of English in this contact setting (particularly dialects of Chinese) have serial structures which have been incorporated into Sg.E via L1 retention, just as West African serial verb constructions were incorporated into Caribbean creoles. What unites creoles and the other Englishes are similarities in processes of restructuring of a target language (though “target” is a controversial term in the case of radical creole formation) under contact. Students of

<sup>9</sup> M.-L. Ho and J. T. Platt, *Dynamics of a Contact Continuum: Singaporean English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 1 (hereafter cited as SE).



EWL have developed a terminology of their own to describe the types of restructuring characteristic of the other Englishes. Much of the literature has been devoted to two central "processes" of change – "nativization" and "acculturation". According to Kachru, "nativization involves the approximation of a language to the linguistic and discursal characteristics of the native (or dominant) language of the area into which it has been transplanted".<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, "acculturation ... focuses on the people learning the transplanted language; it refers to the reflection of their socio-cultural identities in a nativized language". The emphasis on both linguistic and socio-cultural aspects of language change under contact is appropriate, and in keeping with the general aims of Contact Linguistics to account for both the structural and non-structural aspects of contact-induced language restructuring.<sup>11</sup>

Students of Contact Linguistics, however, may have problems with the choice of terms such as "nativization", in the sense in which Kachru uses it. The term has traditionally been used by creolists to refer to the adoption of a previous second language variety (a contact vernacular used as a lingua franca) as the first or native language of new generations of children. For students of Contact Linguistics, the creation of contact vernaculars under situations of language shift involves specific processes of restructuring, in particular changes due to "substratum interference" (or L1 retention). As Thomason & Kaufman point out, such interference

results from imperfect group learning during a process of language shift. That is, in this kind of interference a group of speakers shifting to a target language fails to learn the target language (TL) perfectly. The errors made by members of the shifting group in speaking the TL then spread to the TL as a whole when they are imitated by original speakers of that language.<sup>12</sup>

In the case of the new Englishes, of course, these changes do not spread to the external TL as such, but become institutionalized as features of the newly created contact variety which serves as the vernacular of the society.

<sup>10</sup> Kachru, "Diaspora", 235.

<sup>11</sup> U. Weinreich, *Languages in Contact* (The Hague: Mouton, 1953. Reprinted 1967).

<sup>12</sup> S. G. Thomason and T. Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization and Genetic Linguistics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 38-39.

In addition to L1 retention or substratum influence, contact-induced changes in a putative TL under shift include processes of simplification and regularization. The similarities between all of these processes and those which characterize more conventional ("tutored") SLA have been recognized by students of EWL, who often use the terminology of SLA studies, including such concepts as transfer, interference, interlanguage, error, and fossilization, to characterize the emergence of the new Englishes.<sup>13</sup> SLA scholars, for their part, are increasingly beginning to see their area of enquiry as part of the larger field of Contact Linguistics, and are beginning to adopt its terminology.<sup>14</sup> Like SLA researchers, students of EWL have a great deal to offer to a general theory of contact-induced change, through the rich empirical data they have accumulated on the history, structure and socio-cultural status of the new Englishes. The growing rapprochement between students of SLA, creole linguistics, code-switching, convergence, bilingual mixed languages and other areas of Contact Linguistics, will no doubt embrace the field of EWL in the near future.

It is important as well to distinguish those processes of change which accompany the genesis of contact vernaculars from the later changes, whether internally or externally motivated, which attend their continuing evolution and development. Here again, the study of the other Englishes can offer real insight into the stages of creation and development, since in many cases these vernaculars emerged in the relatively recent past, so that both the socio-cultural setting and the linguistic inputs to their formation can be thoroughly documented. This affords the study of EWL a distinct advantage over the study of creoles and other contact languages whose emergence is shrouded in the distant past. Ho & Platt's study of Singapore English is especially instructive in this regard.<sup>15</sup> They document a variety of features particularly in the morphosyntax and syntax of Sg.E. which are due to L1 retention from Chinese in particular, or to processes of simplification and regularization, or to the combined effects of both. Thus we find serial verb constructions like the following, which reflect the syntax of both Mandarin and Hokkien, the two principal Sg.E. substrates.

<sup>13</sup> B. Kachru, "World Englishes 2000: Resources for Research and Teaching", in L. E. Smith and M. L. Forman, eds., *World Englishes 2000* (Honolulu: East West Center, University of Hawaii, 1997), 209-251.

<sup>14</sup> T. Odlin, "Transferability and Linguistic Substrates", *Second Language Research* 8,3 (1992), 171-202.

<sup>15</sup> Ho and Platt, SE.

1a. Sg.E. "That book on the TV, take come here".

Compare:

1b. Mandarin: ná lái  
bring come

1c. Hokkien: giá/thèh lái  
bring/take come.

2a. Sg.E. "You sit car come here, ah?"  
"Did you come here by car?"

Compare:

2b. Hokkien: lì chē chhiā lái chit-táu āh?  
you sit car come here QP  
"Did you come here by car?"

Similarly, Sg.E. employs Chinese-style question tagging as in the following:

3. "Our chicken also the same, all came from one chicken, right or not?"

Other features which are clearly due to Chinese substratum influence (sometimes reinforced by Malay) include the use of "emphatic" *got*;<sup>16</sup> use of *one* as a relative marker, or as a marker of emphasis in sentence-final position;<sup>17</sup> the use of "topic-comment structures";<sup>18</sup> and the use of several discourse particles, e.g., *ma*, *ah*, *lah*, etc., borrowed directly from Chinese. Similarities such as these have led some scholars to suggest that basilectal Sg.E. is in some respects typologically closer to Chinese than to English.<sup>19</sup> Creolists would not be surprised at this, since there is a long-standing view in the field that certain creoles are typologically closer to West African languages than to the European languages that supplied the bulk of their vocabulary. The strategies of L1 retention which the creators of creoles employed are clearly very similar to those which characterized the genesis of the new Englishes, and indeed of other contact vernaculars based on languages other than English, such as Taiwanese Mandarin. For example, Caribbean creoles display a similar preservation of abstract Kwa syntactic patterns in their SVC's, as illustrated in the following example of "give"-type

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. W. C. Ritchie, "Second Language Acquisition and the Study of Non-native Varieties of English: Some Issues in Common", *World Englishes* 5 (1986), 15-30.

serial constructions in Sranan Tongo, whose primary substrate influence came from Gbe dialects.

4.<sup>20</sup> Sranan: Kofi hari a ston puru na ini a olo (SN)  
Kofi pull the stone remove LOC in the hole.  
"Kofi pulled out the stone from the hole".<sup>21</sup>

Xwela-Gbe: Koku yi xoma lɔ le sɔ oxi-me  
Koku take book the pl. go market-LOC  
"Koku brought the book to the market".<sup>22</sup>

This kind of strategy is a universal feature of contact vernaculars in general. Thus in Hiberno-English we find evidence of the retention of abstract Irish Gaelic syntactic patterns in verb phrase structure, as in the following example:<sup>23</sup>

5. HE: She's after selling the boat  
"She's just sold the boat".  
Irish: Tá sí tréis an bád a dhíol.  
Be + non-past she after the boat selling.

We might compare the retention of native Taiwanese morpho-syntactic patterns in the vernacular Mandarin acquired as a second language in Taiwan, as in the following examples from Lin.<sup>24</sup> Note how Taiwanese Mandarin (TM) retains the syntactic patterns of native Taiwanese (TW), departing from standard (Beijing) Mandarin (BM).

6. TW: wà iūng gyán-e kī hākhāo.  
I use walking go school  
TM: wǒyòng zǒu-dē qù xuéxiào.  
I use walking go school  
BM: wǒ zǒulù dào xuéxiào  
I walk go school  
"I walk to school"

<sup>20</sup> Tone marks are omitted from this sentence.

<sup>21</sup> M. Sebba, *The Syntax of Serial Verbs* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1987), 123.

<sup>22</sup> My thanks to Bettina Migge for providing me with the Xwela-Gbe example and several others from her fieldwork data.

