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A I O N
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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 egemonia, *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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Miscellany
(editors for this issue: Marina Vitale, Jane Wilkinson)

REVIEWS

EDITORIAL

A Miscellany is a more or less haphazard collection of unconnected items. One could of course undermine its discrete, random nature by imposing some form of external order – rearranging the articles according to theme or area or period. The previous issue of *Anglistica* began indeed as a Miscellany but somewhere along the way began to turn into a thematic issue, making it necessary to adapt its index and title to reflect the change of focus. But perhaps any Miscellany presents connections and conjunctions, allowing the subterranean web of shared motifs that unites the different contributions to surface within and against the disorderly order of the alphabetical index.

While we were editing this issue, we were also working on the project of putting *Anglistica* on line. With each meeting we became more aware of the fluid, borderless, 'linking' possibilities our e-future opened up. Perhaps it is this experience that has made us more sensitive to the interplay between similarity and difference even in the apparently more solid and stable medium of paper and print. Here too there is a coexistence of separateness and sharing, an interaction between isolated times, spaces and voices whose frontiers suddenly shift or blur if not before the reader's eyes, certainly in her/his mind, disappearing and then reforming – elsewhere.

Not that this was not already apparent in previous Miscellanies, including those that maintained their original definition. In her introduction to the 3.2 (1999) issue, Marina Vitale noted a thematic unity in the different contributions, consisting largely in their concentration on the in-between and on impossible, ghostly bodies. In-betweenness also features in the articles published in the present issue, which all engage with in-between spaces, places, words and signs, in which the finite, circumscribing characteristics of the bordering realities are suspended. But as Homi Bhabha shows, the in-between has none of the at least temporarily static implications of suspension. Rather, as a space of the beyond, it is characterized

by "an exploratory, restless movement" – the to and fro, hither and thither, transformative motions that take place within it and that it in turn produces. And it is movement that is perhaps the main connection between the contributions to this issue. The in-between spaces, times and even genres that are brought into focus are traversed by different kinds of movement, journeying and flow, of unfolding and stirring into being. The unstable, mutable identities emerging within them are "always unfinished, always being remade" in Paul Gilroy's words. Meaning itself, Stuart Hall reminds us, is "in flow, always-already in process".

The explicitly global-local flows at the heart of Bill Ashcroft's reading of Indian and Chinese economic and cultural discourses and their wider theoretical implications give way to and are supplemented by the varieties of movement and displacement present in the other articles and reviews. Movements engaged by the bodies and voices of the protagonists of the narrative, poetic and filmic texts our contributors discuss, but also by the spaces, languages and conventions their characters inhabit, migrate to or are exiled from and that are variously invaded, subverted, mobilized and transformed. Movements in performance, that enact and are enacted, producing, interrogating and at times opposing different forms of being, belonging and 'becoming' – from the "becoming woman" or "becoming body" engaged with by Alessandra De Angelis and Cristina Nisco in their discussions of the "winding" but ultimately self-defeating logic of Asaji in *Throne of Blood* (De Angelis) and the multiple, pluralizing migrations and performativities at work in the "corpo-realities" of *Lady Moses* (Nisco), to the problematic issues of "becoming indigenous" in Australia (Katherine Russo) or of "becoming whole" in Post-apartheid South Africa (explored in a volume edited by Itala Vivan, reviewed in this issue), and to the "becoming word" (but also 'becoming image' and 'becoming poem') of the South African poet-painter Breyten Breytenbach, with his "identities-in-transit" and "in-transformation". Forms, too, of un-becoming, as in Kurosawa's veiling-unveiling maskings, mazings and spider-web trappings (De Angelis), or in the "meltdown rites" of cultural translation Celeste Ianniciello discusses in her study of *The Satanic Verses*, seen – in the wake of Arjun Appadurai – as a "text-in-motion." Or again in William Hjorstberg's post-modern

doubling and eroding of the identity not only of character but of genre as the format of the "hard-boiled" detective story is disrupted and displaced by the Gothic (Bianca Del Villano). Or in the "fluid, ever-changing intersubjective relations and affective processes mobilized by Indigenous Australian appropriations and 'otherings' of the English language" that Russo sees as an "ever-shifting", self-renewing process of re-invention in response to the "ever-shifting ideology" of neo-colonial nationalism.

Another subterranean (or submarine, certainly watery) linguistic or metalinguistic link joins the alienating washing and damming of Indigenous Australian poet Romaine Moreton's "Words of Water" to Breytenbach's "Come Thaw", in which the interaction between language and landscape "thaws" and shifts into a poem. Moving out of the suggestiveness of poetry and into the rationality of prose, the language connection leads us back to Ashcroft's article and to his invitation to reflect on the model of post-colonial writing in English and the politics of its linguistic practices as an indication of the "transformative power of the colonial, and hence global, subject", whose subversive appropriations and abrogations turn the languages of dispossession into a discourse of agency and empowerment.

Although not intended as a postcolonial issue, the contributions confirm the centrality of postcolonial cultural perspectives in confronting not only literary texts and genres and theoretical movings of the centre, but also the political, economic and ethical realities of our time. Marie-Hélène Laforest's review of a collection of essays on the relations between environment and empire points to the similarities between postcolonial studies and ecocriticism, ecohistory and ecofeminism explored by Helen Tiffin in her introduction to the volume. The environment, Laforest suggests, may soon become one of the "staple paradigms of postcolonial literary studies", joining the already established paradigms of race, class and gender and offering an opportunity to postcolonial scholars "to expand and implement their ethical project".

To return to the heterogeneous, random nature of Miscellanies and what seems to be their inevitable undermining of the characteristics of their genre, it is the unplanned, casual order of the alphabet that allows the articles in this issue to open with Ashcroft's study of the post-Washington consensus from the perspective of postcolonial

globalization, and to close, on a very different note, with Itala Vivan's conversation in Zanzibar with the Indo-African or Indo-African-Canadian writer M.G. Vassanji about his in-between view of the worlds he lives in and engages with. An arbitrary closure or interruption that Vivan presents as a dialogic moment of temporal and spatial suspension, its "fleeting intimacy" projecting us into another experience of the beyond.

Jane Wilkinson

ARTICLES

Bill Ashcroft

The Post-Washington Consensus: Post-colonial Globalization

Recently a statue of King George V standing in a Hong Kong park was scheduled by the central government to be moved and replaced by a statue of Sun Yat Sen, the founder of modern China. This provoked a storm of protest from locals for whom the statue had an entirely different meaning from that of its founders. For generations people had taken their families to picnics in the park, played alongside it, had their photo taken beside it, proposed and been engaged in its shade. It had become theirs, a part of their lives, not an intrusion but an indigenous feature of their place. They had nothing against Sun Yat Sen, and most neither knew nor cared who George was, but this statue was theirs! The statue stayed.

What are we to make of this story? It appears to be a very benign example of the appropriation of an imperial symbol, a hint of the transformation of colonial power itself. But there are many other stories embedded in it. It hinges on a narrative of local agency, on the fluid location of cultural symbols in an increasingly globalized world, on the capacity of local subjects to appropriate imperial, and hence global symbols and invest them with a different life. In this respect it disrupts the accepted binary of global and local. The common understanding of this binary is familiarly hierarchical: local communities are subject to the rapacity of Global Capital, which does not recognise local autonomy and sees those communities as a site of manipulation rather than liberation. Global Capital,

so this view goes, domesticates the corporation to further mystify the location of power. Hence the HSBC: the 'world's local bank'. However true this view of corporate *motivation and operation* might be, it nevertheless falls into the trap of disregarding the agency of the local, an agency we see effected in a Hong Kong park.

This agency has been a feature of post-colonial theory for some time. Something happened in the 1990s that both reinstated the local and confirmed the value of the humanities in globalization discourse: the phenomenon could no longer be addressed purely in terms of political economy or development theory. The rise of the cultural discourse of globalization, what we may call its 'cultural turn,' during the 1990s is due almost entirely to the prominence of post-colonial theory and analysis. Global economics has always been cultural, the grounding of capitalism in the culture of imperialism has been a critical feature of European modernity, but the sheer extent and impersonal transnational power of globalization as it developed towards the end of the twentieth century seemed to divorce the cultural from the economic, because it seemed to divorce the local from the global. The language of post-colonialism provided a way of talking about the engagement of the global by the local, particularly local cultures, and, most importantly, provided a greatly nuanced view of globalization that developed from its understanding of the complexities of imperial relationships.

To account for the rise of cultural discourse, and to understand what has begun to happen globally in this century, we need to understand the extent to which both imperialism and modern globalism are grounded in the discourse of modernity. The concept of modernity is tightly linked to the concept of the state and to the discourse of imperial expansion. Modernity emerged from about the sixteenth century, marked by the cultural revolutions of the Renaissance and the Reformation, when European nations began to impose a dominant relationship upon a non-European world and began to spread their rule through exploration, cartography and colonization. Europe constructed itself as 'modern' and constructed the non-European as 'traditional', 'static', 'pre-historical' and even 'primitive'. The imposition of European models of historical change became the tool by which these societies were denied any internal dynamic or capacity for development.

Crucially, in its 'disembedding' of time and space, modernity relegated the local, with its cultural and social particularity, to the past, "as an enclave of backwardness left out of progress, as the realm of rural stagnation against the dynamism of the urban, industrial civilization of capitalism, as the realm of particularistic culture against universal scientific rationality and, perhaps most importantly, as the obstacle to the full realisation of that political form of modernity, the nation state".[1] The cultural energies of modernity were very early directed into economic development. Indeed the link between globalism and the imperial dominance of subject nations is clearly articulated by Adam Smith, perhaps the first globalist, whose view of the role of commodities in distinguishing the civilized from the barbarous is deeply embedded in the ideology of empire. What we see in Adam Smith's linking of civilization and economics is an example of the way in which the teleological and civilizing rhetoric of imperialism becomes the rationale for a global view of the world. Both are embedded in the idea of modernity, but both hinge upon a hegemonic world view, which is captured in the metaphor of colony itself.

The problem with the nexus between modernity, imperialism and globalization is that interpretations of globalization became wedded to a structure that failed to account for the dispersed and rhizomic nature of imperialism itself. In particular, they remained wedded to the idea that globalization was synonymous with capitalist expansion. It is this view that has been directly addressed by cultural discourse over the last two decades. It is crucial to see that globalization is not simply neo-imperialism but that global flows interact in a complex way with the contemporary political and economic dominance of the US hyperpower. There is no question that an invidious system of global financial control exists, but this control is not globalization *per se*, and is very clearly located in International Financial Institutions such as the IMF and World Bank.

[1] Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in an Age of Global Capitalism* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1997), reprinted in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 464.

Arguably modernity, and its disparagement of the local, reached its apogee at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the United States initiated those features of social life and social relations which today may be considered to characterise the global: mass production, mass communication and mass consumption. The Second World War had two contradictory effects on globalization: the founding of the United Nations reified the modernist concept of the state as the repository and protector of national culture, while at the same time ending the putatively 'global' reach of nineteenth century imperialism; yet on the other hand the Bretton Woods agreement in 1944 established the IMF, thus setting in train the very forces that would, by the 1990s, undermine the concept of the state and its borders as structurally significant in global relations.

It is not surprising therefore that the local should appear in contemporary discourse hand in hand with the repudiation of modernist technology, the rejection as ideology of the 'metanarratives' which have framed the history of modernization, whether capitalist or socialist.[2] This reappearance of that putative site of the pre-modern, the local, in what may be called a generally 'postmodern' impetus, received a specific focus in the language of post-colonial theory which began to be strategically deployed by globalization theorists in the 1990s and came to dominate social science and development theory models.

Varied as the discourses of postcolonialism and globalization might be, according to Simon Gikandi,

> they have at least two important things in common: they are concerned with explaining forms of social and cultural organization whose ambition is to transcend the boundaries of the nation-state, and they seek to provide new vistas for understanding cultural flows that can no longer be explained by a homogenous Eurocentric narrative of development and social change.[3]

Now this is certainly true, but what makes post-colonial theory so

[2] Ibid.

[3] Simon Gikandi, "Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality", *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100.3 (2001), 627.

useful is its ability to comprehend the postmodern movement of culture beyond the nation state at the same time as it addresses the particularity of the (largely non-Western) local. It has developed a language for questioning the imperial cartography that has defined global relations since the early modern period. This language needed to be adopted because by the 1990s globalization could no longer be explained in terms of traditional social science models. Globalization constitutes what Appadurai calls "a complex overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models".[4] He makes a crucial distinction between older forms of modernity, whose goal was the rationalization of the world in Weberian terms, and the symbolic economy of a new global culture based on reciprocal rather than hierarchical relationships:

> The master narrative of the Enlightenment (and its many variants in Britain, France, and the United States) was constructed with a certain internal logic and presupposed a certain relationship between reading, representation, and the public sphere.... But the diaspora of these terms and images across the world, especially since the nineteenth century, has loosened the internal coherence that held them together in a Euro-American master narrative and provided instead a loosely structured synopticon of politics, in which different nation-states, as part of their evolution, have organized their political cultures around different keywords.[5]

While Appadurai talks about the 'symbolic economy of the new global culture', there is no doubt that "part of the attraction of postcolonial theory to questions of globalization lies precisely in its claim that culture, as a social and conceptual category, has escaped 'the bounded nation state society' and has become the common property of the world".[6] Bhabha makes this point when he stresses that postcolonial theory makes a critical departure from "the traditions of sociology of underdevelopment and dependency

[4] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 32.

[5] Ibid., 36.

[6] Mike Featherstone, ed., *Global Culture, Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity* (London: Sage, 1990), 2.

theory"; as a mode of analysis, postcolonial theory "disavows any nationalist or nativist pedagogy that sets up the relations of third world and first world in a binary structure of opposition, recognizing that the social boundaries between first and third worlds are far more complex".[7]

Why the humanities in general and post-colonial theory in particular became dominant in the descriptions of global culture can be explained in two ways: first, the systematisation of post-colonial theory occurred at about the same time as the rise to prominence of globalization studies in the late 1980s. Second, and more importantly, it was around this time that literary and cultural theorists became convinced that the debates on globalization that had dominated disciplines such as sociology and anthropology had become hopelessly mired in the classical narrative of modernity, in dependency theory and in centre-periphery models. Compelling as Wallerstein's world system theory may be, it is far too structurally static to explain the multi-directional flow of global exchanges, a flow that was most noticeable in cultural exchange.

It was through cultural practices that difference and hybridity, diffusion and the imaginary, concepts that undermined the Eurocentric narrative of modernity, was most evident. An implicit assumption in these debates was that the forms of globalization that had taken place after the postmodernization of society had generated forces and practices that the traditional sociological narrative of globalization could not account for. Faced with "the diversity, variety and richness of popular and local discourses…social science had been unable to develop conceptual terms for spatialized symbolic hierarchies".[8] Not surprisingly, the interpolation of post-colonial discourse in the analysis of globalization and the mainstreaming of cultural discourse has meant the reappearance of the local, though characteristically a local culture now much more ambivalent and much more globally inflected than that rural backwater dismissed by modernity.

This post-colonial revolution in globalization discourse took the debate beyond a view of the encounter between local and global as

[7] Homi K. Bhabha, "Conference Presentation", in *Critical Fictions the Politics of Imaginative Writing*, ed. by Philomena Mariani (Seattle: New Press, 1991), 63.

[8] Featherstone, *Global Culture*, 2.

simply abusive and hierarchical. In particular, older interpretations were unable to cope with a structure of relationships that operated transversely to *both* the structure of nation-state relations and the global flow of capital. This structure operates within what may loosely be termed the 'imaginary' but it hinges on that process of critical importance to post-colonial studies, the power of representation, and above all, of self-representation.[9]

This view of the encounter sees two dynamic patterns of interaction accounting for the nature of global flows, the *transformation* of the global by the local and the *circulation* of the local in the global. Both of these insert the twin forces of cultural representation and cultural reciprocation within the modernist networks of nation and capital. In both transformation and circulation, structural hierarchies are replaced by a concept of *flow* between the local and the global.

[9] This is not an irrelevant issue in the development of global structures. Amartya Sen, discussing styles of representing India in his essay "Indian Tradition in the Western Imagination", offers a number of influential examples. The power of colonial representation is evident everywhere in India's history but perhaps the most damaging was James Mill's history of India which Lord Macaulay called "the greatest historical work which has appeared in our language since that of Gibbon" (Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity*, London: Allen Lane, 2005, 78). Mill, without learning an Indian language or even visiting India decided that Arabhata's work on the diurnal motion of the earth in 499AD, preceding the European discovery of this by some centuries, was pure fabrication. According to Mill "pundits had become acquainted with the ideas of European philosophers concerning the system of the universe" and had then proceeded to claim that these ideas were their own. There could hardly be a more revealing demonstration of Orientalism at work and it was greatly influential in Macaulay's infamous 1835 Minute to Parliament. The effect of this upon Indian education is now well known but like all Orientalist discourse its most damaging effects were on the perception by Indian elites of their own intellectual and scientific history. A possibly even more influential representation was Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*. First published in 1927, *Mother India* was written in the context of official and unofficial British efforts to generate support in America for British rule in India. It added contemporary and lurid detail to the image of Hindu India as irredeemable and hopelessly impoverished, degraded, depraved and corrupt (Lloyd Rudolph, "Gandhi in the Mind of America", in Sulochana Glazer and Nathan Glazer, eds., *Conflicting Images: India and the United States*, Glen Dale Md.: Riverdale, 1990, 166). Its influence was strategic because it reflected the enthusiasm of Theodore Roosevelt for the civilizing mission of imperialism, an enthusiasm that had a subtle and complex effect on America's approach to the world in the twentieth century, despite Franklin D. Roosevelt's role in breaking up the British empire at the Yalta conference.

Post-colonial transformation is a key feature of post-colonial societies' conversion of imperial discourse into various identifying local discourses. The model of literary writing – which appropriates the dominant language, transforms it, and resurrects it as a mode of self-representation – is possibly *the* model of post-colonial transformation because it manifests so completely the agency of the consuming subject. I make no apologies for making such a substantial claim. Post-colonial writing in colonial languages, and particularly in English, was the first indication, in most colonies, of the transformative power of the colonial, and hence global, subject. The post-colonial writer appropriates a dominant, and potentially disempowering, language and turns it inside out to make it a discourse of empowerment. For Simon Gikandi this privileging of literary texts in postcolonial theory emerges as a problem: first, because the images circulated in texts do not always bear directly on, or affect, the desire in the postcolony for the material benefits of modernization; and second, "although English literature has become the most obvious sign of transnationalism, it is historically haunted by its historical – and disciplinary – location in a particular nationalist ethos and ethnos"[10]. Both of these objections are completely plausible but they demonstrate precisely why post-colonial writing is such a useful model for the place of the local in contemporary globalization: on the one hand material desire has always had an ambivalent relationship with the politics of self-representation in the postcolony, but this ambivalence has itself been a source of energy. Ambivalence is the very key to strategic appropriations of dominant modes of representation. On the other hand, the capacity of post-colonial writing to appropriate and transform the discourse of English literature, despite the enormous weight of its historical and disciplinary location (i.e. as the chief mode for advancing the civilizing mission), is a perfect demonstration of the capacity of local agency. Of course, the story of the emergence of English literature in India as a discourse of cultural indoctrination for Indian elites is a much longer and by now well-known story. Its unique role in the civilizing mission prepared the way for its appropriation and transformation.

[10] Gikandi, "Globalization", 631-2.

So whereas the homogenizing principle of global 'development' acts to force the local into globally normative patterns, 'transformation' acts to adjust those patterns to the requirements of local values and needs. Post-colonial transformation continually hovers around the contested issue of identity. Identities, as we know, are not fixed, and are constructed in a globalized world by a continual process of transcultural interaction, appropriation and transformation. By appropriating strategies of representation, organization and social change through access to global systems, local communities and marginal interest groups can both empower themselves and influence those global systems. Transformation *produces* the global rather than vice versa. It occurs in the process called glocalization in which the global is seen to be in the local, an encounter of consumption and production in which the global is produced. What this reveals is that local culture can have a strong identity and still be constantly changing under the pressure of external influences. Even more interesting, perhaps, is that the local exerts its own pressure on these external influences in a familiar postcolonial process of transculturation – the production of the global by the local.

But if we see this in terms of the diffusion of the global, we may also detect another process in which the local is diffused – *circulating* the local in the global. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the increasing movement of people throughout the world, the growing significance of diaspora and diasporic communities in shaping patterns of representation. The key term in this interaction in the twenty-first century will be 'diaspora', which underpins the emerging realisation that the local is no longer static, or geographically fixed. The paradox of global culture is that it makes itself 'at home' in motion rather than in place, and in fact practices of displacement "might be *constitutive* of cultural meanings rather than their simple transfer or extension".[11]

The striking fact is that at the very moment that diasporic communities, travelers, immigrants, refugees, are revealing the porosity of borders, the borders of the state are clamping shut more

[11] James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1997), 3.

firmly than ever. At the moment that the provisionality of the state is exposed, its borders are made less permeable. Why is this so? One explanation reverts to an older dependency theory model: as capital becomes more and more fluid, labour must be kept firmly enclosed at the economic periphery. *Nike* and *Gap* can only make enormous profits if the workforce is both cheap and unprotected. While there is considerable appeal in this, it overlooks the fact that the supply of global labour will remain virtually limitless no matter how great the flow of immigration. The border hysteria now at large in developed nations is generated by the state. This is a curious and panicked response to globalization itself. This is because globalization is not just about the unhindered flow of Capital, such flow has been a feature of the world since the sixteenth century. It is indeed fuelled by the proliferation of the population of the developing world,[12] but more importantly, by the proliferation of cultural movement and cultural relations over which the state has less and less control, because such relations have raised the imaginary to prominence.

In the old global order, the nation was the reality and category that enabled the socialization of subjects, and hence the structuralization of cultures; now, in transnationality, the nation has become an absent structure. The nation is still an apparatus of enormous symbolic power, but it is also the mechanism that produces "a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation, territorial paranoia, or 'cultural difference'".[13] One of the key assumptions of modernity, and indeed of nations themselves, has been that cultures are, by their nature, national in character. The discovery that culture can actually flow between national boundaries undermines the modern narrative of nation. Curiously, this cultural dispersal and heterogeneity is more damaging to the narrative of nation than the obvious fact that capital ignores national borders at an ever-increasing pace.

[12] In the UN 'World Population Prospects' (1998) the proportion of people in the developed world in 2000 was 1,188 million or 19.6% and in the developing world 4,867 million or 80.4%. By the year 2050 the populations of the developed world will drop to 1,155 million, or 13%, and the developing world rise to 7,754 million, or 87%.

[13] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 140.

Re-Imagining the 'Local'

So it appears that the last two decades have seen an attack on the articulation and homogeneity of the modern nation state as a repository of culture: the global imaginary is characterised by heterogeneity, hybridity, fluidity and movement; by the emerging transnational character of culture; by the transformation of the global at the level of the local and the diasporic circulation of local cultures throughout the globe.

However, we are now experiencing a phenomenon that may force us (postcolonial theorists) to reconsider the extent and definition of the local, perhaps even to re-imagine the local, to rethink the relationship between cultural identity, nation and economic transformation. The nation as an open *cultural* site has reasserted a significant place in global economics principally due to the effects of two 'pre-modern', disparaged and profoundly non European cultures: India and China. It is these two societies that will assert the prominence of economies driven by cultural forces in the twenty-first century. And it is the phenomenon of their emergence that may also force us to reconsider the importance of the nation as a cultural phenomenon, a horizontal reality separate from the vertical authority of the state. In the case of Asia we can see the emergence of the nation as a paradoxically 'local' phenomenon engaging a new non-territorial colonialism exerted by an empire that refuses the name. Globalization is experiencing massive intervention from pre-modern national cultures, embedded in the exigencies of local culture, and operating within postmodern global technoscapes.

When I use the term 'pre-modern' it might be presumed that this is a disparaging and culturally elitist dismissal, and this assumption is encouraged by the very prejudices of modernity itself. But by pre-modern I do not mean archaic, pre-historical or undeveloped. These two countries are operating on cultural principles that have existed for thousands of years before European Modernity appeared. The better term might be 'supra-modern'. Culture still escapes the bounded nation state society because pre-modern culture already *exceeds* the boundaries of the nation state and operates beyond its political strictures through the medium of the local. Local culture becomes the site at which the antiquity of culture is maintained

while being the place where innovative interventions into global processes are made. A 'pre-modern' appropriation of globalization disrupts the link between civilization and profit established by Adam Smith and perpetuated for two hundred years by imperial discourse. Civilization in India and China has no need of capitalism, nor does the ideology of progress and culture as a *civilizational* impetus necessarily hold at the local level. Pre-modern, or 'supra-modern' culture is already, so to speak, 'postmodern' in its diversity, variety and richness.