<sup>23</sup> J. Harris, "Syntactic Variation and Dialect Divergence", *Journal of Linguistics* 20 (1984), 319.

<sup>24</sup> H. Lin, "Taiwan Mandarin – a Case of Substratum Influence" (The Ohio State University, Dept. of Linguistics: unpublished research paper, 1997).

Also among the features which Ho & Platt examine in the morphosyntax of Sg.E. are variable use of copula/auxiliary *be*; omission of subject pronouns; noun plural formation and past tense marking. The prevalence of zero copulas and zero marking of plurality and past tense can be ascribed to the joint effects of simplification and substratum influence. The universality of several of these features in the other Englishes, as well as in creoles and early interlanguage, suggests once more that all of these situations are characterized by very similar types of restructuring.

Singapore English, like other contact vernaculars, has of course fashioned its own peculiar grammar in these areas. Thus there are features not found in the Caribbean such as the use of *is* and *was* as markers of present and past tense, as in the following:

7a. *My father is stay here what.*<sup>25</sup>  
"My father lives here".

7b. *I was study in primary school.*  
"I studied in a primary school".

Some features such as the use of *useto* to express both present and past habituality,<sup>26</sup> existential *got*<sup>27</sup> are also found in the Caribbean, though not always with the same uses (for instance, *useto* is confined to past habituality in Caribbean Englishes). In the copula system, as in so many of the other Englishes, we find a hierarchy of copula absence, with adjectival and progressive complements showing near categorical absence, while locatives, passives and temporals display higher rates of copula presence. The pattern here is quite different from that found in Caribbean Englishes and AAVE, reflecting the very different influences of the Chinese substrates on Sg.E. on the one hand, and of the West African substrates on Caribbean Englishes and AAVE on the other. Other features such as variable marking of past tense depending on predicate type (telic/non-telic) and the stative/non-stative distinction, as well as the effects of phonetic environment, display even closer similarities to what is found in Caribbean Englishes. In these cases, substratum influence or L1 retention appears to play a secondary role to "universal" processes of simplification.

<sup>25</sup> Ho and Platt, SE, 35.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 77.

The fact that the outcomes are not identical in all cases is clear evidence that differences in both the linguistic inputs as well as the social settings of the contact play a major role in determining the nature and extent of the restructuring that takes place. Understanding these differences and their motivations constitutes one of the central goals of a theory of contact-induced change. By documenting the details of the sociohistorical settings, linguistic inputs and patterns of intergroup communication which gave rise to the new Englishes, studies of EWL have the potential to contribute much to a unified theory of how contact vernaculars come into being.

### Questions of sociolinguistic status and function

The adoption of the new Englishes as primary vernaculars or as *lingue franche* vital to intergroup communication in former English colonies has brought with it a range of problems that are typically associated with low-prestige varieties which function alongside the standard varieties which serve as official languages in these communities. On the one hand, the new Englishes serve as reflections of the social identities of their users, many of whom in fact acquire them as native languages. On the other hand, socioeconomic and political reality dictates that they are relegated to the status of unwelcome and disadvantaged deviations, even corruptions, of the standard language, which is the avenue to educational and social advancement.

Discussion of the sociolinguistic status and functions of the new Englishes has, not surprisingly, been central in the literature on EWL. Among the themes explored is the unequal social and official standing of the new Englishes vis a vis British, American or Australian standard varieties. The issue is complicated by the fact that the new Englishes themselves are not monolithic, but typically comprise a continuum with a local standard at one extreme and a divergent vernacular at the other. The issue then is not simply one of weighing the merits of a local standard against those of an external one. The more pressing problem is how to accommodate the vernacular varieties as legitimate and autonomous forms of expression in their own right, distinct from and yet complementary to the standard varieties. The sociolinguistic reality is that the vernacular forms of the new Englishes have long existed in a diglossic relationship with the standard varieties. As is usual in such cases, the standard has acquired important functions as a medium for higher education, for legal and administrative communication, for

politics and other public spheres of activity. This means that a command of standard English is a prerequisite for socioeconomic success, political participation, economic and technological advancement and modernization. Since those who have a command of Standard English have a clear advantage over those who don't, this state of affairs reinforces existing inequalities in the social hierarchy. On the other hand, the vernacular varieties serve as primary media for everyday informal interaction, and have become markers of local community identity for large sections of the population. Moreover, their use as "link languages" across ethnic boundaries has reinforced their status as badges of shared national identity. Inevitably then, there is continuing conflict between the public or overt image of standard varieties as symbols of prestige and power, and the private or covert perception of the vernaculars as symbols of shared community membership and identity. This dichotomy is typical of the new English communities in general, including those like Ireland and Scotland which have not traditionally been included within the "outer circle".

Milroy's and Milroy & Margrain's<sup>28</sup> studies of vernacular language loyalty and social network structure in working class Belfast communities reveal a clear distinction between the status-oriented norms which confer prestige on standard varieties and the identity-oriented norms which confer legitimacy on non-standard vernaculars as symbols of group cohesion. Macaulay's study of Glasgow reveals a similar ambivalence in attitudes and evaluation of vernacular Scots and Standard English.<sup>29</sup>

As far as the Caribbean is concerned, similar conclusions have been reached by Reisman<sup>30</sup> for Antigua, Rickford and Haynes for Guyana, Winford for Trinidad and Beckford Wassink for Jamaica.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> L. Milroy, *Language and Social Networks* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980. Repr. 1987); L. Milroy and S. Margrain, "Vernacular Language Loyalty and Social Network", *Language in Society* 9 (1980), 43-70.

<sup>29</sup> R. K. S. Macaulay, *Language, Social Class and Education* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1977).

<sup>30</sup> K. Reisman, "Cultural and Linguistic Ambiguity in a West Indian Village", in N. E. Whitten and J. F. Szwed, eds., *Afro American Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1970), 129-44.

<sup>31</sup> J. Rickford, "Standard and Non-standard Language Attitudes in a Creole Continuum", *Society for Caribbean Linguistics Occasional Paper # 16* (St. Augustine, Trinidad: University of the West Indies). Reprinted in N. Wolfson and J. Manes, eds., *Language of Inequality* (The Hague: Mouton, 1983), 145-160; L. Haynes, *Language in Barbados and Guyana: Attitudes, Behaviours, and Comparisons* (Stanford University: Ph.D. dissertation, 1973); D. Winford, "Teacher Attitudes toward Language Varieties in a Creole Community", *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 8 (1976), 47-75; A. Beckford Wassink, "Historic Low Prestige and Seeds of Change: Attitudes toward Jamaican Creole", *Language in Society* 28,1 (1999), 57-92.

The unequal status of standard and non-standard varieties in all these cases is directly related to the universal dichotomy between power and solidarity as dynamics which regulate the choice and use of language varieties. Given these facts, it is difficult to decide which poses the greater threat to the social standing of the vernaculars and the social values of their speakers – the hegemony of external standards, or the hegemony of local standards. Whichever model is chosen for codification and official use, the fact remains that standardization of any variety inevitably creates a linguistic ideology which reflects and confirms inequalities in power and social status. This theme, of course, is central to the long-standing debate over models and standards for English in the outer circle.<sup>32</sup> It is also an old theme in the sociolinguistic literature on creole situations, from Hawaii to the Caribbean.

One approach to the problem has been to emphasize the separate status of the vernaculars and promote their recognition as legitimate instruments of public communication. Perhaps the most vociferous supporters of this position have been Caribbean scholars like Devonish and Haynes.<sup>33</sup> Both emphasize the autonomy of Guyanese creole and argue that its alleged heteronomy (dialectal status) vis a vis English is a fiction, a construct of sociolinguists committed to a particular view of creole continua. It is interesting that a very similar criticism has been levelled against the tendency to view AAVE as a dialect which shares most of its deep structure with SE, and to use SE as a yardstick against which to measure the norms of vernacular usage within the African American community.<sup>34</sup> Despite this, acceptance of the autonomy of vernaculars has been slow to come in most Caribbean communities, though the tide may be turning in some cases. In Belize, for instance, speakers generally make a clear distinction between "English" and "Creole", and tend to keep the two more firmly apart in their everyday usage than other countries do. This was first brought home clearly to me in a recording of an Anansi story by a twelve year old Belizean schoolgirl who began by asking whether she should tell

<sup>32</sup> Kachru, "World Englishes", 220

<sup>33</sup> H. Devonish, *The Selection and Codification of a Widely Understood and Publicly Usable Language Variety in Guyana, to be used as a Vehicle of National Development* (University of York: Ph.D. dissertation, 1978); Haynes, *Barbados and Guyana*.

<sup>34</sup> M. Morgan, "The African-American Speech Community: Reality and Sociolinguistics", in M. Morgan, ed., *Language and the Social Construction of Reality in Creole Situations* (University of California, Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies Publications, 1994), 121-48.

it in creole or English. In Jamaica too, there is growing awareness of the separate status of "Patwa" as the national vernacular.<sup>35</sup>

No Caribbean community, however, has so far committed itself to the recognition of creole as a separate language for purposes of educational policy, as has happened for instance in Hawaii.<sup>36</sup> Issues concerning language pedagogy are of course central to the whole question of the status of the new Englishes. Again, there is a voluminous EWL literature on these issues, essentially re-running the course of similar academic debates conducted in the 1970's in the Caribbean, in the 1980's in Hawaii, and in the 1990's in the USA for AAVE (or "Ebonics"). These debates have generally had similar outcomes – a massive failure to convince policy-makers to adopt the recommendations of academics. The recent debate over the Oakland School Board's attempt to teach SE as a second dialect to speakers of AAVE has highlighted once more the enormous gap between linguists and (some) educators on the one hand, and policy-makers, legislators and (most) members of the public on the other. This was a particularly harsh demonstration of the power of standard language ideology to negate and dismiss the legitimacy of a vernacular and the social value placed on it by its speakers. Lost in all the acrimony and furore was the predicament of scores of thousands of AAVE-speaking children who continue to face significant linguistic and cultural barriers to success in the school system. It is clear, nevertheless, that the problems posed for language education policy by minority cultures such as African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans and others in the US, are essentially similar to those faced by EWL communities in the outer circle. Indeed, the minority US communities themselves are part of the outer circle – they are like third world societies implanted into the larger macro-political structure of the "mainstream" English-dominant society. They therefore suffer the consequences of the inherently discriminatory practices that follow from the strong prescriptivist version of Standard Language Ideology that these societies have adopted. Their experience stands as a warning of things to come in other communities of the outer circle where vernacular forms of new Englishes are becoming entrenched as the native languages of increasingly large segments of the population.

The sociolinguistic study of the new Englishes is still somewhat

<sup>35</sup> Beckford Wassink, "Jamaican Creole", 57-92.

<sup>36</sup> K. Watson-Gegeo, "Language and Education in Hawai'i: Socio-political and Economic Implications of Hawai'i Creole English", in Morgan, ed., *Creole situations*, 101-120.

in its infancy, but it has the potential to contribute much to our understanding of the socio-cultural contexts of language contact and the practical problems arising from the diglossic relationship between standard and non-standard varieties. This represents another opportunity for mutual exchange with scholars who analyze the social forces that shape patterns of language use in other contact situations. It would be particularly interesting to see how frameworks developed for the study of processes of accommodation and divergence in bi- and multi-lingual situations might be applied to the investigation of the new Englishes in their social contexts.

The methodologies developed by anthropologists for social network analysis,<sup>37</sup> and by social psychologists for Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT),<sup>38</sup> seem particularly well-suited to this task.

Research on the new Englishes within these new paradigms has already begun. Meyerhoff has employed CAT to investigate changing patterns of language accommodation and use in Papua-New Guinea.<sup>39</sup> Myers-Scotton draws on various approaches within sociolinguistics, social psychology, and linguistic anthropology to explore the social motivations for language choice in East Africa, particularly in urban areas of Kenya and Zimbabwe.<sup>40</sup> Studies like these provide a model for future research which will integrate the sociolinguistic study of the new Englishes into the broader program of research on the sociolinguistics of language contact situations in general.

<sup>37</sup> J. Boissevain, *Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalitions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974).

<sup>38</sup> H. Giles & N. Coupland, *Language: Contexts and Consequences* (Pacific Grove, California: Brooks/Cole, 1991).

<sup>39</sup> M. Meyerhoff, "Accommodating your Data: the Use and Misuse of Accommodation Theory in Sociolinguistics", *Language & Communication* 18 (1998), 205-225.

<sup>40</sup> C. Myers-Scotton, *Social Motivations for Code-switching: Evidence from Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

in its infancy, but it has the potential to contribute much to our understanding of the socio-cultural context of language contact and the practical problems arising from the complex relationship between standard and non-standard varieties. The opportunity for further exchange with scholars who analyse the social forces that shape patterns of language use in different situations would be particularly interesting in the context of the investigation of the study of processes of acculturation and divergence in bilingual and multilingual situations might be applied to the investigation of the new languages in their social context.

The methodologies employed by researchers in the field of network analysis, and by social psychologists for Community Acculturation Theory (CAT), seem particularly well suited to this kind of research. CAT is a theory of acculturation which has been developed by researchers in the field of acculturation and is based on the idea that acculturation is a process of negotiation between the individual and the social context. CAT is a theory of acculturation which has been developed by researchers in the field of acculturation and is based on the idea that acculturation is a process of negotiation between the individual and the social context.

Research on the new languages within the field of acculturation theory is a relatively new area of research. CAT is a theory of acculturation which has been developed by researchers in the field of acculturation and is based on the idea that acculturation is a process of negotiation between the individual and the social context. CAT is a theory of acculturation which has been developed by researchers in the field of acculturation and is based on the idea that acculturation is a process of negotiation between the individual and the social context.

<sup>1</sup> I. Borstein, *Foreign Acculturation: Theories and Methods* (London: Routledge, 1994).  
<sup>2</sup> H. Giles & N. Coupland, *Language Contact and Change* (London: Blackwell, 1991).  
<sup>3</sup> M. Mestholl, 'Acculturation and the Role of the Individual in Acculturation: Theory and Methodology', *Language & Communication* 12 (1992), 203-217.

# DIALOGUE DEBATE DISSENT

Marie-Hélène Laforest  
"The Spring"  
Dantical

Edwige Dantical is a Haitian writer who has been redrawing the contours of the history and reality of her country since she arrived in the United States in 1976. She is the author of two novels, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) and *The Fortunes of Power* (1998) and a collection of short stories, *Kriks Kriks* (1976). Dantical came to the United States from Haiti at the age of twelve and has resided in New York ever since.

Her writing emerges out of her experience as a diasporic subject which has allowed her to draw from the rich oral culture of Haiti, infusing it with her own feelings of displacement. Also informing her writing is female bonding which figures so prominently in Caribbean life. She has inscribed her cultural experience in the U.S. with the writer of power which had kept her away at the night, thus invalidating the very concept of marginalization.

Like other women writers of African descent, Dantical has boldly followed her own path and gone back to the tongue of her mother, understood as the language taught at birth, spoken by ancestral female figures in the "workshop of the kitchen". However, in her case, the mother tongue was not a variant of English but Kreyòl, the Creole language which has become a symbol of individual and collective identity. She has used the Creole language to connect the past with the present and the place with the people. Her writing is a dialogue between the past and the present, the individual and the collective, the personal and the political. *Breath, Eyes, Memory* is a testament to her ability to connect the past with the present, the individual and the collective, the personal and the political.

<sup>1</sup> Edwige Dantical, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (New York: Knopf, 1994).  
<sup>2</sup> Edwige Dantical, *The Fortunes of Power* (New York: Knopf, 1998).  
<sup>3</sup> Edwige Dantical, *Kriks Kriks* (New York: Knopf, 1976).