Just as the 1990s saw the return of the local, so we might be seeing the return of the nation as a focus of cultural difference. The possibility of a state with two nations, sometimes known as 'one nation two people' is one of the possibilities that motivated Edward Said's continuing agonism about Palestine. However, the nation-state is *still* an absent structure, neither an entirely clear strategic entity, nor a coherently bounded geographic polity – the strategic dominance of the US has obviated that. Perhaps what we need to talk about are 'civilizations' – ones in which cultural difference will exist as much in dispersion as in traditional locations. But it will engage the opportunities of global economic development with a cultural difference that is fluid, transformative and oppositional. This is a new consensus, a revolution in the relationship between culture and economy.

The 'Washington Consensus'

To put this revolution into perspective we need to go back to 1990 and enter some strange territory for cultural analysis. At exactly the time the post-colonial discourse of globalization was beginning to gain prominence, the principles of economic global control were being formalized. This was an economic theory that came to be known as the 'Washington Consensus' by economists, a theory famous for its prescriptive, Washington-knows-best approach to telling other nations how to run themselves. "The Washington Consensus was a hallmark of end-of-history arrogance, leaving a trail of destroyed economies and bad feelings around the globe".[14]

[14] Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Beijing Consensus* (London: Foreign Policy Centre 2004), 4.

The foundation was laid in 1990 by a World Bank economist, John Williamson, who compiled a list of the most widely recommended market-oriented policies. The ten points were 1) Fiscal discipline 2) A redirection of public expenditure priorities toward fields offering both high economic returns and the potential to improve income distribution, such as primary health care, primary education, and infrastructure 3) Tax reform (to lower marginal rates and broaden the tax base) 4) Interest rate liberalization 5) A competitive exchange rate 6) Trade liberalization 7) Liberalization of inflows of foreign direct investment 8) Privatization 9) Deregulation (to abolish barriers to entry and exit) 10) Secure property rights.

If we were to analyse the language of this list we would see that it spans the affective terrain of neo-liberalism, which as many critics have argued is designed to both obfuscate and cement the power of the ruling class and in this case, quite clearly, the power of the West. But it also mirrors the language of the imperial civilizing mission in an uncanny way: words such as "discipline", "reform", "high return", "liberalization", "property rights", suggest very clearly the principles of a bounded and teleological order fundamental to the *mission civilisatrice*. Williamson originally compiled this list as a reflection of the thinking at Washington-based international financial institutions about the policies needed to reduce Latin America's chronic debt. In essence, the list encompassed the neo-liberal mythology that had characterised 'world' economics since 1980. But even Williamson was surprised to see his list being applied globally in the 1990s in places as diverse as Indonesia and Kazakhstan. His reply to criticisms was that "the 'consensus' should not be taken on as an ideology",[15] which, of course, it quite clearly is when we look at the language. Clearly the list of measures was a perfect guide to making an economy attractive to foreign capital. The model not only failed basic tests of suitability for most countries, but proved socially and economically disastrous. The most spectacular victim was the newly democratized Russia for whom the shock therapy of a suddenly opened free market, the sale

[15] John Williamson, "Did the Washington Consensus Fail? Outline of Speech at the Center for Strategic & International Studies, Peterson Institute" (Washington, DC: 2002), available online:http://www.iie.com/publications/papers/paper.cfm?ResearchID=488.

of government assets to political cronies at bargain basement prices and the high pressure injection of enormous amounts of money by the IMF led to a bankrupt administration, a huge class of poor, and a mafia of phenomenally wealthy oligarchs. Perhaps just as spectacular was the Asian Financial Crisis triggered by countries following exactly these financial liberalization policies of IMF 'fast track capitalism'.

The Washington Consensus, which explains the behaviour of the IMF and the World Bank in the latter half of the twentieth century, provides a good explanation of why top down hierarchical theories of globalization have been so prominent. This prescriptive, Washington-knows-best model is exactly how the US saw global economics operating, even when the principles of the consensus were proven to have failed comprehensively. Although globalization is much more than US imperialism, you could be forgiven for making that mistake when observing the behaviour of the International Financial Institutions. The US is the largest contributor to the IMF and the only member with an effective veto so the effects of structural adjustments in small economies inevitably do more for Wall Street bankers than for poor farmers. The response of the IMF to the Asian financial crisis for instance was to impose 'cookie cutter' SAPs (Structural Adjustment Packages), which forced debtor nations to behave in exactly the opposite way to how the US behaved when it entered recession in 2001.

The trenchant attack on globalization over the last decade or so has not referred to global culture or even to corporate capitalism but to this tyrannical control of international finance. Michel Chossudovsky in *The Globalization of Poverty* shows that World Bank and IMF programs create economic straitjackets which do more to impoverish the recipients and cast them in the yoke of international division of labour than to promote economic growth.[16] Meant to balance national budgets, rectify market imbalances and make the economy more competitive, the real effect of these policies is to impoverish the working and middle classes and cause the economy to plunge into a serious economic depression due to

[16] Michel Chossudovsky, *The Globalization of Poverty: Impacts of IMF and World Bank Reforms* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1997).

shrinking internal demand. Given the damaging effects of IMF policies it is amazing any country accepts the social repercussions of these loans.

It is important to realise therefore that such a consensus only comes about through the power of representation. This is why the phenomenon is of interest to literary critics. The principles by which the IMF discourse maintains control of smaller economies cannot explain the peculiarities of global financescapes. These are increasingly driven "not by any obvious economies of scale, of political control, or of market rationality but by increasingly complex relationships among money flows, political possibilities, and the availability of labour".[17] The *ideology* embedded in the Washington Consensus may be totally ineffectual unless national societies can be convinced that these representations of global capital are the way the world is. The hegemonic power of the moral language of the consensus relies on the consent of its subjects in exactly the same way as the civilizing mission of the British Empire relied on the endorsement by the colonial population of the values embodied in English literature.

The question that arises is: why have India and China taken to globalization with such alacrity? Why is their involvement characterised by the discourse of celebration, rather than the discourse of crisis that has dogged the recipients of IMF funding? The political answer will say something about the success of democracy in India and the freeing up of socialism in China; the economic answer will say something about the enormous consumer base, the opening of free markets, the proliferation of technological innovation and the expansion of education. These answers will all be partly correct. But what makes them different from Australia, say, or European countries, or for that matter, Japan and the Tiger economies? The explosive growth in China and to a lesser extent India comes about by two 'pre-modern' national cultures not playing by the rules. Although their stories are very different neither has accepted IMF control. China has never accepted IMF funds and India's experience of IMF interference has meant that its influence

[17] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 37.

in India is now virtually non-existent.[18] More subtly, neither has accepted the imperialist perception that developing countries should develop the way the West did, that is, slowly, linearly and politely.

The advantages of ignoring the IMF are statistically evident, but there is a much broader and subtler range of cultural strategies that may weaken the Western dominance of globalization. Post-Washington globalization will be led by countries such as India and China that either refuse IMF funding, or remain very wary of its control,[19] allow huge trade imbalances to develop and by 'mimicking' the West 'menace' the very bases of its control of globalization. Appropriating the technology, using it according to culturally relevant principles for the benefit of a local society, with a world audience of trading partners – this sounds awfully familiar. In fact it is the fundamental principle of post-colonial literary production – appropriation and transformation.

[18] According to Chossudovsky: "World Bank structural adjustment loans and IMF loans were signed shortly after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in November, 1991. Earmarked for repayment of six months of debt servicing of India's external debt totalling $80 billion, the loans helped stem a crisis of confidence on the part of international lenders. Policy conditionality on which the loans were predicated, while held tightly as a 'state secret', is reported to have been wide sweeping in its scope. Ensuing measures to address balance of payments difficulties, reduce the fiscal deficit and relieve inflationary pressures may have had just the opposite effect. The economy suffered from 'stagflation', the price of rice increasing by more than 50 percent in the months following the 1991 measures and the balance-of-payments continued to deteriorate as rising import costs were not able to be offset by a decline in imports of essential commodities or an increase in exports. The negative effects of the program on internal demand pushed a large number of firms into bankruptcy. The program resulted in dismissal of roughly one-fifth of the public sector work force with only a very modest 'safety net'. More 'liberal' labor legislation may have marginalized further lower wage employees and landless farm workers as wages for these groups came under pressure while consumer prices rose" (Michel Chossudovsky, *The Globalization of Poverty*, 125-35).

[19] One comment on this talk recently was that it would be hard to imagine any different approach than the IMF one now applying to global capital. First, this is to conflate IMF policies with global capitalism, which is erroneous. Second, even those who support the Washington Consensus agree that implementation of the principles can be vastly different from the often disastrous implementation strategies demanded by IMF loans.

The Post-Washington Consensus

If we think about the history of border clashes and political alignments since the 1950s, China and India appear to be very strange bedfellows indeed, and they don't necessarily have much to do with each other. Nor, I might add, are their approaches to globalization necessarily any prettier than Washington's. I am not claiming that China and India are ushering in a glorious age of humanitarian capitalism. Pollution increases unchecked, landowners are evicted, resources cannot meet the demands of production, whole classes of people and regions fall through the cracks as economic expansion proceeds. But I am saying that any serious challenge to the neo-liberal dominance of global capital will probably come from India and China and may be better understood by cultural research and analysis than the discourse of economics. They are both societies that have regarded themselves as historically dominated rather than dominating. In India's case it is clear that its cultural engagements are deeply influenced by a history of colonization, and it is quite clear that its economy and culture was eroded rather than enhanced by imperialism. But we cannot understand China without understanding its own perception of itself as the victim of 200 years of Western bullying. It has been said that all China's strategic decisions are implicitly directed at overcoming the shame of the Opium Wars.

We should not be surprised by their strange partnership, nor by their globalizing acumen. Both societies were in the business of disseminating technology and culture well before they came in contact with the West. The relationship between India and China is captured in the fact that the word for 'Mandarin' comes from Sanskrit. An active association developed in the first millennium out of a shared intellectual and devotional interest in the Buddhist heritage but this was augmented by an extensive array of trade links, particularly in silk and porcelain. "Is there anyone in any part of India who does not admire China?" asks the Chinese scholar Yi Ting in the seventh century.[20] Some millennia later history may be repeating itself.

[20] India has not been a frequent user of IMF resources, it has accepted IMF credit on three occasions: in 1981-82, borrowing SDR 3.9 billion under an Extended Fund Facility; in 1991-93, borrowing a total of SDR 2.2 billion under two stand by arrangements, and in 1991 SDR 1.4 billion under the Compensatory Financing Facility. In 2003 it became a creditor to the IMF.

But both represent entirely different approaches to the globalization process that stem from the ancient character of their civilizations and which have characterised their historical relationships with the West. China operates from a long history of introspection in which it regarded itself as the centre of the world and carefully protected itself from cultural pollution. Invading armies from the Mongols to the Manchurians ended up speaking the language and adopting the culture: they began speaking Mandarin, eating Chinese food, slipping into Chinese cultural patterns. China's initial contact with India some thousands of years ago was marked by surprise that another such civilized society could exist.

One of the consequences of this introspection is the unshakable belief in the strength of Chinese culture, which has withstood the turmoil of the last two hundred years in which a major crisis has occurred about every fifteen years. There are many theories about why Chinese culture is so strong, and they can best be summarized by the Chinese insistence on localisation of ideas, products and ways of life. Nothing can be absorbed in China without localisation. This was why Mao invested years of his life trying to figure out what "Communism with Chinese Characteristics" looked like. Straight Leninist thinking was no more suitable to China than knives and forks. A common belief is that perhaps the greatest error of the Cultural Revolution was that it was a revolution against Chinese culture. In China the requirements of the local are raised to the policy level, and the "integration of global ideas is rigorously checked against the demands of local suitability".[21] The idea, then, that India and China are trying to adopt the American way of life, or that they are subject to Western centres of globalization, is a great misconception. They are developing their own global way of life out of their own sense of cultural centrality.

One consequence of this cultural character, a way of not 'playing by the rules' is a strategy that can be referred to as 'asymmetry'. Symmetrical opposition to the US empire was demonstrated by the actions of an opposing empire – the USSR – for forty years after WW2. This symmetry proved fatal for Russia during the 1980s when Ronald Reagan and Defence Secretary Weinberger radically

[21] Sen, *The Argumentative Indian*, 161.

increased US military spending in the 'Star Wars' initiative. The attempt to match the US in military spending, what the USSR regarded as the only viable way to oppose US hegemony, led to its bankruptcy and the eventual collapse of the USSR itself. Military symmetry with a power that spends over 50% of the entire world's military budget without exceeding 5% of GDP is a recipe for disaster. China's asymmetrical approach is one that is best understood in cultural rather than economic terms. How does China respond to US military dominance? By buying the US. The US foreign debt is now 40% of GDP. It has become the first debtor empire in the history of the world. Keeping the empire in debt might well be seen as a military tactic called 'How to win without fighting'. Asymmetry is best understood by recognising the endogenous and introspective, the culturally localised yet politically centralized, political structure of China. Above all it may be understood by the unique relationship between local cultural specificity and state control. China has never been a hemispheric empire. If it has been an empire at all it has been a continental empire, strongly bounded by the state rather than reaching out to absorb and control distant territories. If the rigidity of its internal control continues unabated the width of its reach has been confined.

India's approach is profoundly different, being in every way exogenous, outward looking and transformative and for this reason may be a society whose globalization may be much more implicated in its diaspora of cultural ideas and influences. It has a long history of heterogeneity, argumentative reasoning and democratic interchange. It is a mistake to think that democracy is a gift to India from the West. "Democracy is intimately connected with public discussion and interactive reasoning",[22] traditions that have existed in India for millennia. Despite common assumptions, democracy doesn't gain its strength in India from the strength of the modern nation state but from a long history of interacting with, absorbing and transferring intellectual and cultural practices both internally and externally.

For the same reason the post-colonial nation state, so resoundingly birthed by Nehru in August 1947, is maintained not so much by the

[22] Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Beijing Consensus* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2004), 34.

clarity of a national political structure as by its ancient tradition of secular argument, its heterogeneous co-existence of local cultures and its ingrained tendency to adapt and transform. The spirit of India's fluidity, acceptance and capacity to change is virtually embodied in the giant figure of Rabindranath Tagore, who made perhaps the defining statement of post-colonial appropriation when he said: "Whatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly becomes ours, wherever they might have their origin".[23] This may be a common post-colonial strategy but it describes 6000 years of India's cultural history as well.

In a letter to C.F. Andrews in 1924 Tagore wrote that "the idea of India itself militates against the intense consciousness of the separateness of one's own people from others".[24] This remarkable statement has two profound implications: first it argues against an idea of India as a mixture of separated and alienated cultures and communities, sharply distinguished according to religion or caste, or class or gender or language or location. Second it argues against an intense sense of the dissociation of Indians from people elsewhere,[25] particularly the idea that local culture is so fragile it will break if exposed to outside influences.

The rise of the nation over the state, if we could propose such an outlandish concept, is energized by the phenomenon that characterises both India and China. Quite apart from their enormous size, both entities are what I am beginning to call 'transnations' – both are characterised by the circulation of their vision of the local, by the diasporic flow of their populations. The antiquity and adaptability of Indian civilization, and the nature of its engagement of the 'transnation' with globalization, is suggested in its writing in which two magnetic poles seem to organize the landscape of identity: the pole of memory and the pole of possibility. On the one hand Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Karmala Makandaya, Kamala Das, Nyantra Saghal operate in the region of cultural memory. On the other, a new Indian diaspora mediated in the works of writers and film-makers such as Bahrati Mukherjee, Hanif Kureishi, Meera

[23] Sen, *The Argumentative Indian*, 13.
[24] Ibid., 86.
[25] Ibid., 349.

Nair, Rohinton Mistry, M.S. Vassanji, Gurinder Chadha, Meera Syal, and others represents an Indian identity whose overriding characteristic is one of mobility and transnationality.[26] The model of India's global activity is quite clearly set in the example of its writing.

Similarly China, despite its historic inwardness, "can no longer be limited to the more or less fixed area of its official spatial and cultural boundaries", nor, conversely, as Ien Ang says, "can it be held up as providing the authentic, authoritative and uncontested standard for all things Chinese".[27] This represents a dialectical disruption of the linking of the nation and the state. For while diaspora entails "a disruption of the ontological stability and certainty of Chinese identity," it does not negate its operative power as a cultural principle. China's diasporic writing demonstrates the same cultural energy as the Indian transnation, though perhaps not with the impact that the work of Rushdie and Mistry, Ghosh and Tharoor have had on English literatures. This has something to do, perhaps, with the fact that the question of identity has never had, for Indian writers, the almost compulsive command that it has had for writers in the Chinese diaspora. But the end result of the phenomenon of Chinese and Indian transnational writing is to provide a *cultural* framework through which we may consider the possible movement of political economy in globalization: dispersion, fluidity, asymmetry, the porosity of borders and the transformation of the technologies of power.

When we compare India's free flowing, transgressive, even sometimes chaotic but locally driven appropriation of the global with the example of a nation like Australia, we discover that the role of the modern nation state in globalization may not be as irrelevant as sometimes believed. While small, developed nations may be absent structures in the flows of corporate capital, their states may facilitate those flows through an observance of the Washington Consensus. Ironically, this facilitation of global capital by national economic legislation is directly connected to the hysterical guarding

[26] Ibid.
[27] Vijay Mishra "The Diasporic Imaginary: Theorizing the Indian Diaspora", *Textual Practice* 10.3 (1996), 422.

of national borders. The nation state is both in the service of global capital and threatened by the emergence of a transnational cultural imaginary. The local still transforms the global influences upon it but the nation state, by its very nature, can impede, or deflect, the operation of local transformation.

The critical feature of this postcolonial, post-Washington globalization is that it shows how societies can globalize while resisting the hyperpower imperialism apparently in control of the strategic, military, political and financial state of the globe. The new consensus is as much about culture as about economics, about representation as about financial control. The resistance to the imperial effects of global financial policies is a resistance to the discourse in which those policies are embedded. The Washington consensus can only *be* globalization if the *discourse* of the consensus is accepted. Invidious though it is, international financial control is a very small part of the landscape of globalization and can be resisted. Countries such as India and China, leading the world in an asymmetric and locally oriented approach to globalization, reveal the extent to which cultural resistance can alter the landscape of capital. In whatever way this post-Washington globalization may proceed, the humanities may be in a unique position to address the cultural resistance at the heart of this new era, to analyse the imperial identity of economic discourses such as the Washington Consensus, and to reassess the place of the local in its changing relation to the nation.

Alessandra De Angelis

Noh Masks, Weaving Metaphors and Gender Stereotypes in Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*

> [A] stereotype is an intensification of a role which typifies in an unvarying pattern… Stereotypes frequently narrow the expression of human personality and the range of authentic sexual identity by embodying a conventional and superficial view of the roles men and women are to play in social interaction and even in their perception of themselves.
>
> (Carolyn Asp, "'Be Bloody, Bold and Resolute': Tragic Action and Sexual Stereotyping in *Macbeth*")

> Come you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, / And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top full of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood … / That no compunctious visitings of nature / Shake my fell purpose nor keep peace between / The effect and it!
>
> (William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, I, v, 40-46)

What happens to the characters of female myths and stories when, after being released from the uncomfortable fixities of western-white-male narratives, they embrace or face transpositions into other stories and myths? It may sometimes happen that their voices are freed. It happens more often, I would suggest, that their captivity within male representations continues unchanged for centuries, touching the core of the matter and revealing prejudice once again.

This is what I am trying to unveil, or at least to focus on, in my attempt at a gender-analysis of *Throne of Blood*: Akira Kurosawa's Japanese transposition of *Macbeth*.

Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* – Noh masks, visual icons and Fate

Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* locates the story of the Macbeths within sixteenth-century Japanese Samurai culture, restraining and crystallizing the drama in powerful, concrete visual images of confrontations between man and nature, man and woman, man and Fate. The result is a Noh transposition of the tragedy, or even, perhaps, a westernized transposition of a typical Noh plot (Kurosawa is considered the most 'western' among eastern directors). As Anthony Davies points out:

> *Macbeth* is a drama about the power of choice, and the exercise of that power. *Throne of Blood*, on the other hand, is a drama about inevitable prophetic truth … forcibly announced at the beginning and the end of the film, by the chanting chorus which rings out the inevitable fate of ambitious men and proclaims it to be a truth which transcends particular circumstances of history.[1]

As both Davies and Donald Richie notice, the spatial strategy of *Throne of Blood* involves four essential visual elements: mist, horses, the forest and the castle. On the screen the last two elements function as symbols of the natural and human world. The dramatic polarity between the two realms of experience is deepened by the contrast between verticality and horizontality – only incidentally disturbed by the diagonal and circular, sinuous movements of Lady Asaji, to which I will return.

The most essential and immediately evident visual reference in the film, as already indicated above, is to the classical Japanese drama tradition, Noh and partly Kabuki theatre, evidenced through the use of highly iconic mask-like facial expressions and make-up. Kurosawa has declared that he made wide use of Noh for the film because "it is the real heart, the core of all Japanese drama. Its degree of compression is extreme, and it is full of symbols".[2]

[1] Anthony Davies, *Filming Shakespeare's Plays: The Adaptations of Laurence Olivier, Orson Welles, Peter Brook and Akira Kurosawa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 155.

[2] Akira Kurosawa, quot. in Donald Richie, *The Films of Akira Kurosawa* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1973), 117.

Noh enables Kurosawa to compensate for the lack of the literary richness of the Shakespearean text. *Throne of Blood* is deeply iconic, both visually and auditorily, condensing the action and the cultural and psychic aspects of the story into images, for Noh is a highly formalized and symbolical form of art which has been considered as an aesthetic and philosophical eastern counterpart to the dramatic monologues and psychological characterizations of western drama. Thus, the moral and psychological battle between Washizu and his wife Asaji is revealed by their spatial arrangement[3] and by the auditory contrast between the two characters, as well as between the human and natural worlds.[4] It is also revealed by the immediately visible difference of their facial expressions, a particular on which both actors had worked, following the director's hints and suggestions. Kurosawa had in fact shown each of the players a photograph of the Noh mask which came closest to their respective role. While Washizu could choose among a range of different warrior expressions, all human although furious, "To … Asaji", declares Kurosawa, "I showed the mask named Shakumi. This was the mask of a beauty no longer young, and represented the image of a woman about to go mad".[5] As Brian Parker observes, this second mask is usually called Deigan and, as we find in several encyclopaedias of Noh Masks, it belongs to the series of Vengeful Spirit Masks, used to portray angry spirits, both living and dead, whose anger demands expression. "Isuzu Yamada, who played Asaji", writes Parker, "was not only a nearly perfect example of classical Japanese ideals of feminine beauty but also appreciably older than Toshiro Mifune, playing Washizu – with implications both for her dominance and her childlessness".[6]

[3] Stillness vs. movement, low position vs. high, diagonality vs. horizontality, as broadly analysed by Davies, in *Filming Shakespeare's Plays*, passim.

[4] The main auditory contrast is between Washizu's silence and Asaji's snake-like swishing, or, vice versa, between her treacherous silence and her husband's emotional confusion and loud noises.

[5] Kurosawa, quot. in Stephen Prince, *The Warrior's Camera: The Cinema of Akira Kurosawa* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 146.

[6] Brian Parker, "Nature and Society in Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*", *University of Toronto Quarterly* 66.3 (1997), http://www.utpjournals.com/product/utq/663/663_parker.html.

As a middle-aged woman, fixed by the compression of the Noh mask assigned to her, Asaji gets stuck in her fate and character. From the very beginning of her screen story she may only dwell in the characteristics that Noh recognizes as her sole possibilities in life: psychic dominance (coupled with political passivity), childlessness, evil influence, a tendency to madness. Almost all the time she remains emotionless, while her unspeakable inner strength is conveyed only through the glittering of her eyes, her swishing movements and the controlled and precise dance that she performs in the castle, subverting all the rules of linearity as she mimics the movements of a wicked snake. Her silence is interpreted by critics as the expression of her unfathomable evil and boundless determination, the hidden sound of her ambition and greed for blood and power. Hers is seen as a purely evil force, fixed, unchangeable, as if it were determined by fate, a god, or the inner, inescapable nature of her mask. Richie depicts her as "a good deal more evil than Lady Macbeth",[7] and Prince as "lacking of the human dimension of Shakespeare's character",[8] but all eventually admit that at the end of the play her mask-like face betrays her inner fear, her restrained swishing turning into a frantic dance while her fate is realized: after the homicides and a miscarriage she goes mad, fulfilling the fate the mask has determined for her.

The polarity between the natural and the human world (much insisted on by all Kurosawa's critics), a visual icon of the uselessness of resisting fate, is strengthened and made essential by the contrast between the horizontal and the vertical, elements present both in the castle and the forest, in the human world and the natural realm. As Davies points out, in the end "in both the castle and the forest, the horizontal defeats the vertical. Both men and the trees are brought low: reduced to a level with all things and gradually obscured from sight by the mist".[9] It is the sign of destiny, the inescapable fate that mocks all vain human ambitions, levelling them to the ground

[7] Richie, *The Films of Akira Kurosawa*, 119.

[8] Prince, *The Warrior's Camera,* 143.

[9] Davies, *Filming Shakespeare's Plays*, 158. The mist, intended as a primordial element, is associated with the forest witch; it is the natural symbol of fate, which covers everything and makes men's hopes and ambitions sink into oblivion.

of an eternal story of defeat. Yet, the forest also develops diagonal or circular paths that confound the human characters, proving to be a maze of deceptive trails in which a whole army can get lost. It is the forest that can assure victory or defiance. The witch that Washizu and Miki encounter in the depth of the wood is a strangely asexual and ambiguous figure spinning her wheel in the stillness. Her presence disturbs the predictability and geometricality of the man-made image of the forest: a mental map which is perhaps just the result of humanity's ongoing but inevitably vain attempt to rigorously adjust its sense of linear spatiality and "conscious purpose" to nature.[10]

The witch is both the hand of fate, who sews and cuts the thread of human life like the Greek Parcas, and the natural, symmetrical antagonist to Lady Asaji's vain and treacherous ambitions. The parallels between these two characters, underlined in the film and consequently much analysed by Kurosawa's critics, are rendered through both concrete and symbolic resemblances, the clearest of which are gender ambiguity and the art of spinning. But if the witch, as a supernatural being, can decide and manipulate the lives of others, the far too human Asaji fails in her project: her actions prove to be futile and ultimately insignificant. Her cobweb, whose picture she has embroidered on her pale kimono, will fail: Washizu and Asaji herself will be captured by the very traps she has been setting.

Richie maintains that the Noh tradition is confined in the film to the figure of Asaji, whose characterization, in keeping with the rigid conventions of Noh, is the reflection of her psychic limitation, of her refusal to be more than she is. She disrupts the geometrical stability and order sought by men. Her circular, smooth, patterned movement emphasizes the metaphoric cycles of the film: ambition,

[10] When I speak of 'mental maps' (vs. 'territory'), 'finality', or more precisely of 'conscious purpose', I am using a cybernetic approach and quoting the words of Gregory Bateson, according to whom the want of control is a vain and useless pathology, since human beings are only a part of larger systems, and as a part they can never control the whole. For further reading see Gregory Bateson, "Conscious Purpose versus Nature" and "Effects of Conscious Purpose on Human Adaptation", in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (St. Albans, UK: Paladin, 1973), and Gregory Bateson, Mary Catherine Bateson, "Innocence and Experience", in *Angels Fear. Towards an Epistemology of the Sacred* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987).

treachery, and hideous death. Her circular movements through the castle rooms resemble the flowing threads of the spider-web that is her visual and psychic symbol. Ironically, she is eventually destroyed by her own vain attempts to confine the world within the place that she controls.

A couple of questions still remain unanswered for me, filling my thoughts with the ambiguity of something hidden, something obscure. The first regards weaving. Why is there such insistence, by both Kurosawa and his critics, on the metaphor of weaving, and why in such negative terms? Why is weaving associated with female or asexual figures in the film and why is it confined to treachery and trap-setting? The second is but a curiosity about the roots of female roles and masks in Japanese classical drama tradition. I am thinking of the banishing of women from the stage and the figure of the *Onnagata* in Kabuki. I will now try to follow the path of my suspicions and of their apprehension of prejudices.

Spinning the threads of prejudice – a woman's cage

Trapped in the spider-web she has woven for the sake of power, Asaji eventually disappears after an ambiguous miscarriage. This is followed by a scene of madness in which she vainly tries to wash her hands without water under the partial cover of her Kimono, used as a veil to keep her from the sight of others.[11] No announcement of her death is made, only the shadow of a suggestion that she has probably committed suicide to regain her honour, according to her society's customs. As we learn from Bettina Knapp, the samurai wife had to uphold the Bushido code, commonly known as "The way of the warrior" and was "expected to carry out her husband's ideals and concepts of honour and courage".[12]

[11] Some critics such as Brian Parker and James Goodwin regard this sudden claim of pregnancy as an opportunistic device to further manipulate Washizu's weak will. See Parker, "Nature and Society", and James Goodwin, *Akira Kurosawa and Intertextual Cinema* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 181. After the presumed miscarriage nobody is allowed to see Asaji and the dead child, except her maid, a furtive old woman who prevents Washizu from visiting his wife.

[12] Bettina Knapp, *Images of Japanese Women: A Westerner's View* (New York: The Whitston Publishing Company Troy, 1992), 125.

The epilogue to Asaji's solitary existence seems to reverse the movement and direction of her hunting, turning her into the prey of her own spider-web, which proves to be an icon of her whole life, a sort of divine punishment. Entangled from the cradle in the mazes of spacious yet oppressive castles, where her destiny of political passivity and subordination is only apparently disguised by the ambiguous domestic power left her as the only practicable range of possibilities, Lady Asaji vaguely resembles Louise Bourgeois's *Maman*, plotter and victim at the same time, drawn into a web of subtle yet useless plans. Her sad, emotionless expression may recall what some critics of Noh define as "the face of a human being who, under the feudal system, repressed all emotions, never revealed human feelings on the outside, and strove to live on as ordered".[13]

If feudalism seems the archetypal form of government in Japan, in keeping with the image of this nation constructed by the west, some other studies have shown that Japan was originally a matriarchal realm, where the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, the source of light, heat and life, was worshipped as the progenitrix of the nation, she who had bestowed divinity upon the Emperor. After the spread of Confucianism, whose ideas about women and their role in the community overturned centuries of female independence and splendour, women gradually lost their prestige, while their political role, not only in the government of the country but in their own private life, became extinct: "more and more prescribed and limited, she became wholly dependent upon the man. In the Tokugawa Period, her presence had become peripheral, subservient, a by-product of a man's life – a kind of entity necessary to his well-being".[14] The woman's narrowed possibilities of action were limited to her home, and consisted basically in serving her husband and showing humbleness, dignity, frugality, obedience and silence. Weaving

[13] See Kunio Komparu, *The Noh Theatre. Principles and Perspectives* (New York: Weatherhill/Tankosha, 1983), 229. Komparu is only quoting an idea that seems to be common among some critics, but which he does not share. On the contrary, he sustains that far from being expressionless the "Noh mask's expression should be interpreted not as a passive 'neutral' but rather as an active 'infinite'". I maintain, though, that the Japanese historical background of Noh drama can explain many of the stereotyped female images conveyed in the plots – of which masks are the first vehicles.

[14] Knapp, *Images of Japanese Women*, 244-245.

and spinning were surely among the domestic activities that kept a woman busy and could also be a space for female, alternative creativity. The abused yet incompletely analysed metaphor of weaving in this film is one of death, that clearly has nothing to do with the feminine power of creation or mending, but rather with political and personal powerlessness: Lady Asaji's story is more that of an unlucky plotter than of a weaver.

Weaving a woman's life: spinning possibilities in other female myths

Every time I consider the potential of life, for which weaving is both a metaphor and a symbol, my thought immediately flies to some famous spider-women of our myths. As for 'our myths', I recognize that I belong to a culture whose roots are usually traced back to Greek and Latin history, although my mother would always supply me with collections of nursery tales from both Greek, northern Europe and Asian legends and our most beloved story was Scheherazade. At school I was only taught legends from 'the centre' of the ancient world, which were often tales of violence, power or war. Nevertheless, I remember that I loved some of those 'marginal' narratives whose power of creation has been recently reconsidered by western-white-feminist critics, stories that feature strong female characters. As for other cultures, to return to the subject of this paper, it is worth recalling that Native American legends present Spider Woman as a metaphor for she who creates from a central source, a goddess of generation connected to the moon; the goddess Maya, symbolized by a Spider, is even said by the Hindu to be the mother of the enlightened Buddha. For my ancestors, the patriarchal Romans of the rural districts of Italy, the act of weaving was surrounded on the contrary by considerable superstition: women were forbidden to spin in an open space or when traveling on foot, since the act of spinning was considered unlucky.[15] From the Greeks, just as

[15] In *Historia Naturalis* Plinius the Elder writes that "pagana lege in plerisque Italiae praediis cavetur, ne mulieres per itinera ambulantes torqueant fusos aut omnino detectos ferant, quoniam adversetur id omnium spei, praecipue frugum"; Plinius Gaius Caecilius Secondus, *Historia Naturalis,* xxviii, 5, in http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Pliny_the_Elder/28*.html#28 .

patriarchal, but maybe less credulous than the Romans, we inherit the myth of Arachne, who, with the perfect yet human beauty of her tapestries, dares to challenge Athena and the gods, denouncing their wretched tricks. Although she is imbued by a male, competitive attitude to victory, and her self-esteem is eventually punished and silenced by the goddess (see Ovid's *Metamorphosis,* VI, 1-145), her story is an act of personal creativity.

But it is from an older civilization, defined by some as matriarchal, that the myth of Ariadne's self-awareness is handed down – at least according to the rewriting of the myth proposed by Carolyn Heilbrun in her detective story *The Players Come Again,* published under the pseudonym of Amanda Cross.[16] More than a mere detective story, conveying historical, archaeological and philological theories to sustain a feminist (fictitious) re-writing of the myth of Ariadne, this novel-within-the-novel rediscovers the figure of the girl from Knossos. She appears as a clever, mature young woman who sacrifices part of her life to save her matriarchal city-state from the violence of Theseus and his political rules, grounded on hidden and probably unconscious envy, hatred and phallic competition. By beguiling him, helping him, and then leaving him to his destiny – paradoxically playing the role of the abandoned woman –, she protects her world, although she is destined to abandon it. Ariadne's story is re-written in the novel by Gabrielle, the wife of a fictitious famous modernist writer, Emmanuel Foxx, who has conquered the public and the critics with his novel *Ariadne*, an apparently shocking, unconventional version of the myth that features a sexually uninhibited female character. If Foxx's character reminds us of James Joyce, on whom he is vaguely modelled, his Molly Bloom appears as a woman imagined by a man, who shapes her desire. To Heilbrun's eyes, she must have appeared as unreal as the Ariadne created by Foxx. Whereas Ariadne is a product of fantasy, the discoveries about matriarchy in ancient Crete seem to be true indeed. According to the accounts of Sir Arthur Evans

[16] Amanda Cross, *The Players Come Again* (New York: Random House, 1990). Amanda Cross is the pseudonym of Carolyn Heilbrun (1926-2003), who started writing detective stories when she was Professor of English at Columbia University, New York, and chose to cover her identity as novelist to protect her academic career.

(1851-1941), the archaeologist who brought the palace of Knossos to light, it was here that the term "labyrinth" originated. He argued that "labyrinth" means something like "palace of the double axes", for double axes, or *labrys*, were found everywhere at the Palace of Knossos as religious symbols.[17]

But what has Asaji's icy mask got to do with Arachne, Ariadne or Penelope, whose political and personal praxis of resistance to patriarchal rules was enacted by weaving and un-weaving her father-in-law's shroud?[18] Penelope was attempting to create a new story for herself, one neither to be forged by the patriarchal rules of the city, nor to be silenced, a "story of a woman who, staying at home, had travelled to a new place of experience, had created a new narrative, who had been able, finally to stop unweaving and invent a new story".[19]

Penelope's story of unravelling reveals unexpected folds of political and personal creativity. Although it appears to take the form of passive resistance, her action disrupts the finality of an ancient, widespread gesture. By boycotting the linear future one would expect to ensue, she transforms it into an almost circular present of creation, where no determination is taken for granted and the range of possibilities remains open after all. However risky, narrow and soaked with anxiety – an emotion familiar to women whose life has to be invented because it cannot, nor does it even want to, follow the codified path – her life has a meaning. She is a vital figure in a dangerous space; her circularity doesn't entrap her, it is not an icon of futile attempts.

Where Asaji is depicted as a skilful, greedy priestess in the linear

[17] See Sir Arthur John Evans, *Palace of Minos: a Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilisation as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos* (Oxford: Macmillan,1921-1936). The double axe is still used as a lesbian symbol, following the myth of the Great Mother. As support for this theory, Heilbrun also quotes Sylvia L.Horwitz, *The Find of a Lifetime: Sir Arthur Evans and the Discovery of Knossos* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1981) and Joseph Campbell, *Occidental Mythology: The Masks of God, Volume III* (London: Souvenir Press, 1974). Luce Irigaray has also written about the double axe as a female symbol in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. by Catherine Porter (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985).

[18] See Adriana Cavarero, *Nonostante Platone* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1999), 13-32.

[19] Carolyn Heilbrun, *Hamlet's Mother and Other Women* (Ballantine Books: New York, 1990), 130.

and deterministic logic of opportunism and dirty power (moving diagonally or circularly, she is always aiming at something, trying to impose human, mental purpose upon the openness of life – or, in the case of her Noh story, upon the immutability of Fate), Penelope refuses this role, and yet she is not stuck in a moment of sterile repetition. Weaving her present, composing her own story of refusal and playing for time, she frees the present from the traces of external, patriarchal discourses about what a woman can or has to do, and inscribes her body into the story of the nation. In contrast with Asaji, Penelope avoids the customs that deny her the possibility of suspension and waiting, of living her empty, yet deeply personal time and space. By inventing her own personal device, she is freeing her life from the devices of others; by "beguiling the time",[20] she is keeping herself free from an a-critical, passive trust in any predetermined fate – more cultural than properly divine. Neither striving (according to a linear logic, in the sense of pretending to be able to move and decide the path of her life from one fixed point to another, at least), nor remaining merely passive, Penelope demonstrates her power. She is able to accept and tolerate the frustration and anxiety of an open-ended strategy: twenty years spent on the threshold between self-annihilation and sheer assent to a foreign, male power.

This negative space of creation – a space of un-doing – is the only one that makes it possible for her to have a life of her own or indeed a room of her own (since her needle-work is her own literary texture, where she can forge her life). She weaves in order to resist violence and silence, not to gain power or lay snares but to tell her own story, to dis-cover her own voice, her life-power, and to save

[20] In a 'different' way that the treacherous, masculine ladies in Kurosawa and Shakespeare could never even imagine, confined as they are in a female ghetto of obedience and sterile opposition made of ambition, where their attempts to gain visibility or, on the contrary, hidden and manipulative power, turn out to be mere repetition without difference. "To beguile the time, / Look like the time", suggests Lady Macbeth to her doubtful husband, as if it were their only chance of emerging from a levelling present of subordination. Whereas Penelope is beguiling a 'male', linear time that expects her to follow it without opposition, Lady Macbeth and, in a slightly different sense, Lady Asaji, are trying to beguile the laws of human communality, of friendship and loyalty, however ambiguous and corrupted they may be.

at least a small place for mental sanity. She has nothing to hide, no penis envy to conceal or reveal through the use of a mask; she lives for living's sake, in the only sustainable way that Ithaca has left her, for the moment: living in the present. As Heilbrun points out:

> In the old myths, weaving was women's speech, women's language, women's story. Of all human accomplishments, Freud granted women only the invention of weaving: an art, he conjectured, they had to devise to conceal their genital deficiencies. But the old stories confirm that women wove, not to conceal, but *to counter male violence*. For this they are punished, but not before 'the voice of the shuttle' had been heard, if only to be silenced again. Women's weaving was women's answer to their enforced silence about their own condition, their own mutilation.[21]

A mask denies as much as it affirms

According to Freud's theories about sexuality and femininity, the cloth – the woven – is a cover for something that is missing, something that in the very act of covering reveals a lack: the lack of the penis, or the lack of creativity, from which women are debarred by their own psychic (im)possibilities. As Luce Irigaray points out, there is a contradiction in the act of veiling as reported by Freud: in the very act of conceiving a 'lesser value' (castration, the lack of a penis, a sex which is not 'a' sex), in order to protect it and overvalue the 'fetish', it also covers the interest conveyed by it, such as the interest in conception. So, paradoxically, women's veiling enforces the disavowal of their own sex, thus reproducing the economic sexing machine, which states that one sex has higher value than the other.[22] By covering what is perceived to be 'less', a woman avoids and confounds the teleology of male, linear discourse that doesn't recognize her difference, and substitutes woman for what has been removed, banishing her to the realm of the repressed and the censured.[23]

What I am trying to point out is that Asaji's Shakumi mask

[21] Heilbrun, *Hamlet's Mother*, 120.

[22] See Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. by Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 115-116.

[23] See Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, 67-69.

seems to have a function that is in some ways similar to the act of spinning webs, whose icon in *Throne of Blood* is the spider's web embroidered on Asaji's kimono. The act of making up one's face like a mask may be as ambiguous as the act of wrapping up one's own sex. But let's unveil the mask, to dwell on its ambiguity and be questioned by it. Let's discover its meanings, what a mask is for.

As we know from the *Oxford English Dictionary* a mask is "a covering for the face, worn either as a *disguise* or for *protection*". The main use of the verb to mask is "to *disguise the real character* of or *diminish the effect of*... under an assumed outward show; to *conceal* the *real nature*, intent, or meaning of", while in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* we read that the principal use of the mask, as well as that of a device for disguise, was "1) as a part of the paraphernalia in *primitive rituals*; 2) as *a convention* in theatrical representation". Levi-Strauss widens this definition by maintaining, in *The Way of the Masks*, that "a mask is not primarily what it represents but what it transforms, that is to say, what it *chooses not to represent*. Like a myth, a mask *denies as much as it affirms*. It is not made solely of what it says or thinks it is saying, but of *what it excludes*".[24]

What is Asaji's mask trying to *disguise, protect* and, at the same time, unconsciously attract attention to? What is the convention, the role the mask has to play? What metatextual reference is hidden behind, and at the same time revealed by, her make-up, what is it *choosing not to represent*? And, finally, what has the mask *censored*? At first sight, the mask could signify both what it is intended to represent – perfect beauty and a restrained sexual and social role – and what it conceals – a greedy 'male' appetite for power. Narrowing down the possibilities of displaying one's soul, the mask shrinks life into pre-determined, codified paths. But at a second glance, the role of the mask seems to go beyond the mere act of concealing: it bestows a fixed, immutable shape. What is repressed is not one 'identity' instead of another, but the very outpour of real life, the 'chora' of possibilities that the role aborts,

[24] Claude Lèvi-Strauss, *The Way of the Masks* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), at http://www.maskmakersweb.org/CmodsWebLinks-index-req-viewlink-cid-19.phtml. All the italics in the excerpts from the OED, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and *The Way of the Masks* are mine.

creating automatons.[25] I would accept the term 'masking', in this context, as the intentional act of giving social and cultural limits to the multifaceted feelings and folds of bodily subjectivity. Whose choice this is, and whether Kurosawa just represents a patriarchal society or believes in this female stereotype, we do not know. As a public, we are witnesses of something else, something more which could have existed but has been aborted.

Asaji's outer appearance is that of a middle-aged woman, a well-to-do but cold hostess and lady of the house, like Lady Macbeth herself. Miming sweetness, sobriety and dignity, she shows the perfect qualities of a feudal Japanese lady, the Samurai's wife to whom home, husband and honour are the priorities of life. Yet, her snake-like swishing, plotting and final frantic dance of madness reveal a fiery, ambitious character that many critics regard as more masculine than that of her husband. Her character, as expressed in her subtle and powerful acting, is so different from her outward appearance that this odd combination incarnates a living oxymoron, a striking visual icon. She also seeks recognition in her feminine attributes, just like Lady Macbeth, indeed even more so, when she claims to be pregnant. Her story, her very figure on the screen, is thus ambiguous, unbearable, insofar as it circumscribes her, forcing her into the cage of a prescribed role from which she subtly but repeatedly deviates, without ever achieving a real, healing resistance. More than being herself an oxymoron or an aporia made of flesh,

[25] I am referring here to Julia Kristeva's meaning of the Platonic *chora*, intended as the pre-verbal realm – prior to Logos, to the symbolic order and in a certain sense to repression – where "each strives to fill the impossible lack in/of the other. (where) The *I* truly is an other": Julia Kristeva, "Revolution in Poetic Language", in Toril Moi, ed., *The Kristeva Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 95. Kristeva sees the *chora* as capable of generating the energy which helps the signifying process. The *chora*, as an instinctual realm, is therefore both mobile and regulated. It is not a menace for the subject and the symbolic realm, but a spark of energy: "Without the threat of revolt against the symbolic order, the psyche loses energy. It loses the life-enhancing force that the *chora* brings to subjectivity. The self becomes more of an automaton than a human being. The less touch people have with semiotic forces, the less able they are to thrive, change, and live": Noëlle Mcafee, *Julia Kristeva* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 106. Mcafee underlines here how the role of the pre-language realm (I assume the mask as a language, in this context) is healing to the self, reminding it of its non-essential, non-univocal nature.

she is captured in a double bind from which she cannot break loose. In this film – and in this vision of human relationships – there is no possible solution to her dilemma.[26]

As lonely as Lady Macbeth, repressed within a feudal society, she has to simulate obedience – political, personal and gendered – if she wants to survive. Although they are both women, potentially capable of bearing life and, more spiritually and metaphorically, of receiving the Other without totalizing it, they are instead as ambitious as the old male stereotype, and maybe more so: they strive to gain a place in that violent, power-structured public life from which they are excluded. As Carolyn Asp reveals in her study of sexual stereotyping in *Macbeth*, "In a society in which femininity is divorced from strength and womanliness is equated with weakness…the strong woman is forced to reject her own womanliness if she is to be true to her strength".[27] To her, rejecting her deepest womanliness means more than loss, it is a form of suicide: this is what probably happens to Asaji, whose end we are not allowed to witness, but only imagine. For Asaji this rejection means adopting a socially constructed image of femininity, a feudal code that entraps her and forces her to act either as a slave woman or as a man, never as herself. The metatextual reference of Asaji's make up, intended to function as a mask, is appropriate to men in the Japanese context. Since women were not allowed on stage, either in Noh or in Kabuki, their roles were played by male actors or, for some periods, by professional geishas. Had the role of Asaji been played at the time of real Samurais, she would have been a man. Just like the first Lady Macbeth of Shakespeare's time.[28]

[26] As Gayatry Chakravorty Spivak argues, "there is no space from which the sexed subaltern can speak": "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (London, Macmillan, 1988), 307. Although another space, I guess, above all mental and psychic, intended as a possibility for an-other story and another point of view, would be necessary to try to loosen or even just survive this double bind.

[27] Carolyn Asp "'Be bloody, bold and resolute: Tragic Action and Sexual Stereotyping in Macbeth.", *Studies in Philology* 78.2 (1981), 153-169.

[28] While originally – when women were banished from stages – female roles in Shakespearean dramas were played by young boys, because of their slightly asexual voice and appearance, Noh and Kabuki dramas had adult men playing as women. The *Onnagata*, a male actor who only plays female roles, is a kind of Japanese national emblem.

Masks and make-up act therefore as disguises for real, strong womanliness. They both reveal and conceal the cultural choice of women, who may choose to act in a 'male' unscrupulous, violent fashion, rather than suffocate their inner strength, just to be as faithful as possible to themselves. But this choice doesn't pay (if it could ever even be defined as a real 'choice', since, as Spivak points out, the epistemic violence of patriarchies makes the subaltern-woman doubly dumb when she has to speak and decide for herself). Violence is a linear, purposive rationality that can prove pathogenic and destructive, as Bateson would argue.[29] And violence in *Macbeth*, as also in *Throne of blood*, is morally neutralized and accepted through the ritual of warfare, and associated with the male stereotype, Asp suggests. That is probably why to use a mask, going back to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, reminds us of the role of masks in primitive rituals and paraphernalia.

Accepting the limits of the sexual stereotype means crossing more fundamental human limits, that in the case of Asaji and Lady Macbeth are those of gender, not intended as a cultural construction but as an incarnated female subjectivity which cannot bear such violence.

Many male critics have underlined the masculine role played by Lady Macbeth in the tragedy, while Kott goes even further, maintaining that the Lady is the real man of the couple.[30] We could use Freud's words to explain Asaji's 'lacking' sense of justice and morality, arguing that her attempt to gain power is but an envious behaviour, an imitation of the male role.