Marie-Hélène Leforest

**"A New Tongue Has Sprung".  
An Interview with Edwige Danticat<sup>1</sup>**

Edwige Danticat belongs to a new generation of American writers who are redrawing the contours of American identity. Her mastery and remodeling of English as well as her poetic vision have earned her a National Book Award nomination in 1995 and inclusion among Granta's twenty "Best Young American Novelists" in 1996. She is the author of two novels, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), *The Farming of Bones* (1998) and a collection of short stories, *Krik? Krak!* (1996). Danticat came to the United States from Haiti at the age of twelve and has resided in New York ever since.

Her writing emerges out of her experience as a diasporic subject which has allowed her to draw from the rich oral culture of Haiti, infusing it with her own feelings of displacement. Also informing her writing, is female bonding which figures so prominently in Caribbean life. She has inscribed her cultural experience in the U.S. text, the center of power which had kept her story at the margin, thus invalidating the very concept of marginalization.

Like other women writers of African descent, Danticat has boldly followed her own path and gone back to the tongue of her mother, understood as the language taught at birth, spoken by ancestral female figures in the "wordshop of the kitchen". However, in her case, the mother tongue was not a variant of English, but Kreyol. Out of this tension between her adopted language and Kreyol, her voice rises to tell both individual and collective stories and to connect the new place she inhabits with the place and people from which she has been separated. *Breath, Eyes, Memory* derives from personal memory; *The*

<sup>1</sup> In the choice of the title I was inspired by the "Epilogue" in Grace Nichols' poetry collection, *i is a long memoried woman* (London: Karmak House, 1990): "I have crossed an ocean / I have lost my tongue / from the root of the old / one / a new one has sprung".

*Farming of Bones* from the historical memory of a people abused like few others; *Krik? Krak!* evokes the spiritual wealth of Haitians in the midst of immense poverty. In the tradition of the African diaspora, Danticat has refused to sever fiction from the social cultural context, producing a form of writing which, to borrow from Toni Morrison, is "unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time". This interview was conducted in June 1999.

MHL: Did the schools you attended in New York have a majority African American population?

ED: Most of the schools I attended except college were mostly made up of immigrant children from the Caribbean and African-American children and young adults. Yes.

MHL: Were you looked upon as different? Was it because of language?

ED: Haitian children were always seen as different from the other children from the English Caribbean because we speak Kreyol and also because of our bad image in the press, the political turmoil in Haiti, being on the high risk AIDS list in the 1980s. The other children always separated themselves from us.

MHL: How did you learn about African American culture? Was it taught at school or did you have to educate yourself about it later?

ED: I learned about African-American culture, first from reading novels, then from meeting and living with African-Americans in Flatbush and East Flatbush where we lived.

MHL: Did you feel a split between the world of your parents and that of the school?

ED: I think all children feel a split between their parents' world and theirs. Immigrant children feel a greater split because their parents want them to be a certain way, like they were back home, and children by their nature want to fit in and belong, so there is a generational as well as a cultural split when you are an immigrant child. I was very shy, however,

and didn't have many friends, so I didn't have much peer pressure and liked being at home with my parents. I think I understood them better than I did my peers.

MHL: You write in English, a language which is seen in the English-speaking Caribbean as the language of colonialism. Obviously, this is not so for you.

ED: I write in English as a result of my early migration to the United States. When I came here, I wasn't fluent enough in French to write in French. At that time, they weren't teaching children in Haitian schools to write in our first language, Kreyol, so I began to write in English, because that is all there was available to me. It was not a political decision or a commercial decision. It was a result of my being a migrant child in the United States. We have a lot of younger writers who write in English now and who come from another language, like Junot Diaz, Julia Alvarez and Maritza Perez from the Dominican Republic and Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo who also come out of another language. If we are writing in English, it's because we are migrants. Some people find it hard to believe, but it's really as simple as that. My brothers and friends who came here when they were ten and younger speak mostly in English, I'm glad that they can read, and hundreds of others like them can read what I write, because they no longer read or never learned to read or write in French. For me, I guess, French was the original colonial language that you mention. And I always felt that French was as much a foreign language as English. In any case as Jean Price-Mars, the Haitian anthropologist said, "Language is a tool". And right now English is the tool I'm using. Perhaps, if next year I move to Spain, I might start writing in Spanish, like Micheline Dussek, the Haitian writer who writes in Spanish. One of the tools of migration is the new language. It's been done before. Joseph Conrad, Samuel Beckett, Nabokov, there are so many who wrote in languages other than the language of their birth. People should not make us feel small or guilty for this.

MHL: You have defined English as your "stepmother tongue". What do you mean by that?



ED: Kreyol is my mother tongue. I say English is my stepmother tongue because I came to it late, after I left my motherland, Haiti. I guess you could say that America is my stepmother country. When I said that a lot of people thought I was being mean about English, when what I was actually saying was that it has become my stepmother because I am no longer everyday with my mother tongue. Not that I am completely separated from my mother tongue. We speak Kreyol at home and with friends all the time, but the space in which I live, in America, the stepmother country, English dominates.

MHL: Is this why you spoke of your writing as 'maroonage' in language?

ED: I am a very quiet person, but there are so many things that make me angry, so many things that make me want to scream, so I think of myself as a maroon sometimes, who hides behind the words. As the African-American writer Toni Cade Bambara once said, "Writing is my main method of protest".

MHL: You have said that you translate from Kreyol when you write. This is certainly not the impression one gets from reading you. Could you explain this process?

ED: I translate in my head. I feel like the people are speaking a certain way in my head and I am the filter. Writing, even if one writes in Kreyol from the Kreyol voices in your head, is an act of interpretation, anyway. Written words are different from speech. When I write in English, I am doing a further interpretation of what I hear the characters say, another layer in the translation from voice to page, from one medium (speech) to another (paper) and from one language to another.

MHL: Some critics have theorized that when writers choose English as their literary language, the intended readership is 'foreign'. Do you feel you're writing for a specific group of people?

ED: I am first writing for myself. I try to write things that I would like to read. I am writing for the hundreds of Haitian-American youngsters like my brothers who really as Junot Diaz quoted a poet as saying in the epigraph of his book

*Drown*, "don't belong to English, though I belong nowhere else". I think someone should write for those people. I think of my brothers always as my first audience when I write. That group is not as foreign to me as the foreign people everyone is thinking about.

MHL: Many anglophone Caribbean women writers have declared that their mothers 'wrote' their stories for them. Is this the case for you?

ED: I think our mothers imprinted our stories in us. I feel like I write my mother's stories. She has a lot of stories in her that she would never dare even whisper and once I get a wind of them, I want to write them. My mother and the other women in my family "gave" me the stories. They lived them. I write them.

MHL: I wonder if this is why there are echoes of ancient wisdom in your stories, as if you were writing an ancient tongue.

ED: I feel like an old woman sometimes because I was raised by old women and preferred their company, so there is a lot of what my friends call "*ti gran moun*" in me. If there is a trace of that in the work, it comes from those older people, my grandmother and my aunts who were so present in my childhood in Haiti.

MHL: Salman Rushdie speaks of people like him, like you, who are "out of country and even out-of-language" as experiencing a great sense of loss. Is that why you wrote *Breath, Eyes, Memory*?

ED: When I was writing *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, I just wanted to tell a story as best as I could. I really wasn't thinking about anything theoretical. However, I definitely agree with the Rushdie quote. People like me are certainly 'out of country and out of language'. However, I think, even though there can be a great sense of personal loss that comes from this, it can be a wonderful place from which to write. As both insiders and outsiders, perhaps we can better observe both the culture

from which we've come and the new one that we've stepped into.

MHL: Your last novel, *The Farming of Bones*, deals with a gruesome page in the history of the Caribbean, the 1937 massacre of 35,000 Haitian cane cutters in the Dominican Republic. Despite the need to reclaim that history and many other stories, do you feel that there is the danger of remaining "prisoners of history" as Fanon said.