Her refusal of womanliness – I do not mean of external female features or sensuality, but of her human potentiality to be a good, loving creature, incarnated in a female body – the denial of any

[29] When I speak of 'mental maps' (vs. 'territory'), 'finality' or more precisely of 'conscious purpose', I'm basically using a cybernetic approach quoting the words of Gregory Bateson, according to whom the need for control is a vain and useless pathology, since human beings are only a part of larger systems, and as a part they can never control the whole. For further reading, I would suggest Gregory Bateson, "Conscious Purpose versus Nature" and "Effects of Conscious Purpose on Human Adaptation", in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (St. Albans: Paladin, 1973), and G. Bateson, Mary Catherine Bateson, "Innocence and Experience".

[30] Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (New York: Norton, 1974), passim.

attempts at personal creativity such as 'real' weaving, beautiful embroidery, spinning threads of relationships through the sensitive use of her body and soul, or even writing, is lethal to her. But this is not a choice, either in her time, or in the director's plans. She hates her sex: her contempt for a life of subordination and rigidity that deprives her of her talents and creativity pushes her toward a hard choice, one of personal castration. Adapting Joan Metelerkamp's reflections on Ruth Miller's poem *Spider*, we recognize that Asaji's web (as a metaphor for discourse, language) is not a mediation between the realms of life – living, touching, active words – and death: the dead patriarchal Logos. It is a covering for dead language, for her failure to create her own sense by living in the fertile present of possibilities. It is really a covering for her self-castration.

Asaji's weaving is an act of resistance, brought forth to carve a political space of intervention out of a feudal, patriarchal world from which she must be excluded, despite the God-like status that she simultaneously longs for.[31] Her endeavour is not worth the effort: it cannot empower her; on the contrary, it causes her to die. Unable to bear the unnatural and energy-capturing life that seems her only choice – a doomed fate indeed – she invalidates life in herself, giving birth to a dead child who proves an icon of her personal, creative sterility. Asaji's semiotic realm, I would argue quoting Kristeva, has been so deeply repressed that it cannot provide her with fresh energy. She cannot trust herself as a nurturing woman. She mimics men's speech, she acts as a man, and as her own castrator.

Asaji's scapegoating: the abject disrupter

As a disrupter of the social and geometrical order, bringing a diagonal and winding logic into the human space of the castle, as she is depicted by Richie and other critics who focus their analysis on the visual icons and strategies of the film, Asaji is rejected, eliminated from the scene. As a scapegoat, she catalyzes all the evil and disorder of the story. She disappears without leaving a

[31] Joan Metelerkamp, "Ruth Miller. Father's Law or Mother's Lore?", in M. J. Daymond, ed., *South African Feminisms: Writing, Theory and Criticism* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1995), 241-258, passim.

trace, silently like Lady Macbeth, as if she had never been there. Repressed.

Immediately associated by public and critics with the forest witch, with whom she shares her sexual ambiguity, expressionless face and the ability to spin (although the witch's spinning is of the prophetic word of fate, and Asaji's is just an imperfect human attempt), she is an example of what Kristeva has called "abjection". She represents "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous".[32] If *Macbeth* is itself a ritual of warfare and scapegoating, in this film the sacrifice is acted out on the woman, paralysing her in an unnatural life and movement that can only lead her to death. For this reason she must be banned from the screen, just as Japanese and Elizabethan actresses were made to disappear from the stage.

Nevertheless, banning unveils prejudice. Like a mask it reveals what it tries to hide. Once again, in a male revisiting of female myths and stories, we encounter a persistent resistance to the multifaceted becoming of women.

[32] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.

Bianca Del Villano

The Gothic Detective in William Hjortsberg's *Falling Angel*

The narrative of William Hjortsberg often deals with mystery and detection and offers interesting examples of postmodern crime fiction, in which the investigator's search for the 'culprit' reflects or sets in motion an investigation into his/her own identity.[1] This scheme is central in *Falling Angel* (1978), in which not only the subjectivity of the protagonist, but also the detective genre itself is being questioned. The novel starts as a traditional hard-boiled story, whose rational pattern is destabilised by a 'Gothic' ending.

This paper will focus on the genre pattern in *Falling Angel*, analysing how the textual erosion proposed by Hjortsberg's reinterpretation of Gothic and crime fiction is mirrored in its postmodern erosion of subjectivity.

The Private Eye

Falling Angel is set in New York in the 1950s and the main character is Harry Angel, a private detective who is contacted by the lawyer of an enigmatic Frenchman, Louis Cyphre, who asks him to find Johnny Favorite, a famous singer. Harry discovers that Johnny was a weird, superstitious character, deeply involved in black magic and voodoo practices. He had disappeared during

[1] William Hjortsberg is a contemporary New York writer. He is the author of several works of fiction, among which the most famous are *Falling Angel* (1978) and *Nevermore* (1994). He is also known for his screen-plays, such as *Legend,* directed by Ridley Scott, and *Angel Heart*, a cinematic version of his novel *Falling Angel,* directed by Alan Parker in 1987.

the Second World War after returning from the battlefront in Tunisia, where a bomb had destroyed his face and cancelled his memory. Harry's attempts to find out whether Johnny is alive are dangerous for him, since all the people who are in some way connected with the singer get murdered: including Johnny's former fiancée, Margaret Krusemark, and Epiphany, the daughter of one of his lovers. The more Harry discovers about Johnny, the more Johnny's presence seems to persecute him, through death, violence and odd coincidences. In the end, Harry discovers what seems to be an impossible truth: before the war, Johnny had made a pact with Satan, giving his soul in exchange for wealth and success. Once he had become rich and famous, however, he had tried to avoid his destiny by performing a magical ceremony, during which he would acquire the soul of another man by eating his heart. The victim was Harry Angel and Johnny's plan was to assume this name, so that Johnny Favorite would be forgotten along with his debt. However, after the bombing, Johnny was unable to remember his true identity and had consequently identified completely with Harry. Thus the person Harry was looking for was actually himself. Johnny's firstly intentional and later unconscious attempt to hide under the identity of Angel is thwarted by the arrival of Louis Cyphre, alias Lucifer, asking for vengeance. Harry/Johnny is eventually charged by the police for all the murders and will probably be condemned to the electric chair and obviously to hell.

The structure and plot of *Falling Angel* make it a complex novel, in which detective story and Gothic romance intermingle and are reinterpreted in the light of a postmodern focus on problems related to subjectivity.

Elements of the Gothic tradition are quite evident: the presence of the devil in disguise, the pact with Satan, the frequent occurrence of satanic numbers (666), the function of religion as an expression of human interiority, the mysterious deaths, the ending in which the villain is doomed to eternal damnation. At the same time, the protagonist is a 'shamus' as he defines himself, the typical private detective of early 'hard-boiled' American fiction. Thus the novel's Gothic pattern proves to be contaminated by the genre scheme of the particular kind of crime fiction that developed in the USA around the 1930s/40s, in which the loss of social stability between

the World Wars reverberates in the presence of characters in search of fixed points of reference:

> This type of crime fiction, then, began to develop as a popular form in the aftermath of one devastating war and came to maturity in the two decades that terminate in the Second World War. In its most characteristic narratives, some traumatic event irretrievably alters the conditions of life and creates for its characters an absolute experiential divide between their dependence on stable, predictable patterns and the recognition that life is, in truth, morally chaotic, subject to randomness and total dislocation.[2]

The beginning of the novel, indeed, immediately proposes the tone and characteristics of an early hard-boiled novel:

> It was Friday the thirteenth and yesterday's snowstorm lingered in the streets like a leftover curse. The slush outside was ankle-deep. Across Seventh Avenue a treadmill parade of lightbulb headlines marched endlessly around Times Tower's terra cotta façade … I spun my chair around and stared out at Times Square.[3]

The noir atmosphere is evidently defined by the indefinite pessimistic tone of the passage, mostly centred on the city; the urban setting is fundamental in crime fiction, partly because the detection genre responds to the questions posed by urban crime,[4] partly

[2] William Marling, *Hard-Boiled Fiction.* Case Western Reserve University. Updated 2 August 2001. Http://www.cwru.edu/artsci/engl/marling/hardboiled/XXXXXX.html. In particular, the period between the First and the Second World Wars was marked by a series of social and economic disasters in the USA, such as Prohibition with the consequent development of 'gangsterism', the crash of 1929, the Great Depression, and the increasing connivance between crime and politics. Hard-boiled fiction developing in that period gave voice to disillusionment.

[3] William Hjortsberg, *Falling Angel* (New York: St. Martin's Paperbacks, 1978), 1. Subsequent references to this novel will be indicated after the quotation in brackets.

[4] In this respect, William Marling writes: "Hard-boiled fiction has always been related to public interest in the problem of modern, urban life, particularly in crime. But crime as a feature of Western social life was not generally recognised until the rise of large cities in the early 1800s, a period that corresponds to the creation of a mass reading public. Fascinated by and afraid of crime, new city-dwellers vilified and romanticised criminals, as well as those who fought them". William Marling, *Hard-Boiled Fiction.* Case Western Reserve University. Updated 2 August 2001. Http://www.cwru.edu/artsci/engl/marling/hardboiled/XXXXXX.html

because the city with its complicated topography symbolises the maze which the investigator has to unravel. Another significant element suggested by the quotation is the presence of a first person narrator, who will soon prove to be an investigator. It is important to notice that the subjective narration *should* suggest that whatever is recounted is told from a particular angle, but in traditional hard-boiled fiction the individual and subjective viewpoint of the private eye is instead transformed into an objective and stable position from which to recognise and judge corruption. In other words if on the one hand hard-boiled fiction – dealing with American society before and after the two World Wars – describes the world as ambiguous and deprived of its points of reference, on the other it offers a conservative solution in the character of the investigator, the only trustful 'eye' on society and the defender of its patriarchal, bourgeois values. "Cynical, alienated, yet incorruptible lone wolf",[5] the early hard-boiled private eye is in fact always a white male (macho) American, as tough as a hard-boiled egg – the image that won this genre its particular label – and he is the protector of moral integrity in opposition to the other characters (all potential criminals). Besides, though he cannot restore social order, he can denounce corruption by solving cases:

> In old-fashioned mysteries, egghead investigators engaged in games of clever reasoning: find the liar .... Deducing truth was a war of attrition, in which the detective has his work cut out for him outlasting all the liars. No one spoke the truth. Solving a case was the mission, but keeping your balance and retaining a shred of integrity was also a priority.[6]

Notably, however, since he has to solve cases at all costs, the 'shamus' is also able to play ambiguously with other characters, often behaving like criminals or disguising himself, and this is possible precisely because of his "balance" and "integrity", which also helps him to correctly interpret the evidence he finds. Thus,

[5] Eddie Muller, *Dark City* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1998), 69.
[6] Ibid., 70.

hard-boiled fiction fuses together some characteristics of both hero and criminal to create an impressive model of virtuous but 'tough' masculinity.

In *Falling Angel*, Harry reflects in many respects the figure of the hardboiled private eye before turning into a Gothic hero: he is a cynical white male city-resident; he disapproves of Johnny Favorite's moral behaviour and of the people Johnny used to frequent; he despises superstition and the fanatic religious behaviour of both Satanists and the black voodoo community, displaying in opposition a proud atheist ethics. For example, the following exchange between Harry and Epiphany is revealing of Harry's sarcastic consideration about voodoo, which he sees as superstitious and dangerous. Indeed, after seeing a ceremony in the park officiated by Epiphany, Harry teases her:

> "The Parks Department and the Human Society would disagree. Quite a gruesome little religion".
> This time Epiphany looked me straight in the eye, her glance black with fury. "Obeah doesn't need to hang a man on the cross. There never was an Obeah Holy War, or an Obeah Inquisition!"
> "Yeah, sure; you've got to kill the chicken to make the soup, right?" (128)

Analogously, Harry despises Ethan and Margaret Krusemark for being devil worshippers. Having witnessed a Black Mass, in which a baby is killed and a girl raped, he does not hide his disgust:

> K: "The Prince of Darkness protects the powerful. You should pray to him yourself, Angel. You'd be surprised at the good things that would happen."
> A: "Like what? Slitting babies' throats? Where'd you snatch the kid from, Krusemark?" ...
> K: "There was no snatching involved. We paid hard cash for the little bastard. One less welfare mouth for the taxpayers to feed. You are a taxpayer, aren't you, Angel?"
> H: I spit in his face. I'd never done that to anyone before. (267)

Thus, Harry shows his belief in a code of behaviour that resists until the end when he is told he is the person he despises. Harry

is certainly also a 'tough guy' and even kills Ethan Krusemark in a fight, but he appears as an honest man, who tries to make order in the maze of deception he is swallowed into. Very innocently, he says to Louis Cyphre, "nothing's going to stop me from getting the truth" (172), a phrase which definitively typifies Harry as a hard-boiled character, in search of the truth. In opposition, Cyphre's answer – "the truth, Mr. Angel, is an elusive quarry" (172) – sounds prophetic and mocking, since in the end 'the truth' is not what Angel wanted to discover.

The private 'I'

Before Cyphre's arrival, Harry knows little of his past and seems to be little interested in self-analysis. When Epiphany asks him about his origin, he answers vaguely:

> A little place in Wisconsin you've never heard of. Just outside Madison. By now it's probably part of the city … I haven't been back since I went in the army. That was the week after Pearl Harbor. … There was nothing there for me anymore. My parents were both killed when I was in an army hospital. I might have gone home for the funeral but was in no condition to travel. After my discharge it was just a bunch of fading memories. (185-186)

Harry's loss of memory is described here and in other passages as a process, something occurring *gradually*, as the expression "fading memories" shows. The following quotation too hints at forgetfulness as a progression, adding moreover the idea that it served as the prelude to a new life:

> Walking up from 43rd, I tried to remember how the square looked the night I saw it for the first time. So much had changed. It was New Year's Eve of '43. An entire year of my life had vanished. I was fresh out of an army hospital with a brand-new face and nothing but loose change in my pockets. … I felt my past sloughing away like a shed snakeskin, I had no identification, no money, no place to live, and knew only that I was heading downtown. (40)

Here the past/snakeskin comparison and the choice of the verb

"sloughing" implicitly refer to the hope for a second chance, which Harry fulfils through his detective job; indeed, it is immediately after returning from the war that quite by chance he is offered a job as an investigator, and significantly the Agency's name is "Crossroads":

> My office was two flights up … Eight-inch gold letters gave me the edge over the others: Crossroads Detective Agency, a name I bought along with the business from Ernie Cavalero, who took me on as his legman back when I first hit the city during the war. (2)

But the detective job is actually decisive not simply because it represents the opportunity Johnny/Harry needs, but also because it helps Johnny/Harry not to question his identity; it is as if for Angel concentrating on other people's lives meant not looking into himself. In short, he becomes a 'private eye' to hide his private 'I'. In this respect, the most effective description of Harry's personality is given by Margaret Krusemark – the black magician and Johnny's former fiancée – when Angel tries to get information about her relationship with Favorite by pretending to be a client who wants a horoscope. The woman does not recognise him, since Harry underwent facial reconstruction after the bombing, but she is able to catch the main features of his identity:

> "I know that you're a natural actor," she said. "Playing roles comes easily. You switch identities with the instinctive facility of a chameleon changing color. Although you are deeply concerned with discovering, lies flow from your lips without hesitation. (61)

Margaret's analysis is enlightening in more than one sense; her hint at his role-playing ability reveals the multiplicity of Harry/Johnny's personality, a characteristic he shows on many occasions and that is apparently required by his job. Indeed, in order to obtain information about Favorite, Angel pretends in turn to be a journalist, a writer, an employee of the National Institute of Health, and a window cleaner. However, in Margaret's vision, this aspect becomes problematic when considered in relation to the dualistic structure of Harry's psyche:

> Your role-playing ability has a darker side and presents a problem when you confront the dual nature of your personality. I would say that you were frequently the victim of doubt. 'How could I have done such a thing?' is your most constant worry. Cruelty comes easily to you, yet you find it inconceivable that you are so gifted at hurting others". (61)

The portrait that emerges from these words is of a man who refuses a part of himself. His subjectivity is multifaceted and versatile, in line with the postmodern world Hjortsberg presents in the novel, but Harry seems unable to acknowledge his 'postmodernity', because that would imply unveiling the division on which his identity is constructed. Harry needs to believe that his self is unitary, coherent, perfectly in control, in order not to run the risk of remembering the banished past. In this respect, the detective role is crucial because it allows Angel to explain his multiplicity and to cope with the numerous aspects of his personality without revealing the division(s) of his subjectivity: his lies and his ability to "switch identities" are not seen as traits of the self, but only as a necessary component of his job, and since the job involves discovering the truth (a high moral aim), his hurting other people is simply astonishing for him.

Conversely, the other characters are conscious that identity is flexible and variously compounded. For instance, Margaret uses the stratagem of a fake identity to sidetrack Harry, when she says she is not Margaret but her *twin* sister Millicent, clearly an invention: "'That would have been my sister, Margaret,' she said. 'I'm Millicent. We're twins. She's the black witch in the family; I'm the white one'" (60). Whereas Margaret is making fun of Harry, openly playing with her identity and even referring to a twin, the symbol of duality, Harry does not realise the trick and believes her. Epiphany too is conscious of the variety of possibilities of one's identity:

> E: "I am not one woman, but many. Just as you are more than one man"
> H: "Is that voodoo?"
> E: "That's common sense". (244)

As a result, Harry lives in a postmodern world but follows an anachronistic hard-boiled code of behaviour, which proves inadequate to understand the complexity of reality. Amnesia, consequently, represents a device enabling him to select the aspects of the self that can be accepted; at the same time, it dramatises the disease of a character who is incapable of establishing a relationship of continuity with his past, or of accepting the multiple aspects of his subjectivity: "the memory problem experienced by … Harry Angel serve[s] initially to hide from the texts a very postmodern twist – the multiplicity of selves that create an identity".[7] Indeed, Angel stubbornly proclaims the stability of his own identity, even though he does not remember his past and even when he is told about Johnny's role in his life:

> Times Square blazed like a neon purgatory. I fingered my probable nose and tried to remember the past. Most of it was gone, wiped out by a French artillery round at Oran. Bits and pieces remained. Smells often bring them back. Damn it, I knew who I was. I know who I am. (280)

Ironically, Harry's refusal to acknowledge his past and his self is precisely why even his detective ability fails when it confronts the trap prepared by Cyphre, as we will see in the next section.

Deciphering the Mystery

Face to face with the difficult case of Favorite, Angel follows a rational method, gradually discovering much about Johnny's life, but not noticing the strange points in common he shares with the man. Both men are veterans and amnesiacs and they have both undergone facial surgery; nonetheless, Angel does not read these cues correctly. Even after discovering the truth, Harry continues hysterically to embody the detective role, opposing his sterile rationality to what is proving to be 'real'. Indeed, after his last

[7] Daniel Jones. "Split Identities and World(s) Under Erasure in *Memento* and *Falling Angel*: Playing on the Detective Figure in Postmodern Crime Fiction", *Crime Culture* (Autumn 2002), www.crimeculture.com/contents/DanJones.

encounter with Cyphre, when the devil simply vanishes in the elevator, he continues to consider events according to logic and proves incapable of going beyond it:

> The circular window in the outer door filled with light as the elevator clanked to a stop. I steadied my aim and held my breath. Louis Cyphre's satanic charade had come to an end. The red metal door slid open. The car was empty … I tried to combat my confusion with logic. If he was not on the street or the roof and didn't get off the elevator, he must still be somewhere in the building. It was the only possible explanation. He was hiding somewhere. He had to be. During the next half-hour, I went over the entire building. … There was no one there. I returned to my office feeling lost. It didn't make sense. None of it made sense. No one can vanish into thin air. It had to be a trick. (284-285)

"I tried to combat my confusion with logic" sums up Harry's essence as private eye, but also sanctions the failure of his method, challenged by what proves stronger and incomprehensible. Hence, Harry's rationality is not synonymous with cleverness in interpreting evidence but rather the opposite: logic prevents him from sensing danger and from deciphering even the most evident traces, such as the devil's name: "You disappoint me, Mr Angel. I should have thought you would have had very little difficulty deciphering my name" (282). These words again make fun of Harry and of his ability to 'read' the world, as he does not even hear the Louis Cyphre-Lucifer connection. At the same time the devil's use of the verb "deciphering" proposes another pun related to his name. Harry's inability to de-cipher "Cyphre" proves his general inability to decipher or discover the hidden meaning of facts.

Another episode in the novel, however, suggests a deeper meaning of the devil's name, which is revealing of Cyphre's function in relation to Johnny/Harry's amnesia and is connected with the original meaning of the word "cypher, cipher", which according to the OED includes "cyphre" among its variant forms and derives from the Arabic *sifr*, 'zero'. The episode takes place in a theatre, where Cyphre presents a conjuring show. The spectacle provides several performances, accompanied by strange comments

on the part of the magician, who concludes his show with the words: "Zero, the point intermediate between positive and negative, is a portal through which every man must eventually pass" (212). The quotation mentions a "portal" which every person has to pass through at a certain point, and so it may refer to death, but it also hints at "the point intermediate between positive and negative", recalling the idea of a more general kind of transformation, of a passage between two extremes. In Angel's case, the threshold is that of self-discovery, since the equation between Cyphre and the word "zero" suggests that the devil is used in the novel as a metaphor for the fatal passage between self-negation and self-discovery. Cyphre is, indeed, the creator of the revelatory plan that drives Harry to acknowledge the interruption within his mind. The fact, then, that Cyphre is Lucifer dramatises the shocking impact this discovery has for Johnny/Harry. The taboo about his Self is so violent that the return of the repressed must necessarily be depicted on the one hand as the supreme uncontrollable symbol of evil, and on the other as an element which is totally unexpected in a rational system such as that of detective fiction. In this respect, the genre twist reflects the twist occurring within the protagonist's mind. While Harry's identity comes to dissolve, the hard-boiled textual pattern also vacillates and assumes the less reassuring contours of a Gothic narrative. In other words, the psychic threshold, the "zero" between Johnny and Harry, is reflected textually through the change from hard-boiled into Gothic.

At the same time, as the ending proposes a complete dissolution of the main hero's identity, and a deconstruction of the assumption that subjectivity is unitary, one could say that the Gothic in *Falling Angel* speaks the language of postmodernism, insofar as Harry's disease proves to be his incapacity to accept his hybridity and his past. In one of the final moments of the novel, as he comments on his recent discovery about himself, Harry associates his hybridity with corruption:

> Under my breath, *I* hummed a Johnny Favorite tune popular during the war. It was one of *my* biggest hits. Poor old Harry Angel, fed to the dogs like table scraps. *I* killed him and ate his heart, but it was me who died all the same. Not even magic and

> power can change that. I was living on borrowed time and another man's memory; a corrupt *hybrid* creature trying to escape the past. (287, italics mine)

Harry's reference to corruption traces a link between the loss of his moral integrity (the prerogative of a detective) and the disintegration of his identity, shown here through the use of the personal pronoun "I", indifferently addressing both Angel and Favorite. Besides, from a textual perspective, the instability of the pronoun "I" also shows that the narrator's viewpoint is no longer as stable as hard-boiled fiction implies and, consequently, it is no longer a privileged and trustful 'look' on the world. The emergence of the Gothic pattern, then, corrodes the centrality of the narrator/detective's viewpoint, forcing it to occupy a relative position; the detective is obliged to admit in the end that he is not only a subject who looks at others and judges them, but also an object who is, in turn, looked at and judged by others. Harry/Johnny recalls this Lacanian inversion of perspective in the following words, which hint at the inevitability of being the object of a look (especially one's own look in the mirror) and which perfectly expose/express the protagonist's ultimate state of mind: "No matter how cleverly you sneak up on a mirror your reflection always looks you straight in the eye" (287).

In conclusion, *Falling Angel* stages the collapse of the main features of detective fiction, whose scheme is destroyed by the irruption of a Gothic counter-text, which rewrites in a postmodern perspective the identity of the protagonist. On the one hand, the Gothic-postmodern pattern aims at discarding the rational apparatus of crime fiction by showing that the investigator is unable to interpret the world correctly. On the other, it digs into the protagonist's interiority, unveiling the presence of a gap between past and present in his psyche and obliging him to acknowledge the multiplicity and hybridity of his identity.

Celeste Ianniciello

The Satanic Verses as a "Text-in -Motion"

A celebration of "hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformations that come from new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the pure".[1] These are the words Rushdie uses to defend *The Satanic Verses* against the charge of blasphemy, but also to defend one of the most problematic aspects of the postmodern condition: the multiculturalism produced by migration. The Indian anthropologist Arjun Appadurai defines *The Satanic Verses* as a "text-in-motion" because it migrates from one place to another, through multiple cultures. In this sense it can be considered an interesting point of reference for an analysis of globalization and its transcultural effects.

According to Appadurai postmodernity is characterized by the diffuse and disarticulated deterritorialization of people, images, technologies, capitals, ideologies, which he respectively defines as *ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, ideoscapes*. This creates a system of disjunctions and differences that prevents us from accepting the idea of a homogeneous cultural unity, closed within spatially defined borders like those of the nation-state. Such concepts as place, identity, nation have to be redefined precisely because of these heterogeneous and uncontrollable "disjunctive global flows":

> the central paradox of ethnic politics in today's world is that primordia (whether of language or skin colour or neighborhood

[1] Salman Rushdie, "In Good Faith", in *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Granta Books, 1991), 394

> or kinship) have become globalized. That is, sentiments, whose greatest force is in their ability to ignite intimacy into a political state and turn locality into a staging ground for identity, have become spread over vast and irregular spaces as groups move yet stay linked to one another through sophisticated media capabilities.[2]

Considering the complex tension between heterogenization and homogenization caused by these flows, Appadurai maintains that the configuration of cultural forms is substantially fractal and suggests that new representations of postmodernity and its polymorphism must be based on a fractal metaphor which "relies on images of flow and uncertainty, hence chaos, rather than on older images of order, stability and systematicness".[3]

The multiform, chaotic vision of the world Appadurai describes is surprisingly similar to the hybrid, eclectic, exciting vision of *The Satanic Verses*. Most of the characters in Rushdie's text are migrants from India to England; by crossing the frontiers of their nations they necessarily undergo a sort of cultural translation. They locate themselves in what Homi Bhabha calls the "third space", in an interstitial, transnational space between London and Bombay, East and West, which "gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation".[4]

Because *The Satanic Verses* is structured around the experience of migration and its transformative effects, Bhabha defines it as a "migrant metaphor" of our world, characterized by "a more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities".[5] But in the light of Appadurai's argument it can also be considered a literary fractal metaphor of our age, where, as he writes, "there is a delocalized *transnation*, which retains a special ideological link to a putative place of origin but is otherwise

[2] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 41.

[3] Ibid., 47.

[4] Homi Bhabha, "The Third Space", in Jonathan Rutherford, *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 211.

[5] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 5.

a thoroughly diasporic collectivity".[6] *The Satanic Verses* is both the product and the mirror of that transnation. "How does newness enter the world?":[7] this is indeed the central question posed by the novel. I suggest that for both Rushdie and Appadurai the answer lies in the transformations and cultural translation brought on by frontier crossing.

All the characters of Rushdie's text belong to the diasporic public spheres or *ethnoscapes* described by Appadurai; they are part of that flow of people in motion from one place to another. Since for Rushdie "to cross a frontier is to be transformed", change and movement are typical traits of this identity.[8]

In Rushdie's universe the transformation deriving from migration is represented as a rebirth through destruction. We first encounter the two Indian protagonists, Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta, after the Bostan 420 bringing them to London is exploded by a group of Sikh fundamentalists. They precipitate on the English coast like "bundles dropped by some carelessly open-beaked stork … going down head first, in the recommended position for babies entering the birth canal" (10). The first words Gibreel pronounces are "born again, Spoono, you and me. Happy birthday, mister; happy birthday to you", while Saladin "coughed, spluttered, opened his eyes, and, as befitted a new-born babe, burst into foolish tears" (10). Margareta Petersson, underlining the themes of the fall and metamorphosis, maintains that *The Satanic Verses* focuses on the destruction and rebirth not only of the characters but also of society and systems of thought.[9] Her observation is in line with Appadurai's thesis on postmodernity and its relationship with migration. It seems that the events narrated in *The Satanic Verses* highlight the process of cultural production emerging from the relationship between the flows of *ethnoscapes*, *ideoscapes*, and *mediascapes,* exposing the characters to the traumas of deterritorialization, i.e. to the sufferings of cultural reproduction in a disjunctive global world.

[6] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 172.

[7] Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Vintage, 1998, [1988]) 8, hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

[8] Salman Rushdie, *Step Across This Line* (London: Vintage, 2001), 411.

[9] See Margareta Petersson, *Unending Metamorphoses: Myth, Satire and Religion in the Fiction of Salman Rushdie's Novels* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1996).

In Rushdie's brilliant satire Gibreel and Saladin are doubly traumatized by deterritorialization because they are migrants and above all because they lack the concept of hybridity, so that while one is unable to translate himself in another culture, the other does it wrongly. Neither enjoys the solidarity of their author who makes them victims of the changes they undergo after migration. Chamcha's migration is represented as a ridiculous kind of subverted colonialism: he desperately tries to suffocate his Indian origins in order to 'conquer' the status of the perfect Englishman, even in his physical aspect:

> Mr Saladin Chamcha had constructed his face with care – it had taken him several years to get it just simply as *his own* – indeed he had forgotten what he had looked like before it. Furthermore, he had shaped himself a voice to go with the face, a voice whose languid, almost lazy vowels contrasted disconcertingly with the sawn-off abruptness of the consonants. (33)

To Chamcha the word "home" sounds like a dangerous threat against the precious cultural capital he has accumulated in England. But when he goes back to India, after many years in London, he realizes he is not immune from the danger of "Indianness", and when his friend Zeeny accuses him of only being a bastard "wog", he rejects that infamous label but ends up being in clamorous contradiction to himself and what he actually represents: "Zeeny … the earth is full of Indians, you know that, we get everywhere … Columbus was right maybe; the world's made up of Indies, East, West, North. Damn it you should be proud of us, our enterprise, the way we push against frontiers." And Zeeny observes: "listen to my Salad. Suddenly he wants to be Indian after spending his life trying to turn white … India jumbled things up" (54). Then Chamcha decides to fly away from his "dangerous" native homeland and go back to London; but unfortunately he is unaware of the ironically tragic destiny the city reserves for him. In fact, after his fall from the Bostan, he is arrested as a clandestine and violently beaten up by the police, after which he transforms into a poor devil with all his typical attributes: half-goat body, horns, hooves, sulphurous breath and gigantic phallus. After having been acknowledged as a British

citizen, Saladin is brought to the hospital where he meets other migrants who, like him, have undergone a similar transformation: they are all half-beast humans: "there's a woman who is now mostly water-buffalo. There are businessman from Nigeria who have grown sturdy tails. There is a group of holidaymakers from Senegal who were doing no more than changing planes when they turned into slippery snakes" (168). Moreover, after returning home, Chamcha realizes that his wife Pamela Lovelace, a magnificent tweed-voiced English woman, smelling of "Yorkshire pudding and hearts of oak" (180), had betrayed him with his friend Jumpy Joshi the very day he was believed dead.

Chamcha's return and rebirth look like a sudden and painful agony, an inexorable journey back, a frustrating degeneration. In England Saladin is irreducibly a foreigner; as such he feels irreversibly deterritorialized and represents a diabolic threatening presence for English national integrity. Saladin Chamcha's metamorphosis is a metaphor: it stands for the way the English look at the 'Other', and his desecrating victimization is the direct consequence of this way of looking. In fact, the manticore, the half-tiger man Chamcha meets in hospital, explains acutely that "they [the English] describe us … they have the power of description and we succumb to the pictures they construct" (168). Chamcha's ridiculous imitation of Englishness succumbs to the English power of description, i.e. to their imperialist ideology and stainless nationalism which picture migrants as monsters. His desperate attempts at this sort of cultural translation are destined to fail because his concepts of identity, nationality and integration, originating in the eclectic culture of India, collide with those of English culture, enclosed in the proud ivory tower of its tradition. Chamcha's persecution and metamorphosis represent the trauma of deterritorialization caused by the disjuncture between the *ideoscapes* of nationality and belonging "in-motion" from India to England and vice versa.

Another example of this kind of disjuncture is represented by Chamcha's job: he is a famous radio actor, "The Man of a Thousand Voices and a Voice", whose talent for imitation is concentrated in his voice, without involving his embarrassing Indian appearance because, as his friend Zeeny underlines "they [the English] pay you to imitate them as long as they don't have to look at you"

(60). Even on television, where he is the protagonist of the sitcom emblematically called *The Aliens Show*, he has little visibility: his appearance is camouflaged. Finally, after his return from India, he is dismissed because "with [him] in the show it's just too damn racial"(265). Significantly, the only place where Chamcha finds refuge is an Indian restaurant, the Shandaar Café, among the people he had tried to escape from. It is at Brickhall, the migrants' district, that he can finally obtain social and even political value: the young black antiracists choose him, i.e. the devil, as their powerful symbol of resistance. As the young Indian Mishal Sufyan tells him: "people can really identify with you. It's an image white society has rejected for so long that we can really take it, you know, occupy it, inhabit it, reclaim it, and make it our own"(253), to which Chamcha, replies in terror: "go away. This isn't what I wanted. This is not what I meant at all" (287). But it is just by crossing the frontiers of multiethnicity and living among the migrants who perceive his "difference" as a real source of power that he can really be born again:

> everyone, black brown white, had started thinking of the dream-figure as *real*, as a being who had crossed the frontier, evading the normal controls, and was now roaming loose about the city. Illegal migrant, outlaw king, foul criminal or race-hero, Saladin Chamcha was getting to be true … *I am*, he accepted, *that I am.* (288-289)

Actually, Chamcha demonstrates he is not a devilish figure, a role that is played in Rushdie's text by Gibreel Farishta. Once in England, he wants to abandon his religion, Islam, but he is gradually and irresistibly possessed by the image of himself as the destroyer angel, charged by God to purify the decadent, multiethnic city of London with his burning trumpet Azraeel. Gibreel's wish is, in fact, to remain an *untranslated* man and to transform England into something like his homeland, India, because, unlike Chamcha, he never compromises and never welcomes newness. To cross the frontier means for him to transform rather than to be transformed. As Sara Suleri states: "both Farishta and Chamcha represent aspects of colonial Muslim India that are most involved in both the prospect of infiltration and, next, what it means to infiltrate. The two of them are accorded a unique prophetic status in relation to the former

colonizer".[10] Both Saladin and Gibreel, in relation to imperialist England, are destined to have the status of infiltrators: the former because of his absurd imitation of Englishness, the latter because of his desire to transform the city of London, thereby operating a kind of historical nemesis. In fact, Gibreel represents the devilish angel of postcolonial vengeance wandering through the streets of London and embodying an uncanny epiphany: the return of the repressed:

> He would show them – yes! – his power. These powerless English! Did they not think their history would return to haunt them? The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor (Fanon) … Native and settler, that old dispute, continuing now, upon these soggy streets, with reversed categories. (353)

For Gibreel, Fanon's prophecy may be fulfilled by a "climatic" revolution: "the trouble with the English was, *in a word*, Gibreel solemnly pronounced, *their weather*" (354).[11] His mission is to tropicalize and Indianize London:

> Increased moral definition, institution of a national siesta, development of vivid and expansive patterns of behaviour among the populace, higher quality popular music … Emergence of new social values, friends to commence dropping in on one another without making appointments, closure of old folks' homes, emphasis on extended family spiced food; the use of water as well as paper in English toilets; the joy of running fully dressed through the first rains of the monsoon …

[10] Sara Suleri, "Contraband Histories, Salman Rushdie and the Embodiment of Blasphemy", in M. D. Fletcher, ed., *Reading Rushdie* (Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994), 227.

[11] In *Black Skins, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), Franz Fanon analyzes the colonizer-colonized dichotomy as the product of a "manichaeism delirium", the result of which condition is a radical division into binary oppositions such as white-black, good-evil, true-false, in which the first item is privileged in colonial discourse. On the one hand, Fanon stresses the mystificatory power of this discourse, which can be employed by the colonizer to incorporate and disarm opposition; on the other he recognizes its potential as a demystifying force through which the colonized can exert his resistance and construct new liberating narratives. But Gibreel's demystifying power will only result in a ridiculous and improbable 'climatic' revolution.

> Standing upon the horizon, spreading his arms to fill the sky, Gibreel cried: 'let it be'. (354)

Gibreel's tropicalization of London envisages the transformation of its inhabitants according to the typical negative stereotypes with which the English label migrants but which he presents here as desirable qualities the English lack. Gibreel represents inflexibility at both the religious and the cultural levels. His compliant attitude toward Saladin mirrors the superiority of integrity over the depravation of mutability; so while, for example, Gibreel's favourite books and films represent the epitome of *Indianness*, he considers those preferred by Saladin nothing but "Western art-house craps" (434), whose choice demonstrates the depth of his brainwashing. Significantly, Gibreel calls his friend "Spoono", playing with his name "Chamcha", literally "spoon" and metaphorically "flatterer". Saladin is well-suited to feed the English palate, and Rushdie has emphasized the fundamental role such "spoon-men" played in the construction and consolidation of the colonial system:

> a Chamcha is a very humble, everyday object. It is in fact, a spoon. The word is Urdu; and it also has a second meaning. Colloquially, a *chamcha* is a person who sucks powerful people, a yes-man, a sycophant. The British Empire would not have lasted a week without such collaborators among its colonized peoples. You could say the Raj grew fat by being spoon-fed.[12]

Like Chamcha, Gibreel too tries to carry out a sort of subverted colonialism; his enterprise, however, is founded not on imitation but on an obsession with an integralistic, monomaniacal idea of culture which is equally opposed to Rushdie's idea of cultural hybridity. It is not by chance that Rushdie gives Gibreel, a Bollywood star in the genre of the 'theologicals', the role of the angel of the Indian nation. As Srinivas Aravamudan observes, Rushdie uses Gibreel to parody the Indians' habit of worshipping their movie stars as divine creatures, on the one hand, and the Indian stars' habit of

[12] Salman Rushdie, "The Empire Writes Back With a Vengeance", *The Times* (3 July 1982), 8.

considering themselves as political semigods or national heroes, on the other.[13] In fact, Rushdie reserves a rather more prosaic destiny for Gibreel because, like Chamcha, he is exposed to the traumas of deterritorialization produced by the globalized world in which we live. The more polymorphous and variegated the frontier Gibreel crosses, the more dangerous his trauma will prove to be.

Deterritorialization, according to Appadurai's analysis, can provoke unpredictable and sometimes dangerous effects, as for example local ethnic implosions between the national State and the different deterritorialized groups when the latter, fuelled with the image of their homeland vehicled by the media, construct an invented and rigidly fantasized homeland. Appadurai gives the example of the Sikhs in England, Canada and the United States, whose idea of homeland constitutes an *ideoscape* that interacts dangerously with internal nationalist politics.

In this sense, through the *mediascape* of the 'theologicals', the inflexible Farishta would constitute dangerous fuel for radicalized nationalist *ideoscapes*. He is the real threat whose presence Rushdie chooses to eliminate. Gibreel's diabolic, monomaniacal obsession with India and Islam does not allow him to transform and be born again, opening himself to newness. It leads him on the contrary to madness and in the end to death. After attempting to tropicalize London, he in fact ends up by being trapped in his role as the avenging angel, bringing social and personal degeneration.

At the personal level, his role as avenger turns into a pathologic jealousy that brings him to kill his beloved Alleluia Cone for whom he had gone to London. At the social level, it brings him to burn Brickhall district, the Shandaar Café and the Community Relations Council, which represent the multiethnic parts of London. In the end Gibreel kills even himself because his image as angel has become an unbearable inner demon. His deterritorialization proves not only traumatic but lethal. Rushdie seems to be telling us that the only way to "survive" in our multicultural world is to abandon any kind of fixed and inflexible idea of culture because it kills any hope for renewal and rebirth. Fawzia Afzal-Khan maintains that Gibreel

[13] See Srinivas Aravamudan, "Being God's Postman Is No Fun, Yaar", in Fletcher, ed., *Reading Rushdie*, 193.

symbolizes two strategies of containment: colonialism and religion. One contains people within racial and geographic borders, the other delimits their intellectual territory.[14] This has tragic consequences on a 'time frontier' that asks us, as Rushdie puts it, to "step across these fixed and shifting lines".[15]

What distinguishes the mutable and inflexible characters from the immutable and inflexible ones is their modernity, in the sense that their hospitable attitude towards newness and change represents one of the most suitable ways to conform to modern times and Rushdie contrasts it sharply with religion, or with what in his text it means to be religious. Clearly, Rushdie's aim is not to dichotomize the postmodern age of fragmentation, hybridity and uncertainty and the anachronistic age of religion and orthodox certainty because he himself acknowledges that religion does not necessarily coincide with intolerance and repression, and he does not consider Islam as absolutely inflexible: "I knew that Islam is by no means homogeneous, or as absolutist as some of its champions make it out to be ... Islam contains ribaldry as well as solemnity, irreverence as well as absolutism".[16] Nor is it possible to hypothesize a dichotomy between a secular Occident and a religious Orient, or between the historicity of the West and the atemporality of the East. In response to Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies who read in Rushdie's text a negative attitude towards Islam, stemming from its orientalist perspective, Margareta Petersson explains that the image of the Muslims in *The Satanic Verses* is not at all as uniform as it would be in an orientalist text: "the Orient [in *The Satanic Verses*] is not characterized by timelessness, an eternal present tense, as in orientalistic discourses".[17] In fact, what Rushdie means by atemporal and in opposition to the modern moment is not the Orient or Islam per se, but rather the fundamentalist concept of the sacred.

[14] Fawzia Afzal-Khan, "The Debunking of Myth", in *Cultural Imperialism in the Indo-English Novel* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993).

[15] Rushdie, *Step Across This Line*, 442.

[16] Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, 409.

[17] Petersson, *Unending Metamorphosis*, 295. For a more exhaustive description of what is meant by 'Orientalist perspective" see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) and Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe Myths of Orient* (London: Pandora, 1994).

The Satanic Verses satirizes a religiosity that is antithetic to modernity. The kind of behaviour it implies contrasts radically with the fractal configuration of the world, which requires, as Appadurai explains, that "our very models of cultural shape will have to alter, as configurations of people, place, and heritage lose all semblance of isomorphism".[18] It is precisely by virtue of its distance from all semblance of isomorphism that *The Satanic Verses* eludes any sort of orientalistic discourse and, as Jean-Pierre Durix maintains, marks the birth of a new cultural order: "we may witness [with *The Satanic Verses*] the birth of a new world culture in which the emphasis is laid not so much on synthesis but on creative diversity and the refusal of cultural barriers".[19] Rushdie's satire takes aim at a religiosity which refuses diversity and is based on the idea of an immutable and absolute pureness that is outside history and contingencies. The sacred text contains the highest truth, that which is directly revealed by God. As such, it is opposed to the prophane text of history and to the metamorphic, inconclusive narrative of modernity, whose meaning is evanescent. While the sacred text, the Koran in this case, requires total submission, history and the present require incessant questioning.

While religion may appear to resist the indeterminacies of history, Rushdie's novel challenges this kind of religiosity, suggesting that religiosity itself is a literary and historical construction. The chapters narrating Gibreel Farishta's dreams of himself as the angel Gabriel represent this complex relation between religion and modernity. In the chapter called "Ayesha", for instance, the figure of the Imam in exile embodies Islam as the negation and destruction of History, and the chapters "Mahound" and "Return to Jahilia" describe the birth of Islam, its entrance into history through the divine revelation the angel Gabriel (embodied by Gibreel) transmits to Muhammad.

The Imam of Desh carries Gibreel's monomaniacal inflexibility to the extreme: he determinedly resists all sorts of English contamination during his forced exile in London which for him is only "a waiting room, or transit lounge ... a soulless country" (208). Distant from his

[18] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity*, 46.

[19] Jean Pierre Durix, *Mimesis, Genres and Post-Colonial Discorse* (Basingstoke-New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, 1998), 161.

homeland, the Imam seems stuck in a limbo, suspended in inactivity: "The Imam is a massive stillness, an immobility. He is living stone ... the Imam's eyes are clouded, his lips do not move ... he moves without motion, acts without doing, speaks without uttering a sound" (210). Unable to enjoy the pleasures of cultural exchange deriving from contact with a new country, the exiled Imam focuses all his attention on returning to his homeland, where he will be able to realize his most burning desire, i.e. setting off a revolution against History and freeing his people from the chains of temporality: "'We will make a revolution ... against history'.... History the intoxicant, the creation and possession of the Devil, of the great Shaitan, the greatest of the lies .... History is the deviation from the Path, knowledge is a delusion" (210). Ironically, in order to carry out his anti-modern revolution the Imam uses the radio, one of the most typically modern means of communication, thus contributing to the creation of the delocalized *transnation* Appadurai refers to, which is constituted by deterritorialized persons and also by *mediascapes* like the radio.

While the Imam's religiosity is represented as a paradoxical antithesis to the present and a total detachment from history, the revelation of Islam is instead represented as a violent and transfiguring irruption into History, through the absolute truth of divine knowledge. In fact, the mutable reality of the city where Islam originates, Jahilia, a lively centre of commercial exchange made up entirely of sand and vulnerable to the dissolving effects of water, is in sharp contrast to the inexorable intransigence of a religion that does not allow any fragility, error or impurity. Rushdie deliberately avoids submitting Islam to the regime of unequivocation in order to make room for heterodoxy, just where one would expect orthodoxy to dominate, thereby confronting Islam with the embarrassing possibility of its very ambiguity and historicity. We can affirm with Fawzia Afzal-Khan that Rushdie is a demystifier, not only because he narrates the birth of Islam through the hallucinations of an Indian movie star on the brink of madness, but even, and most significantly, because by using the name "Mahound" for the prophet Muhammad he demonizes him.[20] Rushdie underlines how the prophet's devilish aspect coincides with his human one, as he explains elsewhere:

[20] See Afzal-Khan, *Cultural Imperialism*, 168.

> I knew that stories of Muhammad's doubts, uncertainties, errors, fondness for women abound in and around Muslim tradition. To me, they seemed to make him more vivid, more human ... I never doubted Muhammad's greatness, nor, I believe, is the 'Mahound' of my novel belittled by being portrayed as human.[21]

Nevertheless, the author's intention is not so simple and naive as he would make us believe. Rushdie's text transforms myth into history through satire, which is the finest as well as the most dangerous means of expression. Mahound is an acute businessman who opportunistically masks himself as a prophet. When, for example, Abu Simbel, the Great of Jahilia, proposes the conversion of the entire city and a place for him in the Council in return for the admission into the new religion of the three goddesses of Jahilia as angelic entities, Mahound is ready to compromise. And to his disciples' preoccupation that his decision would undermine the monotheistic nature of their religion, he opposes his shrewd pragmatism: "haven't you noticed? The people do not take us seriously. Never more than fifty in the audience when I speak, and half of those are tourists ... Sometimes I think I must make it easier for the people to believe" (106).

Then, when he realizes that Hind, Abu Simbel's wife, has no intention to respect the compromise and continues to keep the worship of the three goddesses alive, Mahound once again shows his businesslike practicality: he retracts his previous declarations because, as the angel Gibreel has now revealed, they came from Satan, not from God. Yet, the satire on the prophet is further strengthened by two emblematic characters, Salman the Persian, the migrant who, among Mahound's disciples, indicatively bears Rushdie's name, and Baal, the satirical poet. Salman, officially charged to copy the revealed Word, realizes the latter is perfectly in line with the prophet's interests. When he decides to introduce furtive variations to the holy text in order to test his suspicions, Mahound does not immediately notice the changes. Thus Salman slyly opens the way to 'difference' at the very height of Mahound's power: at Yathrib he had in fact obtained the conversion of the

[21] Rushdie, "In Good Faith", 409.

entire population, ratifying it in a very detailed as well as ridiculous series of laws, and even Hind had finally submitted to his Word. Salman successfully opposes his irreverent, secular, effective *word* to Mahound's counterfeit and alienating *Word*. Through the destabilizing figure of Salman, *The Satanic Verses*, as Steve Connor maintains, "seems to underwrite the fallen word of ordinary language against the supreme authority of religious Word".[22]

As regards Baal, he too is a destabilizing figure, and his threat to Mahound lies in an even more dangerous weapon, satire. There is an emblematic reaction of the crowd listening to Baal when, after being brought before Mahound to be judged, he starts narrating his libidinous experiences in the brothel *Hijab*, where he had taken refuge pretending to be Mahound:

> The crowd, packed into the tent of judgement, knowing that this was after all the famous satirist Baal, in his day the sharpest tongue and keenest wit in Jahilia, began (no matter how hard it tried not to) to laugh. ... By the end of his speech the good flock of Jahilia were literally weeping with laughter, unable to restrain themselves. (392)

Baal's satire has a disarming power of seduction over the crowd, unleashing laughter, a real means of antiauthoritarian resistance. Significantly, the prophet compares writers to whores because of their similarly transgressive potential: "whores and writers, Mahound. We are the people you can't forgive", Baal shouts, to which Mahound replies, "whores and writers, I see no difference here" (392).