ED: I think we are all prisoners of history, whether we like it or not. We can not free ourselves from history while being ignorant of it. Many of us think that if we migrate, go to another country, away from the one where we were born, then we are leaving our history behind. But even as we step away momentarily from our own history, we are stepping into another place's history. We cannot ignore history. Perhaps we should not let the past decide our destiny, our future, but we have to know that past, lest we stumble upon it again or let others push us into it again. What is that saying? Those who don't know the past are doomed to repeat it. *The Farming of Bones* was very important for me to write because a great number of Haitian people are still cutting cane in the Dominican Republic. So we have to ask ourselves, why after so many years and so many incidents are our people still migrants and still so vulnerable in so many parts of the world. History is one way, perhaps not to explain this, but to try and understand it.

MHL: Now, the inevitable question: Haitian writer, Haitian-American, Caribbean, African American, what do you consider yourself?

ED: I guess I would say I am a Haitian-born writer living in the United States and let other people worry about the qualifying. I don't think Haitian writers living in Haiti would say that I am a Haitian writer. American writers in the United States would not say that I am an American writer. Oh, it's just too much to worry about. I don't want to do it. I'll let others worry about it.

MHL: Have you met other writers from the Caribbean? Do you find many affinities with them?

ED: I hang out, if you will, with some of the younger writers, ones you may not know now, but will hear about in the future. I have a great relationship with Junot Diaz. Somehow we hit it off really well when we met, because we're from the same kind of background. We felt like siblings after our first talk. Since Maryse Condé lives in New York, we see each other too and have done some things together. Maryse is a funny woman. She can make you laugh. There are a lot of other writers I know and have met and some I would like to know better but you know with time and distance and everyone being busy and me not being the most social person, I don't really see that many people regularly.

MHL: Do you recognize the influence of African American women writers in your work?

ED: African-American women writers have been very inspirational to me. I love the complexity and beauty of language in Toni Morrison, where each word seems like a gift from high. I learned a lot from Alice Walker's sense of purpose in her work, her desire to change the world with her stories, to reveal, to tell. I have also been very impressed by Maya Angelou who uses her life as her narrative. That's an amazing thing, to write of your life as it unfolds.

MHL: Among the writers who have influenced your writing, you have acknowledged Jacques Roumain. Yet Roumain has been strongly criticized by the 'Créolité' writers for his "inauthentic language", for frenchifying Kreyol.

ED: I think a lot of people who come at a work with that kind of criticism have lost their ability to read the "heart" of a work. I have heard Jacques Roumain's work criticized on so many levels. People say that he was a bourgeois who wrote about peasants and want to dismiss his wonderful book on that score. All I know is that there would have been such a void in our literature had that book not been written. Or had Jacques Stephen Alexis' *Compère Général Soleil* not been written. Or

Marie Chauvet's *Amour, colère, et folie* or J. J. Dominique's *Mémoires d'une amnésique*. We have at some point to put away all the criticism and just read with heart.

MHL: Have critics compared you to other writers?

ED: I've been compared to Jamaica Kincaid and Alice Walker. But they are both much better writers than me. I'm still learning my craft.

Geoffrey Nunberg

### The Whole World Wired<sup>1</sup>

In 1898, when Otto von Bismarck was an old man, a journalist asked him what he thought was the decisive factor in modern history. He answered without skipping a beat: "The fact that the North Americans speak English". You wonder what he would have said if they'd had a Net account at the Reich's Chancellery.

Everybody seems certain that cyberspace is going to be an English lake, and some people think it will wind up inundating everything else in the world in the process. *The Sunday New York Times* ran a story a couple of weeks ago with the headline "World, Wide, Web: Three English Words". One computer writer described the Internet as "a great force for the Anglification of the planet" and the editor of a magazine called *The Futurist* predicts that thanks to new media, English will become the native language of a majority of the world by some time in the next century. And indeed, one linguist has suggested that the UN should simply declare English the world language, but rename it "Globalese" so as not to imply that it belongs to any one community anymore.

Frankly, I have my doubts as to whether Bismarck would have been completely reassured by this manoeuvre. Certainly there's no shortage of people who view the prospect of a monolingual English Net with some alarm. The director of a Russian Internet provider described the Web as "the ultimate act of intellectual colonialism". And French President Jacques Chirac was even more apocalyptic, describing English domination of the Internet as a "major risk for humanity", with its threat of linguistic and cultural uniformity.

Is any of it warranted – the neocolonialist swaggering on one side, the hysteria on the other? Like most of what's said about and on the

<sup>1</sup> Commentary broadcast on *Fresh Air*, National Public Radio, September 20, 1996. Published by kind permission of the author.

Internet, the discussion tends to be long on speculation and short on data.<sup>2</sup> There's no question that English is overwhelmingly dominant on the Net right now, but a lot of that is due to accidental factors. The Internet was an American development, and something between 70 and 90 percent of its present users are from the English-speaking countries.<sup>3</sup> But the proportion of native English speakers on the Internet is dropping very rapidly, particularly as Net service providers and search services proliferate in other countries, and as people overcome the difficulties of sending and receiving accented characters and non-Roman alphabets.<sup>4</sup> It's a safe bet that we English speakers will be in the minority well before the end of the century.<sup>5</sup>

Even then, of course, there's no question that English will still be the principal lingua franca for Internet communication, just as it already is for most international science, business, and tourism. In fact there are reports that the advent of the Net has intensified the interest in learning English among students in places like Brazil and Germany. But that's mostly old news. What makes the Net different from most of the communications technologies that preceded it, is how much it

<sup>2</sup> *The Times* article managed to discuss the phenomenon of anglicization without citing a single statistic on Internet use, in a style of argument which would make it not at all out of place as a posting to one of the more freewheeling Usenet discussion groups, and which suggests the degree to which the Net has already had a profound influence on the conduct of journalism.

<sup>3</sup> To the best of my knowledge there have been no surveys aimed at establishing directly the proportions of language use on the Internet. The 70 percent figure for Anglophone use is a guess suggested by a recent study by Woodruff et al. which surveyed some 2.6 million documents with the Inktomi Web crawler and found that 59 percent of them bore US domain names, but which unfortunately did no breakdown on the 41 percent of documents listed as "other". (See <http://www.cs.berkeley.edu/~woodruff/inktomi/>) An article in *Business Week* (April 1, 1996) says that 64 percent of Internet hosts are in the US and 12.7 percent in "other English-speaking countries" (a category that appears to include all of Canada but not Hong Kong or Singapore), but it is not clear how these figures should be taken to correspond to numbers of users or documents. More detailed figures are provided by a Gvu survey of more than 23,000 respondents conducted in October-November, 1995, which reported that 76.2 percent of the respondents were from the US, and almost 94 percent from countries or provinces where English is the dominant language (See [http://www.cc.gatech.edu/gvu/user\\_surveys/survey-10-1995/](http://www.cc.gatech.edu/gvu/user_surveys/survey-10-1995/)). But these figures are almost certainly too high for the Web as a whole, since severe biases were introduced by the fact that the survey was administered in English, that it was advertised primarily on English-language sites, and that respondents self-selected. (The percentages of Japanese and French respondents in the survey were only 0.27 and 0.25 respectively, which if we took them at face value would put the number of Web users in each of those countries below the numbers for Finland at 0.45 and Nova Scotia and Alaska at 0.35 – not a very plausible conclusion).

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of some of these initiatives, see <http://www.crpht.lu/~carrasco/winter>.

<sup>5</sup> Writing in *Wired*, Nicolas Negroponte has estimated that US Web sites would be less than 20 percent of the total by the year 2000. That's hard to credit, though.

does to preserve linguistic distinctions. The telegraph, the telephone, the radio all made the world smaller. Now finally we have a technology that helps to keep the world big and polyglot.<sup>6</sup>

One reason for this is that languages aren't in competition on the Net the way they are in print or other media. A Danish rock festival can post its Web page in English and German for the benefit of foreigners, but it also posts a version in Danish so the locals don't feel slighted. And for that matter the National Library of Wales can post its Web page in English and Welsh. In fact you could argue that the languages that have the most to gain here are the ones that are too small or scattered to support a lot of the traditional print media, languages like Welsh and Yiddish and Esperanto (I'm here to tell you, before the Net I had no idea how many Esperanto enthusiasts there were out there, and I suspect that neither did they). But every language group is taking advantage of this. In a half-hour's wandering around the Net the other day, I found discussion groups conducted in more than sixty languages, at which point I stopped counting.<sup>7</sup> The Italians were talking about the elections, as they always are. The French people exchanging dirty jokes. The Indonesians, as best I could tell, were arguing over whether the movie *True Lies* was anti-Islam or merely stupid. All of which confirms the lesson we have already learned from the proliferation of discussion groups on domestic Internet services: if you give people the chance, they are less interested in turning the Net into a world forum than a back-yard fence. There's a new Tower of Babel, and it has an Intel sticker on the side.

<sup>6</sup> Just about every modern technology of transportation and communication has been heralded as making the world a smaller place. Contemporary enthusiasm for the telegraph prompted Thoreau to write in *Walden* in terms that might apply to the Internet as well: "We are in great haste to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the old world some weeks nearer the new; but perchance the first news that will leak through into the broad, flapping American ear will be that Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough".

<sup>7</sup> It is hard to calculate the number of languages used on the Internet with any accuracy. There are Usenet groups conducting all or part of their discussions in around thirty languages, including Afrikaans, Albanian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, Flemish, French, Esperanto, Estonian, German, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. In a relatively cursory search I have also been able to locate references to lists conducted wholly or partially in Arabic, Aragonese, Armenian, Basque, Breton, Cambodian, Catalan, Czech, Gaelic, Galician, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Hmong, Hungarian, Indonesian, Macedonian, Malay, Nahuatl, Rumanian, Slovenian, Swahili, Urdu, Welsh, Yiddish, and Yoruba. (For lists of many of these, see <http://www.indigo.ie/egt/Inglst1d.txt> and <http://babel.uoregon.edu/yamada/lists.html>). But the resulting total of around sixty languages is certainly much too low, and I am certain that more thorough research would turn up Web pages and Net discussion groups in dozens more.

The book is a collection of essays by various authors, including Wole Soyinka, who is the central figure. The essays explore various aspects of African literature and culture, with a focus on the role of the writer and the impact of colonialism and post-colonialism. Soyinka's work is particularly prominent, and the book is a valuable resource for those interested in African literature and culture.

Wole Soyinka, *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Mourning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), £16.95.

Reviewed by

## REVIEW ESSAYS

Wole Soyinka is a Nigerian poet, playwright, and novelist. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986. His work is a blend of traditional African culture and modernist techniques.

The book is a collection of essays by various authors, including Wole Soyinka, who is the central figure. The essays explore various aspects of African literature and culture, with a focus on the role of the writer and the impact of colonialism and post-colonialism. Soyinka's work is particularly prominent, and the book is a valuable resource for those interested in African literature and culture.

The first chapter, "Reparations, Truth, and Reconciliation", examines the book's political and historical co-ordinates. The recent case of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission provides a model for the whole continent, a way out of a gloomy past that does without reparation on the part of the former oppressors. The commission was set up under the auspices of Archbishop Desmond Tutu with the purpose of investigating the crimes committed during the Apartheid regime, what at the same time opened the way to a general amnesty. The Movement for Reparation for the slave experience, on the other hand, a campaign initiated by the Organisation of

Wole Soyinka, *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.xii-208 (hardback edition), £ 16.99.

Reviewed by Marco De Bernardo

Wole Soyinka's latest book was originally a cycle of lectures presented at Harvard in April 1997 to inaugurate the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute Stewart-McMillan Lecture Series. Articulated in three chapters, for width of scope and internal consistency, it matches *Myth, Literature and the African World*, Soyinka's seminal critical work published in 1976. *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness* discusses the implications of forgiving and of demanding reparations, two alternative ways of dealing with the "burden of memory"; that is, with Africa's history of "denial of humanity": from the slave-trade and colonial exploitation to racism and to the dictatorships of our day. In this light, Soyinka reconsiders the place of the Negritude movement in African literary history, proposing a new interpretation of the attitudes of the Senegalese statesman and "poet extraordinaire", Léopold Sédar Senghor, and of other Negritude poets towards what we might term 'the Black man's burden', namely, European imperialism. In the heat of the famous debate that saw Soyinka in the Sixties as the most prominent opponent of Negritude, he may have over-simplified certain aspects of the question. More fundamentally, the binary logic of Negritude's opposition to European identity, an aspect Soyinka had exposed as dependent on a European bias, seems today less distant from the nature of his own critical thought, than he himself had previously acknowledged. Here he not only proposes some elements for a better understanding of Negritude, from its historical and sociological premises to its psychological and poetical motivations, but even seems to be implicitly looking at Senghor's thought in order to find a way to correct some of his own binarism.

The first chapter, "Reparations, Truth, and Reconciliation", establishes the book's political and historical co-ordinates. The recent case of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission provides a model for the whole continent, a way out of a gloomy past that does without reparation on the part of the former oppressors. The commission was set up under the auspices of Archbishop Desmond Tutu with the purpose of investigating the crimes committed during the Apartheid regime, while at the same time opening the way to a general amnesty. The Movement for Reparation for the slave experience, on the other hand, a campaign endorsed by the Organization of

African Unity and set in the framework of a more general “*fin de millénaire* fever of atonement” (ranging from the rehabilitation of the victims of the 1692 Salem witch hunt in the USA to the Spanish reckoning with the 1492 edict of eviction of the Jews), becomes the model for a possible restoration after ancient and recent damages. On the nature of reparation Soyinka leaves the “infinite possibilities of human justice” open; he thinks it should be a concrete act, though not necessarily a punitive one. One example is found in the struggle to recover both the “material patrimony and the humanity” of the victims of the Jewish Holocaust.

Both models – forgiveness and reparation – wish to give an answer to the need for reconciliation and for the resolution of past conflicts, be it on a world, continental, or national scale. A public establishment of Truth about the responsibilities of the past is a prelude to such a reconciliation, but can it suffice? Soyinka is sceptical. Remitting the crimes committed by a part of the community, he argues, produces impunity, a failure in responsibility and justice. The “seeds of hate” would remain, and the chain of evil haunting the African continent would not be interrupted. Were slavery to be reinstated, he says, “we recognise among us those who would be the first in line to offer up their own kith and kin” (89). Soyinka implies a continuity between those African rulers who in the past sold slaves to the European merchants and those who today are active or connive in the violence and neo-colonial depredation perpetrated by many dictatorships. Some kind of reparatory justice is needed for society to begin a truly new life and restore harmonic relations among its components. Reparation assumes the cathartic function of healing society of past wounds, as exemplified in Okonkwo’s temporary exile after the involuntary killing of a boy, in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

The use of African references is Soyinka’s constant care, and in the subject of foreign oppression he finds the fit terrain for offering a thorough account of his radical anti-imperialist views on African identity. History is the watershed between all kinds of reliance on the ideologies or religions of the slave-traders (both Western and Arab) on one side, and commitment to the culture and the memory of the enslaved, without renouncing all other cultures’ richness, on the other.

Nonetheless, Africa also has one great representative of the “muse of forgiveness” thought in the person of the patriarch of Negritude, Léopold Sédar Senghor. Soyinka seems to be attracted by Senghor’s vision once more, as though fascinated by a way of thinking and a poetic sensibility diametrically opposed to his own. His tribute in chapter II, “L. S. Senghor and Negritude: *J’accuse, mais, je pardonne*”, includes the revelation that Senghor had once been on the point of receiving the Noble Prize for Literature, some years before 1986, when Soyinka received it himself. “For me”, the author concludes, “Senghor remains the first – albeit unannounced – African winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature” (144). This is perhaps the author’s personal act of reparation for past conflicts on the literary ground, even if he still

remains distant from the disturbing preference Senghor accorded to the French invaders at the very moment he denounced their oppression. Soyinka ascribes this attitude to the Christian, “priestly” quality of Senghor’s poetic vocation. Analysing, not without some nuances of irony, the eucharistic symbolism of “Prayer for Peace”, a section of Senghor’s long poem *Hosties Noires* (1945), Soyinka highlights a meta-historical urge of Christian love for one’s enemy, where the Black race is seen as a sacrificial victim, “leaven in the dough of humanity”. Rather than as “endorsement of the aggressor’s claims to superiority”, lines such as those he quotes from the poem “*À l’Appel de la race de Saba*”, should be interpreted, he says, as “the rejection of differentiation, the humane empathy”. As in the European war poetry of Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon or Rupert Brooke, they “do not, however, glorify the enemy, only portray them as comrades caught in the vice of a universal irrationality” (113-5).