The events narrated in the so-called "Islamic" chapters express the possibility of historical change and movement, as Connor argues; a possibility that is epitomized by Salman and Baal. As Michael Gorra observes, Salman is teaching us something about modernity: "Salman's rejection of the Word for words – of the Book for books – has a lesson for us. For it is in this world, and

[22] Steve Connor, *The English Novel in History:1955-1995* (London-New York: Routledge, 1996), 115.

not in the Imam's, that we all must now learn to live".[23] Salman, the migrant who prefers a pluralist rather than monolithic vision of reality, indicates the ideal way to relate to the world, recalling Appadurai's suggestion as to how to relate to global, diasporic and multiform modernity. Similarly, Baal's satire undermines every totalizing system of thought because the poet's aim, as he states, is: "to name the unnamable, to point at frauds, to take sides, start arguments, shape the world and stop it from going to sleep" (97). Salman and Baal represent the quintessence of Rushdie's text in its intention to reduce myth to history, and for this reason they relate metonymically both to Rushdie and to the text itself. Their function can be described through Michael Gorra's assertions about Rushdie's aim: "What Salman Rushdie has done in *The Satanic Verses* is set fiction against a particularly powerful, absolute, and peremptory myth. ... He has done it as a way of examining a conflict between purity and pluralism, monologue and dialogue, orthodox answers and sceptical questions".[24]

Rushdie's satire dared to "name the unnameable" out loud, to the point that it was charged with blasphemy against Islam, and Rushdie condemned to death under Islamic law. In reality Rushdie did not write against Islam but, as Afzal-Khan suggests, against any kind of closure, precisely because his text is "opposed in principle to any dualistic, fixed way of looking at things".[25] The universe of *The Satanic Verses*, as Milan Kundera underlines, is based on an ontological level which is evidently opposed to the absolutist level of theocracy: "Rushdie did not blaspheme. He did not attack Islam. … [His novel is] an *infernum* where the unique truth is powerless and where satanic ambiguity turns every certainty into enigma".[26]

Blasphemy is a means to cut away the old, stifling ideologies and to achieve regeneration. Behind blasphemy there is an invitation to cross the frontiers of modernity. It is not by chance that Rushdie

[23] Micheal Gorra, "Burn the Books and Trust the Book: *The Satanic Verses*, February 1989", in *After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 428.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Afzal-Khan, *Cultural Imperialism*, 169.

[26] Milan Kundera, "The Day Panurge No Longer Makes People Laugh", in *Testaments Betrayed* (London: Faber, 1995), 26.

identifies the migrant, i.e. the frontier-crosser, as the protagonist of the modern world. Since in crossing the borders of the nation and inhabiting the global space of a deterritorialized transnation, or even a post-nation according to Appadurai, the migrant has to face the even more difficult crossing of ideological, religious, and political barriers, cultural blasphemy can be considered a historical necessity. In this sense Bhabha considers Rushdie's blasphemy a historical act of cultural translation because "Rushdie's sin lies in opening up a space of discursive contestation that places the authority of the Koran within a perspective of historical and cultural relativism".[27] Similarly, Sara Suleri maintains that Rushdie is fully aware of the blasphemous power of his work precisely because it represents a way to relate to postcolonial modernity:

> One of the most seductive aspects of *The Satanic Verses* is the author's acute consciousness of its status of blasphemy .... [Blasphemy] generates a language of cultural questioning that allows the author to throw up a pair of Muslim hands at the incongruities that impel his discourse, and to elucidate the similarities between the idioms of betrayal and loyalty that history has imposed upon a postcolonial world.[28]

Suleri uses the definition of "blasphemous moments" for the events in the Rushdie's text that correspond to acts of historical or cultural breakage such as the sort of postcolonial heresy represented by the anglicization of Saladin Chamcha, or by anti-Thatcherism. In the chapter called "A City Visible but Unseen", people attending disc-jockey Pinkwalla's Hot Wax Club dance among the wax effigies of the protagonists of black history, and they are able also to perform a sort of "fusion-rite", melting down the "bad" wax effigies, including that of Margaret Thatcher, the British prime minister, emblematically called "Maggie the Torture":

> Her permawaved coiffure, her pearls, her suit of blue. *Maggie-maggie-maggie*, bays the crowd. *Burn-burn-burn*. The doll is trapped into the Hot Seat. Pinkwalla throws the switch. And

[27] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 226.
[28] Suleri, "Contraband Histories", 223.

> O how prettily she melts, from the inside out, crumpling into formlessness. Then she is a puddle, and the crowd sighs its ecstasy: *done*. (293)

This rite is similar to an execution, and it symbolizes the condemnation of political authoritarianism and the demand for more flexible policies towards multiethnic communities. The Hot Wax Club is in fact situated in the multiethnic district of Brickhall, and its members are all immigrants opposed to the triumphalist and imperialist nationalism of the 'iron lady', who does not recognize them as part of a common territory or even history. Their claims for cultural and historical acknowledgement resonate in Pinkwalla's angry performance: "*Now-me-feel-indignation-when-dem-talk-immigration-when-dem-make-insinuation-we-no-part-a-nation-an-mi-make-proclamation-a-de-true-situation-how-we-make-contribution-since-the-Rome-Occupation*" (292).

This exhilarating rap preceding the meltdown rites makes the Thatcherite credo dissolve under its heretical and blasphemous vibrations. In accordance with Bhabha's considerations on the rewriting of Islam in Gibreel's dreams as a dream of cultural translation, it is possible to read the execution of inflexible *Maggie* as a rite of cultural translation, a modern political dream of historical rewriting.

Nowadays, more than twenty years after the end of Thatcherism, radical nationalisms and ethnicisms proliferate all over the world, and it seems paradoxical to fight against religious, political and cultural fundamentalisms in such a diasporic and deterritorialized context as the contemporary world of *ideoscapes, ethnoscapes, mediascapes*. Nevertheless, Appadurai himself maintains that globalization itself is the cause of fundamentalisms. They are the effect of the hardening of national politics that see in globalization, or the transnationality of identity, a serious threat to their own cultural identity: "many racial, religious, and cultural fundamentalisms are deliberately fostered by various nation-states, in their efforts to suppress internal dissent, to construct homogeneous subjects of the state".[29] As a consequence, some nations consciously use their cultural difference as a defence

[29] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 146.

against external "contaminations", adopting a culturalist attitude which sometimes ends up by generating violence, especially in a diasporic social context: "culturalism has high potential for violence, especially in an era when the cultural space of the nation-state is subject to the externalities of migration and mass media".[30] For Appadurai, on the contrary, the instrumentalization of national feelings and the intensification of culturalisms constitute the most tangible proof of the profound crisis of the nation-state, which can now only live transnationally.

This analysis further corroborates the modernity of Rushdie's cultural blasphemy and the consideration that what we call religious fundamentalism has for him an essentially political and nationalist connotation: "When we speak of a religious 'revival', a revival of 'fundamentalism' or 'communalism', we are not speaking of a religious event. … We are, in fact, speaking of a political event that is almost always nationalist in its true character".[31] In this sense it is possible to see 'religious' fundamentalism and the culturalist politics of some nationalisms as identical. Furthermore, Appadurai maintains that when, in a transnational and diasporic context, the politics of the nation or of religious leaders regarding large-scale identities are based on primordial feelings of loyalty and belonging, citizens recognize only one precise type of identity as legitimate. Appadurai also underlines that the construction of "legitimate" representations of identity and the hypothesis of treachery seem to be plausible in a world of mass migration and mass media, "which can subvert the everyday certainties that come from face-to-face knowledge of the ethnic Other".[32] Thus people end up considering the "Other" as an impostor, a potential betrayer, a menacing presence that must be banned or even destroyed.

The violence the English and the migrants exercise against each other in *The Satanic Verses* could thus be ascribed to the culturalist politics of Thatcherism which distorts and exacerbates the complicated relationship between national identities and diasporic identities in their daily, face-to-face relations. The brutal,

[30] Ibid., 156.

[31] Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, 380.

[32] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 155-156.

Fascist violence used by the police against Saladin Chamcha exactly reflects this kind of radicalized wariness or even fear of the 'Other'. Hind Sufyan, the Shandaar Café's Indian owner who lives in the migrants' district, feels persecuted by the police, portrayed as a group of violent ghosts wandering through the streets, ready to shoot:

> they [the Sufyans] had come into a demon city in which anything could happen, your windows shattered in the middle of the night without any cause, you were knocked over in the street by invisible hands, in the shops you heard such abuse you felt like your ears would drop off but when you turned in the direction of the words you saw only empty air and smiling faces, and every day you heard about this boy, that girl, beaten up by ghosts. (250)

Her daughter Mishal declares war against the police that besiege the district: "These days the posses roamed the nocturnal Street, ready for aggravation. 'It's our turf', said Mishal Sufyan .... 'Let'em come and get it if they can'"(284). And in the following chapter called "The Angel Azrael", the mysterious death in prison of the unjustly arrested antiracist leader Ururu Simba causes the outbreak of a war between the front of the police, with its "attacks on black families on council estates, harassment of black school-children on their way home, brawls in pubs" (451), and the front of the migrants' community, with "self-defence patrols of young Sikh, Bengali and Afro-Caribbean males [that] began to roam the borough ... determined not to 'take it lying down'" (451). Far from supporting either of the fighting fronts, Rushdie himself underlines the fact that these events are fuelled by the fear of the "Other", seen as a counterfeit person plotting against homogeneous personal identities. Members of the Brickhall community begin to believe there is a congregation of witches within the police that is acting against them, while in much the same way the police consider the melting rites of the wax effigies at the Hot Wax Club as some sort of black magic against the State. Through the awkward figure of Gibreel as the angel of destruction, whose burning trumpet Azraeel spits fire on the riotous crowd, Rushdie uses the healthy power of blasphemy to neutralize both these types of fundamentalism.

Similar scenes of chaos, confusion and turmoil abound in *The Satanic Verses*, and they are part of a demystifying strategy that operates through the carnivalization of the traditional social, political, and religious order. Philip Engblom highlights the polyphonic and dialogic nature of Rushdie's text: "in Rushdie's demystified postmodern world, we find riotous comedy, exuberant play, and irreprehensible carnival. All normal boundaries and prohibitions are turned on their head, and all normal social hierarchies are mixed and jostled together in a carnivalized space".[33] In the polyphonic text, where the sense of carnival is translated into literary language, everything seems to coincide with its opposite, in a permanent state of joyful relativism. Similarly, in the hybrid, multiform world of *The Satanic Verses* the characters reflect one another through their names, experiences and destinies, creating a multilayered, tautologic universe of similarities and coincidences, dominated by metamorphosis. Here the only truth the author seems to be faithful to is one that guarantees a pluralist vision; as he himself puts it: "I thought, let me write a novel from the position of being plural rather than singular. I've come to distrust the idea of purity. It is a novel about metamorphosis and the nature of change".[34]

The Satanic Verses deals with transformation and is itself in a constant state of metamorphosis. Edward Said notes that "Rushdie's work is not just about the mixture it is that mixture itself".[35] Similarly, as Jacqueline Bardolph writes: "the pieces of the puzzle have tantalizingly similar bits, but there is no *mode d'emploi*".[36] And this sophisticated simultaneity between the form of the text and its content passes through the voice of the migrant.

The Satanic Verses is a "text-in-motion", as Appadurai defines it, precisely because its narrative perfectly mirrors the diasporic

[33] Philip Engblom, "A Multitude of Voices: Carnivalization and Dialogicality in the Novels of Salman Rushdie", in Fletcher, ed., *Reading Rushdie*, 295. For more details about the concepts of "dialogicality" and "carnivalization" as two fundamental features of the polyphonic novel, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1984).

[34] Salman Rushdie, quot. in Louis Shapiro, "The Devil Made Him Do It", *Newsweek* (6 February 1989), 49.

[35] Edward Said, "Rushdie and the Whale", *Observer* (26 February 1989), 14.

[36] Jacqueline Bardolph, "Language is Courage", in Fletcher, ed., *Reading Rushdie*, 215.

morphology of the global world and the traumatic effects of deterritorialization, but also because its own history, connected to the controversies that emerged in different parts of the world about what is known as the "Rushdie Affair", would later demonstrate the transnational nature of postmodernity:

> The Rushdie affair is about a "text-in-motion", whose commodified trajectory brought it outside the safe haven of Western norms about artistic freedom and aesthetic rights into a space of religious rage and the authority of religious scholars in their own transnational spheres. ... In this episode, we can also see how global processes involving mobile texts and migrant audiences create implosive events that fold global pressures into small, already politicized areas, producing locality in new, globalized ways.[37]

Apart from the fundamental importance of the political background of the fatwa and the popular demonstrations against Rushdie, what is worth underlining is the transnational context of the 'Rushdie Affair' and its traumatic effects. In this sense, the narrative of *The Satanic Verses* reflects the history of the text's reception and vice versa. Rushdie finds himself trapped in his own work: "It is hard to express how it feels to have attempted to portray an objective reality and then to have become its subject".[38] Like Saladin and Gibreel, he is traumatized by deterritorialization because, like his heroes, he lives in a transnational, diasporic reality, which is subjected to the unpredictable and dangerous dynamics between *ethnoscapes*, *ideoscapes,* and *mediascapes.*

The controversies about *The Satanic Verses* are an example of how global-local interaction works, how it is strictly connected to the flows of persons and ideas and how questions concerning aesthetic freedom, religious radicalism, justice and blasphemy transcend the nation's borders and cross global space. Moreover, Rushdie's work provides an example of how, according to Appadurai, imagination is emancipated from locality and enjoys a new power of action: the power of inventing social life on the basis of images from elsewhere, often arriving through the media (*The Satanic Verses* is

[37] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 9

[38] Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands,* 404.

a text-in-motion also because of the action of the media). This is the new power deriving from the deterritorialized, polyphonic reality of postmodernity, the reality described by Rushdie.

It is for this reason that Appadurai assigns an "anthropological" value to magic realism, the literary genre to which *The Satanic Verses* belongs. It shows "how the world appears to some people who live in it" and tells us "something about disorientation, displacement, and agency in the contemporary world".[39] Where deterritorialization encounters resistance, magic realism is supplanted by the "realism of the state":

> Where insulation from the larger world seems to have been successful and where the role of the global imagination is withheld from ordinary people .... what seems to appear instead is a bizarre state-sponsored realism. Which always contains within it the possibility of the genocidal and totalizing lunacies of a Pol Pot.[40]

Thus the death sentence against Rushdie could be taken as an attempt by political power to resist the global imagination, or as an attempt on the part of state realism to supplant the multicultural imagination of magic realism. But against the oppressive, authoritarian language of political dictators or religious leaders like Khomeini, *The Satanic Verses* opposes the courageous language of pluralism and newness. For Rushdie, "language is courage: the ability to conceive a thought, to speak it, and by doing so to make it true" (281).

[39] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 58.
[40] Ibid., 55.

Maria Cristina Nisco

Corpo-realities: the space of writing in Lucinda Roy's *Lady Moses*

> I find a pen and a sheet of paper. Time to climb on to the shoulders of the elephant again and begin the long journey across the ocean floor – back to the place where love reclaimed me.
>
> (Lucinda Roy, *Lady Moses*)

Living geographies, living words

Jacinta Louise Buttercup Moses is a small "coloured girl" riding her father's elephant "among the traffic on Lavander Sweep", in Battersea, London.[1] She is the daughter of an interracial couple: Louise Buttercup, a white English woman, and Simon Moses, an African man. From the beginning of the novel, words (both in their oral and written form) play a fundamental role in creating and giving access to multiple dimensions of existence. As shown by the very first lines of the novel, the writing of the story and of Jacinta's life coincide: "Louise Buttercup Moses is dead. She was the beginning of my story and she shaped its middle. She has left me to write the end of it on my own" (3).

End and beginning, death and life, past and present, reality and imagination are all joined together in the writing of this story. In Jacinta's search for a geographical, racial and cultural location, there are constant references to arrivals, departures, and transnational

[1] Lucinda Roy, *Lady Moses* (London: Virago Press, 1998), 6. All references cited are from this edition, page numbers will be given in parenthesis after every quotation.

journeys. Even her family name, Moses, is the symbol *par excellence* of the migrant, as it suggests the idea of homelessness and incomplete travel deriving from the Christian tradition: in the Bible, Moses set the Hebrew people free by escaping from Egypt, and after a life-long journey through the desert, he died before reaching the Promised Land. Jacinta herself states:

> Sometimes it worried me that Moses didn't dwell in the Promised Land after all.... Could it be a curse being named after someone who never reached the land of his dreams? My father had borne that name for more than forty years. He hadn't been able to get back home either. Every so often, the fact of my name was troubling. I didn't want it to claim me. (36)

Jacinta and her father can initially find their imagined Promised Land through words, namely through Simon Moses's stories. His stories about Africa are meant to leave a trace in his daughter, a trace which is oral, but also written, inscribed on her. They are "the first Moses to be from many lands and many peoples" (13) and that is the reason why their stories need not be lost. Simon's stories open up a new space, a space "real Jacinta" shares with the "little Jacinta",[2] finding her hyperreal dimension "in the hammock of his words". Here she listens to "Africa calling my name. When little Jacinta ran away to ride on the elephant, and when the elephant, huge and ponderous, ... let her step up onto his back, and when she dug her fingers into the leathery folds of his skin, it was me riding up there through the bush" (14).

The novel is divided into three parts taking their names from three different locations, locations of identity, standing for particularly meaningful places for Jacinta's life: London, the New World, and Lunama.

Throughout the first part of the novel, Africa represents an ever-present as well as ever-absent space, an imaginary space recreated, desired and experienced in a real place, England. There are many

[2] Sometimes Jacinta seems to live on two parallel dimensions: real life and her father's stories (she becomes their main character, "little Jacinta"). Some other times "real Jacinta" changes into a "potential Jacinta" (an imaginary Jacinta she hopes to become).

tender descriptions of the way Simon Moses made his African traditions live through some kinds of 'acoustic images', through music and dance:

> On Saturday mornings, Simon, Louise, and I had our Red Sea Radio Hour. We called it by this name because my father said that the Moses clan danced so magnificently that we could tame the elements if we wanted to. 'We parted the Red Sea once!' he'd cry. 'Let's do it again!'... My father said it wasn't the same as dancing in Africa but that it was close enough. Often, we didn't dance in time to the music at all. Looking back, it seems to me we danced instead to the rhythms inside Simon's head. We'd close our eyes and let our hips shake and turn our legs loose to his memories. (9)

Simon Moses manages to create and follow a strong thread joining a biblical past to his present and that of his daughter. Even as a small child, Jacinta realizes the importance of her father's power to conjure up a continent, Africa, in their small kitchenette in London, a space suddenly pervaded with a new meaning. Africa is inscribed at different levels on her identity and her body: it is the heritage coming from her father, it brings the influence deriving from her name. Her life has everyday links to Africa: from the songs her father sings, to the food he cooks and the people he entertains:

> there was ... a constant stream of visitors to our one-hundred-year-old terraced house in Battersea. They came to hear my father speak, or to hear him read his stories. Men from Nigeria and Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Congo entered the small rooms bringing the land with them in their flowing robes and embroidered hats. ... Sometimes men and women from the West Indies would show up. If the Africans brought their land in their clothes, then the Jamaicans and Bajans brought it in their voices – island voices that sang rather than spoke. (12)

Multiple spatial planes overlap in Lucinda Roy's writing; several geographical places are intertwined with psychic spaces, spaces of the mind and of desire, acting like an oblique cut on reality and on her body, and thus identifying as corpo-realities. The blurring of spatial limits is also present in the protagonist's name: Jacinta

was the name of an African aunt, the first in her father's family to go beyond the village boundaries in order to discover what was on the other side. Everything in the main character recalls a complex dimension of existence: her name, Jacinta, keeps the trace of the overcoming of imposed boundaries and limits, just as her surname, Moses, tells a story of exile and distancing from one's land. Escaping from Egypt, Moses disobeys the pharaoh's law and then becomes the guard and interpreter of another law, the divine (and patriarchal) law received on Mount Sinai. So too, Jacinta Moses represents both the law and the questioning of that very law.

Bodies and spaces

Simon Moses's sudden death, caused by a heart attack, takes Jacinta away from the place she shared with her father, and marks the beginning of a sad and complex period in her childhood (she is raped by Maurice Beadycap, a white boy living in her building, her mother has an emotional and mental breakdown, and her best friend dies in a car crash).

The first part of the novel – from Simon's death on – is characterised by a sense of claustrophobic oppression and dislocation: the rooms in Jacinta's house are too small, sometimes walls seem to close in on her, and England is too small a place. Her being a black child in a white country affects the way she perceives space as well as the way she perceives her body: she often compares herself to other white children or girls, with their long fair hair growing "the way white people's hair grew" (39), or to her (white) mother, with her straight little nose and small lips. She feels discrimination in other people's gazes and words. She realizes and fully lives the complex relations deriving from the different color of her skin. Every single part of her body is suddenly charged with a sense or meaning deriving from and imposed by the social and religious context in which she lives.

Elizabeth Grosz underlines that bodies are marked more or less permanently and violently by a multiplicity of specific histories, as bodies are only produced through and in them.[3] The body is

[3] See Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies. Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).

the result of psychic, social and sexual processes determining its representation and articulation. Jacinta grows up in an environment where Catholicism functions as a filter reflecting rules and education. The metropolitan space she lives in is characterized by poverty and bleakness; Jacinta uses the adjective "ugly" (59) to define what is all around her, from the house and the area where she lives to the people she meets. Far from only being the frame within which bodies move and interact, space is fundamental in the production of the corporeal dimension of any person, and as such, it may be configured as a network of many different relations, activities and processes. Grosz delineates two traditional models defining the relationship between bodies and city. In the first, the city is simply projected and produced by bodies, and bodies, in their turn, are only the instruments of subjectivity or consciousness; this model is characterized by a one-way link between body (standing for subject) and city (which is only a consequence, a creation of the former). The second model is based on a parallelism – or even isomorphism – between the two terms: the human body stands not only for a city, but also for a political body, the state. Thus the head usually represents the king, arms are usually associated with the army, and so on. In both cases, a single element emerges and then subordinates the other. What Grosz suggests, instead, is a third model based on a two-way relationship between body and city (or space in general), and on a constant exchange between fluid realities and boundaries. In fact, she claims:

> The body and its environment ... produce each other as forms of the hyperreal, as modes of simulation which have overtaken and transformed whatever reality each may have had into the image of the other: the city is made and made over into the simulacrum of the body, and the body, in its turn, is transformed, "citified", urbanized as a distinctively metropolitan body.[4]

Body and space react and respond to each other in a mutual relation, not implying that one exclusively prevails over the other.

[4] Elizabeth Grosz, "Bodies-Cities", in Heidi Nast and Steve Pile, eds., *Places Through the Body* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 43.

Space assumes a physical dimension because the trace it leaves on Jacinta's body is, indeed, a physical one. After being raped by Maurice Beadycap, she burns her right hand in an act of self-punishment (following what she thinks is prescribed in the Bible), and worries about the way her parents would judge her:

> Carefully I lowered my right hand down over the flame until I could hardly bear the heat. I thought about Maurice. His tongue inside my mouth. My mouth open for him. My legs wide. Dirty, dirty. My mother's voice telling me who we were, who they were. My father's sad face, looming regretful from the grave. (47)

In her essay "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays", Hélène Cixous refers to a position of guilt always reserved to women within the patriarchal law, the law of Moses.[5] Just as Moses had the laws of his god inscribed on the tables, Jacinta inscribed that law onto another reality, her body, her skin. Even if this could seem an act of writing conforming to the rules dictated by authority, it is actually an initial step leading Jacinta to question her relation with the world she lives in. Encouraging a similar process, Cixous invites women to write themselves, to let their bodies write in order to put an end to the censorship of body and discourse imposed by what she calls "superegoed, over-Mosesed structure".[6] Writing emerges as a questioning, a practice of working and reworking oneself and the others, and it always has a cost in terms of pain and loss.

Since the African dimension is swept away together with Simon Moses's life, London becomes Jacinta's only space, a place from which she needs to escape. Even the choice of her boyfriends is a clear statement: she refuses white English boys reminding her of the one who raped her:

> There were men, of course. Men who said I was exotic. Men who wanted sex. Men who said I was frigid. Men who wanted mothers. Men who claimed I was too clever for my own good. Men who

[5] Hélène Cixous, "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/ Ways Out/ Forays" in Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, eds., *The Feminist Reader* (London: Macmillan Education, 1989), 116.

[6] Ibid.