Some historical reasons for this embattled reliance on the coloniser’s culture are pointed out. The French colonial policy of assimilation made citizens – albeit second-class citizens – of the intellectual élites; whence the feeling of alienation and the search for mythified ancestral roots. The similarity of their condition as second-class citizens made communication easier among Black Americans and Francophone Africans and Caribbeans, than between Francophone and Anglophone Africans. The latter, kept more at a distance by the British, developed their opposition as a form of political nationalism instead of as artistic protest. And the Negritude writers were influenced in their poetical struggle not only by the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance but also by racial conflicts in America. From the confrontation with racism derives the various kinds of affirmation of Black identity, with polemical emphasis on the aspects of otherness from the Whites. In the last chapter, “Negritude and the Gods of Equity”, Soyinka proceeds to a review of many of the Negritude poets. The general response to the Whites’ “disdain” is far from any mood of forgiveness, and not only in the work of the more radical Étienne Lero (Martinique) and of René Depestre or Jacques Roumain (Haiti), but also in that of Tchikaya U’Tamsi (Congo) or of Léopold Senghor, Aimé Césaire (Martinique) and – at least in his less read poems, like “So often” – Léon Gontran Damas from French Guiana. The Gods evoked in the “Epiphanies of the Voodoo Gods” section of Depestre’s collection, *A Rainbow for the Christian West*, are “Gods of equity”, come to avenge the victims of White American racists. The discovery of African spirituality against Western materialism (in the works of Bernard Dadie from the Ivory Coast, or in Birago Diop’s poem, *Souffles*), and even Senghor’s affirmation of a distorted idea of African identity in such “hyperbolic manichaeisms” as “Reason is Greek, emotion African”, should similarly all be considered “metaphorical weapons forged in the heat of contestation” (183).

Definitely we are a long way from Soyinka’s *Myth, Literature and the African World* essays, where the same idea, expressed by Senghor, was labelled a “fabricated justification of European cultural domination” and a

separation of the manifestations of human genius which is "foreign to the African world-view"(130). As already noted, the positions of Soyinka and of the Negritude writers appear, with hindsight, less far apart than Soyinka claimed them to be when he was involved in his critical verve against the movement. Now he would probably describe some of his own statements too as "metaphorical weapons".

Soyinka's idea of the poetical work is actually akin to the one he finds in the 'resisting face' of Negritude, an example of poetry congenial to his own dialectic mind and drawing inspiration (but in this the similarities with the Negritude writers lessen) from his people's historical experience: "I possess neither wish nor temperament to abandon the continuing, combative imperatives of the dialectics of human history" (193). At any rate, if Soyinka's choices are definite in the political field, art could make unexpected meetings possible. In the constant aphoristic tension that characterises his aesthetic, he wishes to include in his artistic vision even the mystical muse of forgiveness and of meta-historical universalism obverse to his own combative temperament. The alternative vision is represented by his concluding metaphor, characteristically found in ancient African history: that of the balafon (a kind of xylophone), taken as a trophy by the Mandingo king, Soundiata, in the war against the king of Soso, Soumare Kante, and played in Paris during Senghor's ninetieth birthday celebration. Soyinka notes that Senghor too has celebrated this musical instrument in his poetry. The balafon, he says, "was redolent with ancestry, a survivor of much bloodshed and human loss, ... a statement of the complementary truths of strife and harmony - indeed, to revert to my own symbolic world of deities - a statement again of Ogun" (191). Its sound, he reports, "was a dirge of ancestral severance, of loss too great to quantify, only numbing, yet filled with evocation ... of a shedding of individuation into a tide of universal affirmation of a humane oneness" (193).

As the short passages quoted above will maybe suggest, the style, too, of Soyinka's criticism has changed from the more intricate prose of the earlier essays to a beautifully smooth-flowing language, without losing anything in the depth and complexity of the author's thought. To a degree seldom attained in literary criticism, *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness* combines artistic sensibility and historical consciousness, local roots and global perspective, concern with the present political and cultural situation and insight into the wider and less immediately contextual dimension of African reality. By concluding his book with an image apparently alien to his inclinations, yet close to his idea of the Yoruba god Ogun, Soyinka shows a breadth of vision that confirms and even reinforces his stature as an African intellectual.

Constructing and Negotiating Multicultural Space and Identity  
in Intercultural Communities

The paper identifies and examines the explicit and implicit discursive and performative strategies employed by participants in intercultural dialogue and community building and explores how these strategies are shaped by race and ethnic identity. The author argues that the negotiation of multicultural space and identity is a complex and dynamic process that involves the construction of shared meanings and the negotiation of power relations.

## SUMMARIES

The Heat of Words: Language of Incorporation in Derek Walcott's Poetry

This paper takes as its focus Walcott's challenge to write in a colonial language through his incorporation of elements of his native culture. It argues that, through the incorporation of elements of his native culture, Walcott creates a new language that is both a critique of colonialism and a celebration of his own heritage. The author examines Walcott's use of language as a means of negotiating the complex relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

Algebra: A Short History

Algebra: A Short History

The article examines the historical development and present-day significance of algebra. It traces the roots of algebra to ancient civilizations and discusses its evolution over time. The author highlights the importance of algebra in various fields of science and mathematics and explores its role in shaping modern thought.



Winnie Cheng  
**Constructing and Negotiating Ideologies of Race and Ethnicity  
in Intercultural Conversations**

The paper identifies and examines the explicit and implicit discursive and pragmatic strategies employed by participants in intercultural dialogical conversations to typify and stereotype both themselves and others along racial and ethnic lines. The analysis (of exchanges between Hong-Kong Chinese and native speakers of English) suggests that topics relating to ideological assumptions made of racial and ethnic stereotypes and identities are commonplace in intercultural conversations and that some readily identifiable discursive and pragmatic strategies are employed by interlocutors to construct and negotiate their ideological assumptions. Examples of these strategies will be given and explained in terms of the roles they play in constructing, reinforcing, or repudiating ideologies of race and ethnicity. The paper also discusses the communicative and social functions of talk about race and ethnicity in intercultural conversations, compared with those in other discourse types.

Max Dorsinville  
**The Heat of Home. Metaphors of Incorporation in Derek Walcott's Poetry**

This paper takes up Derek Walcott's challenge to assess his work as a verbal journey through felt experience. Its argument is developed in three stages: first, though the problematized images of Odysseus and Helen as a symbolic conflict between the classics and a quest for originality; second, by tracing the development of a set of metaphors revolving around birthing and nurturing in works from Walcott's middle period, such as *Another Life* (1973) and *Midsummer* (1984), reflecting the trials of a language of creation specific to the New World; and third, by examining Walcott's use of sensory impression as a conscious adaptation of European Impressionism for the representation of the tone and texture of the Caribbean landscape epitomized in his masterwork *Omeros* (1990). Walcott's mature work resolves a tension between imitation and originality present from the start of his poetic journey. He progressively succeeds in articulating a journey couched in individual experience, yet meant to reflect his native region as a whole.