> told me I was gorgeous. Men who asked me to lend them money. Men who tried to love me. One or two men I should have loved in return. But Maurice's tongue was still in my mouth. Whoever I loved could not be anything like Maurice. My prejudice against white Englishmen increased as the years went by. I dated West Indians, Africans, Pakistanis, and Irishmen. Alfred said I had courted the United Nations by the time I was twenty-one. (165)

The law of the saviour

She then meets Emmanuel Fox III in London at the National Gallery. He is an American student of African history, with a passion for language; in fact, he is a writer. With his love at first sight, and his proposal of marriage only thirty-three minutes after their meeting, Emmanuel, or Manny, is the promise for Jacinta to leave England for the New World, America. Jacinta is aware she is not in love with him, but rather with what he represents: he may be "the key to the jail" (165), he is her chance to unlock the door. Some time later, thinking back to when they got married, Jacinta wonders:

> Was my husband, Emmanuel, the incarnation of the savior who would set me free? Take me away from one culture and plant me in another? Take me to a New World of fabulous promises? He was the person with the "man" in his name. He was the blond, beautiful American who had been to all the places I had dreamed about and who loved the Africa in me more than I did myself. I thought he would set me free. (159)

If Manny is the key to escape from her prison, Jacinta seems to represent the 'Africanness' Manny is so keen on. They probably represent a mutual projection of hopes, passions and desires for each other. She realizes this while making love in Paris during their honeymoon, when she feels as if she were "making love to an idea" (191). Manny, on the other hand, feels as if he were making love to "many women all at once" (167) as is implied by his wife's name, Jacinta Louise Buttercup Moses; once again, the name becomes the place where different layers of identity are represented and leave their trace.

The patriarchal law re-emerges during the first night of their honeymoon in Paris, when Manny performs a symbolic act linked both to the concept of female virginity and to the Christian sacraments:

> The white sheets became damp with sweat in the heat of the summer night. My breasts were sore and between my legs was a burning sensation, but still we made love.... He carried me to the bathroom and told me to step into the bathtub. He filled the tub with water and washed me with a special perfumed soap.... The warm water lapped me up. I dissolved into it like bath crystals and opened myself wide to his hands. At one point I opened my eyes to find him looking at his hands, an expression of what amounted to anger on his face. When I asked him what was wrong, he smiled, but only with his mouth. He took his glass of wine and poured it into the bath. The water turned pale red. 'You're bleeding', he said. ... 'This is your body.' He ran his finger from my neck down to my navel. 'This is your blood.' He scooped up the rosy water and poured it over my head in a kind of baptism. (191)

The moment in which Manny pours a glass of red wine into the bath-tub, while Jacinta is in it, and then tells her she's bleeding, strongly recalls a patriarchal idea expecting female virginity to be proved by a bleeding after the first sexual experience. The lack of this bleeding might explain the expression of anger on his face and the subsequent need (for his law to emerge) to enact and perform that 'fundamental' moment: the bleeding becomes an important step not only in the construction and performativity of Jacinta's body, but especially of Manny's body and maleness. Through a second ritual moment, Manny seems to accomplish Jacinta's metaphorical sacrifice, clearly recalling Christ's sacrifice through the Eucharist as his words are patterned on those usually pronounced by priests; he then performs an allegorical act, a sort of baptism of initiation, marking her entrance into the domain of his law.

In opposition to Christian and Cartesian views, and in contrast with the idea of a body pre-existing discourse and the different meanings attributed to it, Judith Butler claims the necessity to question any construction of the body meant as a "passive

medium",[7] as an entity on which an external cultural source is inscribed. She refers critically to Foucault's essentialist and repressive idea of history as "a relentless writing instrument"[8] operating on the blank page of the body. According to Butler's reading of Foucault, cultural values derive from an inscription on the body (that is prior to it); such an inscription, in order to signify, must subjugate and destroy the medium itself.[9] The destruction of the body, then, becomes a fundamental act in the production of the subject with his/her values and meanings. In this view, history creates values and meanings by destructively subjecting the body, which consequently becomes a sacrificial object.

Butler moves on to a rereading of Mary Douglas's theories, in which she underlines how the body is configured and marked by specific codes aiming at establishing and maintaining a certain cultural coherence:

> Ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have their main function to impose a system on an ... untidy experience. It is only by exagerating the difference between within and without, ... male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created.[10]

The boundaries of the body, and the skin as a surface of inscription, are not simply material entities, they may also be understood as reflecting the boundaries of society, "the limits of the socially *hegemonic*".[11] Boundaries, margins, corporeal margins in particular, are charged with power and danger because they represent what makes all social systems vulnerable. But Butler remarks that the untidiness to which Douglas refers can be "redescribed as a region

[7] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, London: Routledge, 1990), 129.

[8] Ibid., 130.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an Analysis on Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1969), quoted by Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 131.

[11] Ibid.

of cultural unruliness and disorder"[12] where unpredicted forces and impulses are manifested: that is exactly what Jacinta's body initially represents for Manny's system of thought; she is the unruliness or disorder of multiplicity and difference. Whereas the terms of the previous argument based on Grosz's discourse were bodies and city/environment, now the terms in Butler's discourse are bodies and history/law. If the body is metaphorically identified with the social system, then the distinction between inner and outer realities is meant to consolidate a pregiven notion of the subject, preserved from questioning and displacement through an (impossible) impermeability. Again, a mutual relation seems to emerge and link both terms: the doer is constructed in and through the deed, even if in Butler's theory both 'subject' and 'agency' are the effects of power. Outside the field of power there is no position, as power is the regime that operates in the production of all structures, practices, and discourses.

In her novel *Lady Moses*, Roy manages to convey a sense of shifting corporeal and spatial boundaries constantly 'invading' one another: in Paris, Jacinta and Manny's bodies as well as the city become unreal: "Sandwiched in between those nights were oddly innocent days of museum visits and church tours. Paris became a blur. It existed on the hems of our bodies. It was far less real than we were. Paris was the negative space in the background of our passion" (193).

The next space we read about is America, where the couple enrols at a university writing program: Manny trying to write novels, Jacinta trying and managing to write poems. America is heaven for her. In such a wide space (so different from the island, the narrow space, where she grew up feeling like someone suffering from claustrophobia), Jacinta looks for a new definition of herself and of her life. America and Manny might change her into someone else forgetting about the person she was, a person she hopes to abandon the way she abandoned London. The new continent – a spatial reality – seems to interact with the protagonist's body – a corporeal reality – they flow together in a new corporeality, they effect each other as forms of the hyperreal (as previously suggested by Grosz)

[12] Ibid.

rather than of the real: "for two decades, ever since Simon's death, I'd been waiting for someone to ride into my life, swoop me up and make me into the Potential Jacinta rather than the Actual one" (169).

In contrast with Jacinta's attitude and enthusiasm towards America, Manny claims to be an American "by accident of birth, not by inclination" (201), with the misfortune of being a white male. Instead he stresses his African spirit and his intention to go to Africa and let Jacinta learn about what he calls 'her heritage'.

The light of Africa, the light of a black woman

Thus, Africa is introduced again in the novel through Manny's stories. But the country emerging from his stories is different from the one that lives in Simon's words; from a male perspective (common to both Simon and Manny), two different kinds of law are implied in words and language and find their expression through Africa:

> When Manny spoke about Africa, there was something in his tone that said it could all be so much better if only the guys over there would get their acts together. He talked about going back to 'fix things'. I wanted to go too. Not to fix anything. Just to see this land that had been in my father's bones and that was lighting up my husband's eyes. ... I kept my thoughts to myself and listened to Manny's version of Africa that was so different from my father's. (204)

But before Africa really gets into their lives, Jacinta gets pregnant. She gives birth to a malformed child, Lady, who has no left arm. As a reaction, Manny leaves for a few days soon after the baby is born and Jacinta keeps on believing a mistake occurred, unwrapping the blanket to see if the missing part of the child's little body had been found, or just avoiding to hold the baby at all. Things change when Jacinta finally breast-feeds her:

> I undid my nightdress and let the baby find my nipple. There wasn't much milk there – probably nothing at all – but it comforted the baby. The crying stopped. As the baby sucked it pulled on its ear

> and patted my breast as if it were trying to comfort me. ... She fell asleep sucking. I lifted her up gently and kissed the bud that grew from her left shoulder. That was the beginning of a pact between us. ... Something rose up inside me and made me begin to recognize the splendor of my child. (245-6)

There are frequent references to the concepts of beauty and perfection. In Jacinta's view, everything in her life, her poems, her body, her baby, Manny, had to look "as close to perfect as nature would allow" (234). But beauty is never defined on the basis of white standards and stereotypes. In fact, while England is usually associated with ugliness, America first, and then Africa, represent beauty.

She finally decides, together with Manny, to go to West Africa once they graduate from the university writing program. This is where the third part of the novel, Lunama, starts, with Jacinta 'on the shoulders of the elephant' again to begin a long journey:

> We went to Africa when Lady was two years old. It was like entering one of Simon's stories. ... Africa was Light. Objects came at me all at once before I had a chance to put them in order. ... Objects in shadow became voids, they lost the essence of what they were in sunlight and turned inside out into their opposites. There were trees and not-trees, men and not-men, snakes and not-snakes, things were lost altogether in the intensity of light and dark. Water shone there – not like a series of light particles, not in fragments, but in slabs of iridescence. In England, if light could cry out it would sound like an infant's wail. In Africa, the sound of light would be the shriek of a grown woman – the shriek of a prophet or the damned. Africa was never dark; they got it wrong. (263)

The words of Hélène Cixous resound through Jacinta's voice: the miscalled "dark continent" and the black woman are linked again in Roy's main character just as they were in the essay "The Laugh of the Medusa". Cixous claims the necessity for women to enter writing and history, challenging a sort of apartheid that kept them segregated and represented them as a continent to penetrate and conquer. She identifies women with Africa and thus with being black, remarking on the way in which both women and Africa have

been associated with darkness and danger. Through writing women can free themselves from the censorship subjugating their bodies and their words; writing becomes a weapon to enter History, unearthing other stories along with other bodies: text and body overlap. Tied (like all women) between two terrifying myths, between Medusa and the abyss,[13] Cixous invites us to look straight into Medusa's face in order to discover that she is beautiful and laughs, and that the "dark continent" is not unexplorable but unexplored. The exploration of the different African continents is fundamental to recall new senses and significations that are able "to blow up the Law"[14] and that cannot be reduced to the authority of a single meaning.

The African continent Jacinta explores is the one that opens up when she meets another relevant character of the novel: Esther Cole. The relationship they develop is fundamental for the way Jacinta experiences Africa. There, she is confronted, for the first time, with the fact that even the perception of her being a black woman changes according to the context: whereas in England she was a coloured child in a white country, in Africa the colour of her skin is not enough to let her define herself as black:

> When I went to the market, I was penalized for being a 'Piss Corps', which of course I wasn't. They told me all white people were Piss Corps. I said I wasn't white. The women in the market laughed hard at this. 'Black American, white American,' they said, 'what is different?' When I got angry, they laughed all the more. ... For two months, I was angry .... And then it all went away. ... I woke up one day to find I'd shed my anger the way a snake sheds its skin. In its place was an abiding curiosity, and a willingness to accept the land and the people on their own terms. I'd like to take credit for it, but some of that belongs to Esther Cole. (268)

Esther recalls the figure of the grown woman, prophet or damned, Jacinta talks about when she describes her perception of Africa: as a singer, Esther gives voice to the shrieking sound of light in Africa, a light that the continent claims after centuries of darkness, a light

[13] See Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa" in E. Marx and J. De Courtivron, eds., *New French Feminism* (Amhurst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980).

[14] Cixous, "Sorties", 113.

now linked to the sound, the songs, the voice of a woman. Esther's music and songs seem to host and exemplify Cixous's words: "Text, my body: traversed by lilting flows".[15] In a different dimension, multiple realities find their space and reconcile the written sign with a physical one and a sound sign. It's a new sort of rhetoric that resounds and speaks by using new and old instruments.

Esther Cole breaks the univocal dimension of time, law, and language: "she had a rare talent: she could take your pain and fashion it into her beauty .... She could create spaces in her voice, pauses for you to lie down inside and dream" (258). The audience is almost hypnotized during her performance. Once at home, Jacinta writes a poem about her, beginning: "When Esther sings, the world takes off its clothes" (271). She has the feeling Esther could see each and every person in the audience naked, as if she knew their stories and Jacinta's story; as if she knew about Lady's arm, Manny, her father, her pain:

> We were in the quilt she made with her voice. She threaded us together and we were joined. ... We didn't know where we began and where we ended. Outlines had disappeared. Everything was inside where we were. I can't remember what Esther sang about that night, but I thought it had something to do with peace. In the West we call it inner peace, but for me in Africa it was stillness. It is standing in the heart of the bush and feeling its pulse and calling it home. ... It is you not knowing where that woman begins and where she finishes because she is the bush – her skin the color of tree limbs, her clothes the color of the earth. In the West we comfort by forgetting; we are always trying to escape. In Esther's songs, escape was not possible. Comfort was housed in remembrance. If you remembered what was lost, you were made strong. (271-2)

Again, like an echo coming from her childhood, Jacinta feels a protective, almost healing power in words. Words, both in Esther's songs and her father's stories, have a spatial dimension, they create an enveloping space, a very concrete one, like a hammock or a quilt, where her body is shaped as a different corporality.

[15] Ibid., 111.

Jacinta and Esther's first conversation is not a good start, as Esther pushes her away, mocking and laughing at her. Even so, as she begins to sing again, Jacinta feels seduced by her voice:

> She was taking me to a beautiful place where the air was cool. A breeze was blowing in from the ocean and the moon hung in the sky like a clean wish. There was time to think. I let my mind go back to where Manny was sitting at home banging stories out on his old typewriter. Bang, bang, bang. Words and full stops – a man's way of seeing. Manny changed into my father, Simon. He was a man too and yet his words had wings with soft feathers on them. ... Suddenly I wanted to go back to London, to the place I thought I would never want to see again. I wanted the house on Lavender Sweep and the narrow rooms. (274)

Esther's voice provides a dimension where London, surprisingly, lives again, not only as a place of pain and sorrow, but also as a place of love and happiness for Jacinta. Just like years before, during her childhood in London, different locations overlap: now Africa is the real one, and the "colored" child is a black woman.

The relationship with Esther develops on the basis of an opposition: Jacinta "lived white" (287) or is simply a shadow compared to Esther's darkness. Like in a chess game, Jacinta becomes a white queen while Esther is defined as a "black queen" (278). The whiteness Jacinta perceives when trying to define herself also makes her feel an even more fragile link to Africa. Whiteness is also associated with a peculiar attitude. During an evening spent together on the beach, Jacinta is told she cannot cope well with Esther Cole because she is too white, she is like the people who are "afraid to look", those who "keep their eyes closed" (294). At these words, Jacinta admits: "My husband is one of the frightened ones. He is pulling me down with him. It's like drowning. He's lied to me. He doesn't look at Lady. He's afraid" (294). Esther's words seem to make an imaginary Medusa emerge, a Gorgon whose dreadful look is to be silently avoided. Jacinta is afraid to see her image reflected in the African continent, in her sexuality (both hetero- and lesbian), her daughter, her marriage. Manny is afraid to confront Jacinta (especially in writing), he's afraid to look at Lady's body, and to

cope with Africa as he realizes the country is so different from the one he expected and thought he could 'fix'. Thus, both Jacinta and Manny 'keep their eyes closed', they are afraid to look. In implicit contrast with this attitude, through Esther Cole's words we seem to hear again Cixous's invitation to dare look straight into Medusa's face. Esther pushes Jacinta to keep her eyes open, leading her to the place she had been looking for:

> Esther Cole was a capricious guide, but I didn't care. I'd go with anyone who could take me away from the white house on the top of the hill and show me what darkness meant. There was something I had to find in the bush. I was still the child on the elephant – the girl in my father's story. If I tried hard enough, I could swing Lady up onto the elephant with me; together we could find comfort in the sweet, dark warmth of the bush where our names were etched into the fronds of the high palms and trodden down into the earth by old elephants making their long way home (288).

In her continuous travel, Jacinta is not anchored to a single definition, a single way of being or a single place. Her identity confronts unstable territories and borders – geographical, social and racial. Here we may find it useful to recall what Cixous writes referring to the idea of travel: she opposes a boy's journey (always implying a return to the native land) to a girl's journey which is "farther – to the unknown, to invent".[16] She describes the woman as coming out of herself, as a "traveller in unexplored places ... to experience what she is not, what she can be".[17]

The excription/writing-out of bodies

The ideas of becoming, of an endless change often seem to be connected to femininity. In a re-reading of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming, Grosz defines becoming-woman as "going beyond identity and subjectivity, fragmenting and freeing up lines of flight, 'liberating' multiplicities, corporeal and otherwise, that

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 106.

identity subsumes under the one".[18] In this view, identities consist of fragments linked through multiple processes and in infinite combinations. Jacinta's body can be identified with a process of becoming-body by engaging different spaces, a body overcoming dualisms and locating itself as an interface, always on the edge, on the threshold, within and beyond the limit.

On the pages of Roy's novel, a body writes itself, or as Jean-Luc Nancy would put it, a body writes itself out ("*s'excrit*"). A body inscribed by law becomes a body impressing its inscription on the outside. Nancy talks about the "*excriptions*" (freely translated as "excriptions/writings-out") of a multitude of bodies, namely the "*inscription-dehors*" (inscription-outside), a kind of writing that, just like the body, is located at the intersections, in what he calls "geographies of the multitudes",[19] constantly turning and addressing something or someone outside and beyond. Bodies, Nancy claims, are always just about to depart, there is an incessant movement, a fall, a distance, a continuous dislocation. Both body and writing make a journey through uncertain locations with "scattered points of reference and unreadable signs",[20] so that writing the body parallels writing a foreign country according to Nancy. In his view the body's very being is its being-excripted/written out, and this excription can only be accomplished through writing. *Lady Moses* brings together the writing of a text, of a life, and the excription of bodies through what Cixous would term "carnal, passionate body-words" haunting history and law.[21] Writing realizes – or 'corpo-realizes' – an uncensored relationship between a woman's body, sexuality, and speech. Introducing bodies into writing and letting their writing emerge, *Lady Moses* seems to corpo-realize writing.

[18] Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 178.
[19] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, ed. by Antonella Moscati (Napoli: Edizioni Cronopio, 1995), 14 (my translation).
[20] Ibid., 44.
[21] Cixous, "Sorties", 114.

Katherine E. Russo

"Post Me to the Prime Minister": Property, Language and Indigenous/Non-Indigenous Relations in the Australian Nation

In 1987 Eric Michaels wrote about how the local schoolmaster of Yuendumu, Terry Davis, commissioned some Warlpiri senior men to paint the school doors with the available standard school acrylics.[1] The creation of the Yuendumu doors was a cooperative venture by the senior men of different kin subsections, Paddy Sims Japaljarry, Larry Spencer Jungarrayi, Paddy Nelson Jupurrurla and Paddy Stewart Japaljarri, who had specific ceremonial roles. The result was more spectacular than anyone had envisaged and both Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents of Yuendumu took considerable pleasure and pride in the achievement. Later, a book of colour plates made from photographs of the doors was published and the designs of the doors were reproduced on small canvases for a presumably non-Indigenous audience. The doors, which were created to serve a specific sign/exchange value, were now required to perform somewhat different tasks. As Michaels writes, the Yuendumu doors stand midway between their use in ceremonial ground painting and the canvases exported to European audiences. However, they also confirm the significance of Indigenous Australian appropriation strategies "for anyone interested in developing alternative models of … production, distribution and reception".[2] To understand the meaning of the doors, one would need to be a full

[1] Eric Michaels, *Bad Aboriginal Art: Tradition, Media, and Technological Horizons* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 51.

[2] Dick Hebdige, "Foreword", in Michaels, *Bad Aboriginal Art*, xiv.

member of a particular Warlpiri kin group, initiated and competent in the stories and landscapes that are intimately associated with the sources of these paintings. Even then, some meanings would remain inaccessible until the painter, reciprocating a ceremonial obligation, had passed on the design to another initiated member of the Warlpiri kin group. Hence, the Yuendumu doors offer an example of the intercultural space created by strategies of appropriation because they are both a suggestion that the inhabitants of Yuendumu may use doors differently and a reminder of the existence of different epistemologies.

Appropriation assumes a central position in this article for it analyses diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian uses of the English language. However, as the open/closed space designed by the Yuendumu doors testifies, in intercultural contact zones the term appropriation is not neutral because it assumes the employment of a technology which is the property of another culture. The use of the term appropriation in the Australian cultural debates of the last twenty years has often been unable to eschew the dialectic rhetoric of neo-colonialism for it maintains the assumption that Indigenous Australian peoples "appropriate" a technology which is the property of a different culture, i.e. "colonial property". The imposition of the English language in Australia was mainly achieved through the White Australia Policies, which have guided the implementation of Immigration laws, the Aboriginal Acts and the imposition of the British education system since the beginning of the twentieth century. Therefore, the continued use of the English language in Australia might be considered as one of the most important aspects of neo-colonialism. As Philip G. Haltback points out, "on the ruins of traditional colonial empire has emerged a new, subtler, but perhaps equally influential, kind of colonialism" based on the ongoing impact of the colonial cultural heritage and education system.[3] Consequently, the use of the English language has been variously questioned by Indigenous Australian peoples, for it is closely tied to neo-colonial representations of the nation and to issues of forced assimilation. This article will pay attention

[3] Philip G. Haltback, "Education and Neocolonialism", *Teachers College Record* 72.1 (May 1971), 548.

to this central issue by questioning wide-spread assumptions regarding the representation of the English language as colonial property. To this end, it will offer a reading of some Indigenous and non-Indigenous instances of linguistic appropriation which might be fruitful in testing pre-conceived representations of cross-cultural communication, opening up endless possibilities on the roles the "users of the English language can play, and – attitudinally – above all, how others view the importance of this use".[4]

According to this study, the English language is not essentially 'colonial',[5] but derives its authority from neo-colonial "possessive investment"[6] in the English language. In other words, by portraying the British use of the English language as the only appropriate and correct one, neo-colonial powers have treated this technology as an exclusive and inalienable colonial property, strategically undermining the fact that for many Indigenous Australians Indigenous English is a mother tongue. Instead, the English language is as much the property of Indigenous Australian peoples as it was of its first speakers, who held a subaltern position in relation to the speakers of Latin and French up until the end of the thirteenth century and were later included in the British national configuration, and of speakers of 'Australian' English, who have also appropriated the English language to suit new surroundings and new national myths.[7] The colonial claim of property over the English language has sought to displace the counterfactual Indigenous ownership and use of English. On the one hand, colonial discourse has sought to relegate Indigenous Australian languages to the realm of a frozen pre-contact past. On the other, anthropologists, critics and editors

[4] Braj B. Kachru, *The Alchemy of English: The Spread, Functions, and Models of Non-Native Englishes* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 4.

[5] For a discussion of determinist approaches to language see Bill Ashcroft, "Language", in *Post-Colonial Transformation*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001); Alistair Pennicook, *English and the Discourses of Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); Ismail Talib, *The Languages of Postcolonial Literatures: An Introduction* (London and New York, Routledge: 2002).

[6] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

[7] See further Asa Briggs, *A Social History of England* (London: Weiderfeld and Nicolson, 1983); Ismail Talib, *The Languages of Postcolonial Literatures: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

have reiterated the trope of authenticity as a policing strategy to exclude the use of English by Indigenous writers. The unstoppable dynamism and innovation of Indigenous Australian writers is met with suspicion whenever, according to Marcia Langton, "a work appears to be insufficiently primitive – perhaps too self-conscious, maybe too political, worse still, 'part-Aboriginal', or a domain in which cultures crash".[8] The paradox is that the English language has always existed in domains in which cultures crash.

Yet, the neo-colonial possessive investment in the English language has determined the asymmetrical access to the social space engendered by its property, namely the current neo-colonial configuration of the Australian nation. As legal whiteness studies scholar Cheryl Harris notes, social selection based on property is the central feature of "reification": "Its basis is that a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity', an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people".[9] Similarly, the neo-colonial order has established and protected an actual property interest in the English language, but the inequalities that are produced and reproduced by its property are conscious selections regarding the structuring of social relations. They are not an essential feature conveyed by the English language.

The English language has been a requisite set to include and exclude citizens from the Australian continent ever since the foundation of the Australian Federation in 1901. In order to counter-act the internal sovereignty of the Indigenous nations and the external pressures from the near-by Asian countries, Australia constructed a strong commitment to a distinctive nationality based on white racial identity and has ever since been willing to forgo independent statehood and national representation in order to bring its race based nationalism to fruition.[10] One of the first legislative measures of

[8] Marcia Langton, "Introduction: Culture Wars", in Michele Grossman, ed., *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2003), 87.

[9] Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property", *Harvard Law Review* 106.8 (1993), 1724.