Maurizio Gnerre  
***Ii Jintí*, 'Our Way'. An English Textbook from the Amazon**

The article explores the political, socio-cultural and linguistic dimensions backgrounding the publication of an English language learning textbook by an Indigenous organization of the Amazon, the Shuar Federation of Ecuador. Dimensions such as Shuar language contacts with other languages, rhetoric and power are outlined to show the degree to which the Shuar, as well as the speakers of other minority languages, are trapped in communicative networks. In opening their school curricula to English, and in producing their own textbook, the Shuar were taking advantage of the high status of English, to break the unequal interface of their language with Spanish, the locally powerful, neo-colonial and "national" language. The book is interpreted as a political statement against the neo-colonial role played by the Ecuadorian State and the impact of Spanish on Shuar language and identity.

Marie-Hélène Laforest

**"A New Tongue Has Sprung". An Interview with Edwige Danticat**

American Book Award finalist, Edwige Danticat, discusses her relationship with English, her links with the Haitian tradition as well as African American influences on her work. In describing herself as an insider/outsider and her writing as an act of translation, she throws light on the creative process of writers who "don't belong to English though they belong nowhere else".

Giulio Lepschy and Helena Sanson

**"(Non-)Native Speakers" and "(M)Other Tongues"**

The article discusses the notions of "native speaker" and "mother tongue", from a conceptual and terminological viewpoint. Both notions seem on the one hand to relate to rootedness and autochthony, and on the other to refer to "otherness", to need a negative and differential definition. The designation "native speaker" does not have obvious counterparts in other languages. Its history within English is unclear. Surprisingly the OED does not help. Some new findings concerning its use in the 19th and early 20th centuries are examined. The related notions "mother tongue", "Muttersprache", "lingua madre/madre lingua" are also examined, and comments offered about their history, which is longer and in some ways more complicated than that of "native speaker" and has more obvious and disturbing ideological implications.

Geoffrey Nunberg

**The Whole World Wired**

In this radio talk, the relationship between English and other languages on the Internet in general, and on the World Wide Web in particular, is addressed. Facts are brought to bear which suggest that, far from being threatened by English, as it has become all too commonplace to state, in academic as well as in lay circles, other languages, minority languages in particular, can be seen to be benefiting from the new medium. The discussion is a healthy breath of "Fresh Air", an ironical antidote both to facile demagogical 'hysteria' and nationalistic or neocolonialist 'swaggering'.

Maria Teresa Prat Zagrebelsky

**Watching English Expressions – and Genres – Enter Italian.  
"Briefing" and "Question Time"**

Within the general issue of the present influence of English on Italian, the essay observes "briefing" and "question time", two English expressions, and political discourse genres, entering Italian politics in the 90's. Newspaper usage, in particular, as seen in *La Stampa* from 1992 to 1999, is analysed. The motivations, adaptability and comparative effectiveness of the two loans in relation to the Italian options are considered. Both "briefing" and "question time" refer to prestigious or popular 'Anglo-Saxon' institutions, suggest brevity, punctuality and efficiency, and are shorter than their Italian (near-)synonyms. However, in entering Italian, "question time"

shows some uneasiness in the choice of gender, and the use of "briefing" reveals an undercurrent of ironical and sarcastic interpretations which refer to cynical managerial, political, military and advertising practices. This last aspect suggests that loans are not always received passively, and counter-balances those statements which lament the acritical, or over-use, of foreign expressions in Italian.

Nunzia Ponzo

**Translating 'difference'**

The ethic of translation has become widely discussed in a field which is not always respectful of 'difference', be it sexual, gendered, cultural or racial. 'Reframing' the 'other' involves great responsibility and knowledge, inasmuch as it runs the risk of 'manipulating' other cultures through the translator's ideology. The analysis of terms designating skin tone in Caribbean texts translated into Italian offers the opportunity to reflect on these issues.

Mark A. Reid

**(Con)Fronting the Tattoo. Sexing the Colonial Fantasy in *The Piano***

Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993) is typically discussed within a feminist critical frame. The portrait of Ada, a Scotswoman with an illegitimate daughter and a piano is the usual central focus of such discussion. I extend this feminist approach by introducing the elements of class and race to avoid silencing once again the Maoris. Focussing on George Baines' facial tattoos, I intend to show how they displace his European racial/ethnic self and how they permit, for non-Maori spectators, an eroticized colonial and a 'blackface minstrel'. Through such atavistic mastery, Ada, a married voiceless woman, transgresses marital sanctity to discover sensual pleasures and her voice. Interracial sexual transgression is interestingly hidden under the masque of removal tattoos. Ada's plight also personifies the limitation and re-circulation of the Gothic romance.

Rebecca Suter

**"Sorry, I don't speak Japanese". Interculturality in Kazuo Ishiguro's Novels**

Ishiguro's novels are often read through stereotypes, be they English, Japanese or postcolonial. They do not fit any of these readings for two reasons. On the one hand, Japan's relation to the West is different from that of other Asian countries, and, on the other, Ishiguro's 'liminal' position forbids any easy assimilation to either Japanese or English culture. Ishiguro's works provide an interesting point of view on Western and postcolonial critical interpretive categories. His novels can be fruitfully approached through Gayatri Spivak's deconstructionist idea of postcolonialism and through some categories such as 'alterity' and 'hybridity' as theorized by Homi Bhabha. Using interculturality as a dynamic space, Ishiguro de-naturalizes cultural categories, highlighting their constructed and historical nature, while at the same time underlining his own implication with both Japanese and Western cultures.

Richard Swiderski  
**Some Exchanges between Speakers of Unequal Power**

Verbal exchanges that include English as one of the languages used, often seem to project the other languages against a background of English, which seems to be the language of the more powerful participants in the exchange. An examination of specific instances of exchanges (occurring in a community social service agency in San Rafael, California) in which English is one language shows that the seeming power of English (or of any language) is not intrinsic to the language but emerges through a series of effects as speakers negotiate power relations.

Sonia Torres  
**Chicana Travelogues. Ana Castillo and Erlinda González-Berry**

The study proposes a discussion of the nomadic narrators present in works by Ana Castillo (*The Mixquiahuala Letters*) and Erlinda González-Berry (*Paletitas de Guayabas*), as these feminine, intercultural figures revisit and reinterpret both their Hispanic and American cultural roots. Through the deployment of a second-person 'autobiographical monologue' (Dorrit Cohn, 1978), in the form of notes, letters, intertexts, poems, these texts impose a reflection on the problems of cultural inclusion and exclusion and power, as they narrate the protagonists' conflicted interaction, their anxiety of confrontation with otherness, in their trajectory between their 'imagined communities' on both sides of the Mexican-American border.

Jef Verschueren  
**Pragmatics for International Communication Monitoring**

The paper proposes the relevance and aptness of pragmatics to inform a systematic monitoring programme of international communication. International communication is defined against the background of international affairs. Pragmatics is defined as a fundamentally interdisciplinary (cognitive, social and cultural) look at language use which can thus be profitably employed to identify aspects of discourse organization, the various roles of language in international communication, and the connection between language and ideology. The author reviews the tenets and instruments of pragmatics which make it particularly suitable for this purpose, and, finally, through the pragmatics perspective re-examines the issue of globalization, addressing the special role acquired by English. Throughout, examples are drawn from a single day of news reporting in a selection of mainstream North American print media.

Donald Winford  
**The "Other Englishes". A Contact Linguistics Perspective**

The so-called 'New Englishes' which arose in colonial societies from the 17th to 19th centuries offer excellent opportunities for research on the socio-historical contexts, processes of change and sociolinguistic factors relating to the genesis of contact vernaculars in general. The field of English as a World Language (EWL) studies has

much to contribute toward a unified theory of contact-induced change and its outcomes. The pervasive themes of the EWL literature are essentially the same as those of Contact Linguistics (CL), which embraces areas such as second language acquisition, code-switching, convergence and other forms of bilingual mixture, pidgin and creole formation, etc. The issues of classification and typology, of origins and mechanisms of change and of sociolinguistic status are explored here. Despite differences in terminology and approach, the theoretical and methodological concerns of EWL and CL studies overlap considerably, and much benefit may therefore be obtained from exchange between the fields.

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**Examples:**

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