[10] See further Henry Reynolds, "Part of a Continent for Something Less Than a Nation? The Limits of Australian Sovereignty", in Suvendrini Perera, ed., *Our Patch: Enacting Australian Sovereignty Post-2001* (Perth: Network Books, 2007), 61-70.

the Federal Parliament was the 1901 Immigration Restriction Bill, which immediately implemented a prescriptive language measure, the "dictation test" for potential migrants. Just a few years later, the 1905 Aborigines Act made provision for individuals who had dissolved their Aboriginal associations to become exempted from the application of legislation pertaining to the control of the Indigenous population. Another clause of the same Act postulated the removal of children from the custody of their families and the segregation in reserves of Indigenous peoples who had not relinquished their Aboriginal associations. Renouncing Indigenous languages was part of the so-called White Australia Policy. As Jeanie Bell recounts, the government policies forced Murri people living in Brisbane to "speak English and forget their traditional languages" because they wanted them to "believe that the only acceptable form of communication and lifestyle was one that mirrored the white one".[11] The imposition of the English language was a deliberate attempt to assimilate Indigenous Australian peoples:

> They were trying to *deculturise* the Murri people. They brought them from all over the state and people were forced to speak English and forget their traditional languages and culture. They were also being very easily pushed in the whole concept of assimilation and integration, of being more like white Australians. And that meant the government of the day really wanted them to forget their language and their culture and their country .... Many Murri people at the time had also been indoctrinated to believe that they were inferior to whites and that they had to be more like them if they wanted to be acceptable .... Our parents had been told quite severely that traditional languages were all junk and rubbish – pagan languages even. So it was drummed into our heads that English was the only language that we had to learn, and we were supposed to learn it well.... So we weren't taught our language, we were deliberately denied *access* to this cultural knowledge.[12]

[11] Jeanie Bell, "Australia's Indigenous Languages", in Galarrwuy Yunupingu, Dot West, Ian Anderson, Jeanie Bell, Gaetano (Jnr) Lui, Helen Corbett and Noel Pearson, *Voices From the Land* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1994), 48.

[12] Ibid., 45-52.

As Bell remarks, the neo-colonial investment of the English language with a status of national authority has been strategic to the analytical, epistemological and cultural discrimination of Indigenous peoples and migrants. The White Australia Policies, which still inform the national representation of the English language, created sovereign or abject "subjects" according to the language they used. The linking of race, language and culture was beneficial to the colonial articulation of assimilation. The English language acted as "a *signifier* of culture, which like whiteness, signifies social and cultural dominance".[13]

Today, although during the 1970s much was done towards the implementation of laws which safeguard multiculturalism, passing an English entry test is still a necessary requirement to obtain Australian citizenship and temporary residence visas. Moreover, the "Australian Values Statement", which must be signed in applications for permanent and temporary residence visas, indicates in the English language one of the most important unifying elements of the nation by declaring: "the English language, as the national language, is an important unifying element of Australian society".[14] As the recent National Indigenous Languages Survey Report (2005) has found, the ideology of "monolingualism" is still strong in Australia. Minority languages, which include Indigenous Australian languages, are seen as handicapping the children of minority groups, while Standard English is promoted as "the power language", which permits the acquisition of education, employment, and, in short, a "fair go" in the lucky country.[15] Thus, the English language arguably still functions as one of the nation's "subjectifying" technologies for it permits individuals to effect by their own means a certain number of "operations upon their own bodies and souls,

[13] Bill Ashcroft, "Language and Race", *Social Identities* 7.3 (2001), 324.

[14] "Australian Values Statement", in *The Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship*, available online: http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/values/statement/long/index.htm

[15] *National Indigenous Languages Report*, submitted to the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies in association with the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Languages (Canberra, 2005), 19.

thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection".[16]

Yet, as this article hopes to demonstrate, the neo-colonial possessive investment in English is disrupted by practices of 'appropriation', through which writers such as the Goenpul poet Romaine Moreton disrupt neo-colonial 'monological' claims of property.[17] Once appropriation has taken place, non-Indigenous speakers can no longer feel completely at home in a self-proclaimed "appropriate" and "transparent" use of the English language. By unsettling dominant modes of empathy and identification through the diversity and difference of their use of English, Indigenous Australian writers draw non-Indigenous speakers and readers into 'intersubjective' contact zones, in which "subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other".[18] The neo-colonial amnesia about Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations and contact, with its long history of representation of Indigenous Australian cultures as distant in both time and space, is interrupted by Indigenous Australian appropriations which create zones of contact in the improvisational and specific dimensions of speaking and reading. Thus, the Indigenous/non-Indigenous relation created by the neo-colonial reification of the English language is disturbed by Indigenous writers, who, appropriating what non-Indigenous peoples perceive to be their property, demonstrate the alienability

[16] Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. by Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachussetts Press, 1988), 18.

[17] According to Mikhail Bakhtin, meaning does not belong to any speaker but is constituted "dialogically": "language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes one's own only when … the speaker appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral or impersonal language … but rather it exists in other people's mouth, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own" in *The Dialogic Imagination, Four Essays*, Michael Holquist, ed., Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1981 [1935]), 293-294.

[18] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

of language and the intersubjective relation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples inherent in their co-use of the same language.

Unfortunately, many theorizations of 'intersubjectivity' lack any extended consideration of power and intercultural relations. Intersubjectivity, which is a useful term for discussing the relation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian subjects in cultural production, is a multilayered term. The term 'intersubjectivity' derives from the phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl, who, in spite of his speculation on egology, transcendental idealism and solipsism, claimed that "the experiencing ego is still nothing that might be taken for itself and made into an object of enquiry on its own account. Apart from its 'ways of being related' or 'ways of behaving' it is completely empty of essential components".[19] Thus, Husserl radically modified any naïve or direct conceptualisation of self-knowledge. An ulterior aspect of this term was elaborated by the philosopher, Martin Heidegger, who revisited the phenomenology of Husserl in *Being and Time* (1927), to suggest that not only does the self know itself through others, but in order to do so it must be already ontologically constituted in relation to others.[20] Later, the founder of phenomenological sociology, Alfred Schutz, insisted that individuals understand the world as "intersubjective" – that is, shared with people like themselves with whom they share a reciprocity of perspectives. According to Schutz, individuals assume they can communicate with others, understand their motives, make themselves understood, and coordinate action across shared typifications of time and space.[21] Instead, in Indigenous/non-Indigenous intersubjective relations, power relations are often, although not always, made effective by the absence of reciprocity in the recognition of each other's different perspectives. Cultural difference, as Pratt notes, is not inherently a problem because all over the world groups of people with radically different ways of life and world views stably coexist, living in all kinds of dynamic arrangements and continually

[19] Edmund Husserl, *The Ideas*, trans. by W.R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Collier, 1962), 214.

[20] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Maquarrie and Edward Robinson, (New York: Harper and Row, 1927).

[21] Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1967 [1932]), 163-172.

negotiated relationships.[22] However, difference becomes a cause of conflict when the most positive form of intersubjectivity, called by the feminist theorist Jessica Benjamin "mutual recognition", is denied.[23] As Langton explains, "From inside, a culture is 'felt' as normative, not deviant. It is European culture which is different for an Aboriginal person .... [The non-Aboriginal subject] fails very often to allow Aboriginal people to articulate their own models of what they perceive 'Europeans' to be".[24]

The intersubjective relations and the affective processes mobilized by Indigenous Australian appropriations are highly fluid and ever-changing, the result of interactions among writers, cultural products, and cultural consumers. In fact, while appropriation strategies offer resistant practices to dominant hegemonic cultural processes and representations, hegemonic forces in the industries re-appropriate the tactics of minority cultures into the mainstream. Cultural hegemonies are constantly trying to assimilate subversive strategies of appropriation and minority cultures are always reinventing themselves. This is how hegemony works with the dominant culture in constant flux as it operates in tension with minority cultures. Today, for instance, neo-colonial discourses have extended property interests into rights to use Indigenous Australian cultures to represent themselves as a multicultural nation with no substantial consultation with Indigenous peoples. The absence of reciprocity in the appropriation of Indigenous cultures, brought by the lack of a widespread acknowledgement of Indigenous Australian knowledge, culture and history as sovereign, signals that the Australian nation remains in many ways "an unfinished Western colonial project".[25] Yet, colonial discourse is temporarily interrupted by the practices of appropriation of writers such as

[22] Mary Louise Pratt, "Planetarity", in Rosemary Bechler, ed., *Intercultural Dialogue* (London: British Council, 2004), 25.

[23] Jessica Benjamin, "The Shadow of the Other (Subject): Intersubjectivity and Feminist Theory", *Constellations* 1.2 (1994), 231-251.

[24] Marcia Langton, *Well I Heard It on the Radio and I Saw it on the Television...* (North Sydney: Australian Film Commission, 1993), 37.

[25] Ghassan Hage, "Polluting Memories: Migration and Colonial Responsibility in Australia", in Meaghan Morris and Brett de Bary, eds., *'Race' Panic and the Memory of Migration* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001), 350.

Romaine Moreton, who in a variety of ways alert non-Indigenous peoples to the complex and diverse experiences within and between the multiple identities that constitute Indigenous Australian peoples. They are, as Philip Morrissey suggests, "situative"[26] in that they deal with the different situations of Indigenous peoples in Australia and they invite the colonial and neo-colonial subject to reflect on what happens when the utopian public space imagined in modernity and liberalism – neutral, transparent, open to all – is replaced by a "social space that is always already inhabited hence always divided, circumscribed, owned".[27]

The Meaning of "Blak": Appropriation Strategies in the Poetry of Romaine Moreton

Different strategies of language appropriation operate in the work of Indigenous Australian writers, who provide the symbolic means for a reaction to the idioms of neo-colonial national apparatuses. So-called 'educational' and 'civilising' policies have had a varying impact on different Indigenous peoples. In fact, some Indigenous groups such as the Walpiri and Pitjantjatjara are bilingual, while some other groups, especially those from the coastal areas that were most affected by colonisation and settlement, might have only a couple of speakers of Indigenous languages. In other cases, there is limited exposure to Indigenous language and English is the mother-tongue.[28] In the latter cases, the appropriation of the English language is no less significant, for self-reflection prompts Indigenous writers to transform the English language "from within".[29] As Braj B. Kachru explains, in some south-Asian and African contexts the English language has been used in colonial times against the colonial power because it could be shared

[26] Philip Morrissey, "Aboriginal Writing", in Sylvia Kleinert and Margo Neale, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture* (South Melbourne, Vic.: Oxford University Press, 2000), 320.

[27] Dick Hebdige, "Foreword", in Eric Michaels, *Bad Aboriginal Art: Tradition, Media, and Technological Horizons* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), xxi.

[28] Bell, "Australia's Indigenous Languages", 47-53.

[29] Jean-Pierre Durix, *The Writer Written: The Artist and Creation in the New Literatures in English* (London, New York and Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1987), 47.

across linguistically divided local groups.[30] When Indigenous Australian peoples from different language groups were placed in reserves so that they could not communicate among themselves, they used Indigenous English to build a pan-Indigenous communication.[31] Similarly to the case of South African and Congolese writers, where English was a manifestation of protest against the regime which preferred to keep the speakers of vernacular languages divided, the use of the English language by Indigenous Australian writers has not constituted a passive acceptance but a means for a reaction to the nation's bureaucratic and disciplinary practices of linguistic dispossession.

In her poems, the Goenpul poet, Romaine Moreton, addresses the centrality of the function of "interpellation" inherent in Australian institutional uses of the English language. The moment of "interpellation", as theorised by Louis Althusser, creates subjects through their self-constitutive response to the address of ideological state apparatuses.[32] Althusser provides a famous example in his description of a scene where a policeman addresses a passer-by with "hey you there" and the passer-by who recognizes him/herself in the policeman's address turns around. The passer-by turns because he/she recognizes him/herself as the institution's subject but does not, strictly speaking, precede the interpellation. Hence, according to Althusser, the "subject" is brought into existence by the "interpellation" of institutional powers.

In Moreton's poetry, the function of "interpellation" of institutional powers is diffused and often embodied. For instance, "Strange Recipe" directly addresses the colonial bureaucrats who named Indigenous peoples as "half-caste, quarter-caste, one sixteenth & octoroon", according to their portion of black blood, as "one colonial rapist".[33] Her poems resonate with the traumatic constitution of her subjectivity, which is often felt to exceed her agency through the reiterative effect of racist and patriarchal speech

[30] Braj B. Kachru, *The Alchemy of English: The Spread, Functions, and Models of Non-Native Englishes* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

[31] Bell, "Australia's Indigenous Languages", 47-53.

[32] Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), 168-170.

[33] Romaine Moreton, *Post Me to the Prime Minister* (Alice Springs: Jukurrpa Books, IAD Press, 2004), 42-43.

as in the "Blood of Dinosaur" and "Once Upon Patriarchy".[34] Moreton's subjectivity has an "existence" which is implicated in the bureaucratic language that precedes and exceeds her words. In fact, Moreton's first comprehensive collection of poetry, significantly entitled *Post Me to the Prime Minister*, opens with the poem "Words like Water", supposedly addressed to John Howard, who was the Prime Minister at the time of its publishing and who is sadly famous for his White nationalist views and for having refused to say "Sorry" to Indigenous peoples,[35]

Your words like water
Wash over me
And I cannot feel your hate

I cannot afford
To let your words of hate
Like water

Dam inside me
Finally destroy
My foundations

[34] Ibid., 76 and 115.

[35] In 1991, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommended that the nation should undertake a formal process of reconciliation. That same year, the formal process of reconciliation was established by the Commonwealth Parliament by a unanimous vote and the Australian Parliament passed the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act. The Council had the function of promoting a process of reconciliation and a National Document of Reconciliation. During its first and second terms (1991-94 and 1995-97), the council undertook and encouraged a wide range of local, regional and national initiatives, including meetings, negotiated agreements, cross-cultural awareness and cooperation, and working with Education Authorities to incorporate reconciliation ideals in their curricula. In 1997, the Premier of the New South Wales Parliament, Bob Carr, made an official apology to the members of the "Stolen Generations". In 2001 half a million people participated in a government-sponsored reconciliation walk which was met by the refusal of Australia's Prime Minister John Howard to apologize for his ancestors' actions against the Indigenous peoples of Australia. Thus, while the reconciliation process was felt by many as an important historical event, many today feel it hasn't achieved its goals. See further: Irene Watson, Fiona Nicoll, Brett Neilson, and Fiona Allon, eds., "On What Grounds? Sovereignties, Territorialities and Indigenous Rights", *Borderlands* 1.2 (2002), available online: www.borderlandsjournal.adelaide

Your words like water
Wash over me
Yet I feel clean.[36]

In "Words Like Water", Moreton writes about a sudden self-alienation that occurs in the encounter with the words of the Prime Minister which is consistent with the experience of racism described by Frantz Fanon as a psychic splitting.[37] However, in Moreton's declaration that she "feels clean", there is a possibility left open to those who do not recognize themselves in the terms of the nation's racist interpellation. As Judith Butler notes, for interpellation to work, "there must be a one who turns around, who reflexively appropriates the term by which one is hailed; only once this appropriative gesture takes place does hailing become interpellation".[38]

Interpellation, in Moreton's poems, is also the site of self-empowerment brought by the possibility of appropriating words by attaching to them meanings other than the normative, and, on the other hand, of addressing the non-Indigenous fear of not being the sole owners of the English language. For instance, in "I Shall Surprise You by My Will", Moreton interpellates the neo-colonial oppressor, but most importantly she interrupts the racist and patriarchal discourses through the voicing of a different, dialogic intention, inherent in the English language:

I will make oppression work for me
with a turn and with a twist
be camouflaged within stated ignorance
then rise

I surprise you by my will
.....

[36] Ibid.

[37] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967 [1952]).

[38] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 33.

I shall spring upon you words familiar
then watch you regather as they drop about
like precious tears thick with fear
hear you scream and shout

then I shall watch convictions break away
and crumple like paper bags
and then as beauty I shall rise

and surprise you by my will.[39]

The appropriation of racist speech can function as a counter-interpellation. According to Julie D. Carter, the inclusion by Indigenous Australian parents of derogatory phrases and terms in their vocabulary serves the purpose of preparing children for the negative terms widely used to refer to Indigenous peoples.[40] Parents anticipate that epithets about themselves will be based on stereotypes and, as a consequence, they incorporate terms such as "blackfellas" and "black bastards" and jokes about stereotypical behaviour such as "the way a blackfella travels" or "cheeky black kid" in everyday intra-community speech. By incorporating negative non-Indigenous images of Indigenous people and Indigenous behaviour, they try to account for the experience of identity formation described by Fanon.[41] The appropriation of idioms of stigma inures a stigmatised social identity to hurtful racial interaction and extends the original capacity of the idiom so that it connotes more than negative stereotypical notions. Likewise, in the poem, "Blak Beauty", the term "blak" is appropriated not only in its spelling but through a re-definition of the word:

This has been held on my lips
Since time
Immemorial

[39] Moreton, *Post Me*, 136.

[40] Julie D. Carter, "Am I Too Black To Go With You?", in Iain Keen ed., *Being Black, Aboriginal Cultures in 'Settled' Australia* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988).

[41] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967 [1952]).

There is blakness
Beneath these nails
For I know this earth
And wear it well

She has been

Strapped around my waist
Woven into my scalp
Tied 'round my breasts
Poised in my hair
Or dried at the corners of
My mouth
.....
Belonging to witches
And their magic
Black comedy
Is gruesome and tragic
Black Friday is generally unlucky
Black eye
Something which has suffered a blow
Blackmail
Blackmarket
Blackthroat

This is my earth
She's the colour of
Blak
.....
It is custom
It is lore
It is the envelopment of all hues
Which have passed before

Yes,
This is my earth
She's the colour of
Blak.[42]

[42] Moreton, *Post Me*, 93-98.

In this poem, Moreton disrupts the automatic nature of the readers' response through a linguistic strategy of 'excess', which redefines the limits of the English language itself.[43] The intensification of the experience of stigma exposes the absurdity and rationalisation of racism, while the stigmatised word black is employed to question its genealogical use. Rather than just indicating the racist connotations of this word, Moreton gestures towards a different intersubjective relation to it, rendering the word "blak" the centre of a linguistic mediation through which readers can perceive the presence of a previously negated difference. Offering a different way of reversing the English power of definition, Moreton uses a list of quotations of everyday stereotypes attached to the word "black" such as "Black comedy/Black Friday/Black eye/Blackmail/Blackmarket/Blackthroat", but also different significations of the word "blak" passed down by her people. Moving beyond a strategy of "opposition", Moreton constructs an intersubjective reversal of the word, which is not just a resisting use but a way of making the non-Indigenous speaker aware of his/her constitutive relation to the Indigenous subject. As E. Ann Kaplan suggests, partly because such texts reverse the white gaze, the readers are unable to continue being unaware of their own psychic splitting in the construction of themselves. Whites' self-definition as having no colour and being superior has depended on "their difference from blackness as something specific – a color, an entity – and inferior. Whiteness has become naturalized as neither race nor a color".[44] However, when Moreton displays her meaning of blakness, she interrupts the repetition of the non-Indigenous reader's privileged position as the controller of signification. Rousing readers from their narcissistic absorption, Moreton pushes them to relate to the other as the subject. The binary model of hierarchical oppositional epistemologies is thus challenged by a radically relational practice. If it is the oppressive

[43] Bill Ashcroft, "Excess: Post-Colonialism and the Verandahs of Meaning", in Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson, eds., *De-Scribing Empire, Post-colonialism and Textuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 42.

[44] E. Ann Kaplan, "The 'Look' Returned: Knowledge Production and Constructions of 'Whiteness' in Humanities Scholarship and Independent Film", in Mike Hill, ed., *Whiteness: A Critical Reader* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1997), 321.

structure of linguistic classification and definition with its reliance on exterior bodily signs that feeds prejudice and hate, by working through the expression of stigma (really a projection of inner hated self-objects) subjects are forced to recognize the autonomy of the other. As Kaplan explains, "any act of the subject toward the other that has an inner impact 'negates' the other, breaks into the other's absolute identity with her – or himself in such a way that the other is no longer exactly what she or he was a moment before".[45] In this manner, Moreton's appropriation of the English language installs a relation with previous users of the word "black" forwarding the recognition of black and white subjectivities in their intersubjective relations.

Practicing Proximity

The neo-colonial construction of a national social reality through the codified use of the English language has for a long time played on a taken-for-granted world and, by virtue of this implication, language use continues to confirm as norm the subjective reality that has been socially codified. However, appropriations of the English language such as Romaine Moreton's signal a "loss of casualness … a break in the routines, and, a threat to the taken for granted reality".[46] The installation of difference in the very site of the reality-generating system results in a process of linguistic othering which forces non-Indigenous speakers to acknowledge their relation to the speaker of Indigenous English. Perhaps this is the reason for so much repression and fear of different uses of English: Indigenous appropriations of the English language elicit a crisis at the very site of the neo-colonial subject formation, which demands a process of self-recognition in its possessive articulation of language. As Kobena Mercer notes, Bakhtin's insight into the social multiaccentuality of the sign may be extended to demonstrate how the struggle-in-language entails an interminable discursive antagonism in which subjectivity and identity are at stake.[47] When neo-colonial

[45] Ibid., 326.

[46] Michael A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), 169.

[47] Kobena Mercer, "Black Art and the Burden of Representation.", in *Welcome to*

self-recognition is evidently questioned by the partial difference of Indigenous appropriations, an uncanny shock of provisional lack and dispossession occurs. The fear of dispossession and lack is conveyed in the obsessive accusations of perversion and incorrectness towards new uses of what is perceived as one's own language.

As a consequence of the fear of dispossession and lack brought by Indigenous Australian appropriations, neo-colonial national apparatuses react in subsequent re-appropriations. Many Indigenous writers have commented on the "ever-shifting ideology" of neo-colonial nationalism through their analysis of language and language policies. The invention of neologisms by nationalist state apparatuses to control Indigenous subjectivities is commented upon by Alexis Wright as a monological conversation. She writes,

> In the conversation Australia is having with itself at the moment, again with the exclusion of the work or voice of Aboriginal people, they have invented new words to attack our culture and traditional roots .... Their words are being spread through the mass media to describe us .... [W]ords are being used as weapons to flog Aboriginal people – words like "practical reconciliation", "mutual responsibility", "incremental development", "assimilation" .... Soon we will have new words to deal with .... These are the words being invented ... to excuse lack of responsibility for the distress of dispossession, oppression and poverty of Aboriginal peoples.[48]

The process of re-appropriation, which is present in the continual national re-definitions of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations, indicates that struggles over the multiaccentual meaning of signs are part of the construction of collective identities. Keywords such as reconciliation and multiculturalism are inherently ambivalent and have no fixed or final meanings precisely because they are constantly subject to struggles in which different groups seek to hegemonize their definitions over the definitions of others.[49]

the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 255.

[48] Alexis Wright, "Politics of Writing", *Southerly* 62.2 (2002), 10-12.

[49] Mercer, "Black Art and the Burden of Representation", 277.

The discursive power of linguistic representation, as Wright notes in the passage quoted above, is pervasive, but also provisional, discontinuous and contingent. Hence, by studying genealogically how subjects have been administered through an "ever-shifting" language, we understand how power functions. However, we can also ascertain that resistance can work at the very site of representation. As Trinh T. Minh-ha writes, the necessity of appropriation remains in the face of "the dehumanization of forced removal-relocation-reeducation-redefinition". The subject is often compelled to use the language of institutional powers in order to undo it. Thus, appropriation rests between the inability to "say" and the need to "unsay": "You try and keep on trying to unsay it, for if you don't, they will not fail to fill in the blanks on your behalf, and you will be said".[50] The provisional, discontinuous and contingent labour of language appropriation at least temporarily interrupts neo-colonial national policies. In Wright's words,

> This is the price we pay for being un-Australian, for wanting recognition of words like multi-culturalism, stolen generations, treaties, Aboriginal government, Aboriginal sovereignty, Aboriginal self-determination .... I have to remember the power of words. Our words are weapons too. Our books are time bombs and already are breaking down many barriers on their way across the world .... All we have to do is wait for a delayed reaction. We only have to wait and one day we will see change. This is the hope of writing. Believing the unbelievable.[51]

Wright's conclusive statements gesture towards the possibility of a "delayed reaction".[52] In fact, the process of appropriation by Indigenous writers does not only produce homogeneous reactions of possessive re-colonisation. Since in appropriation practices there is the admittance of the constitutive and dialogic way in which meaning is created in texts, the appropriation of

[50] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 80.

[51] Wright, "Politics of Writing", 10-20.

[52] Ibid.

the English language inaugurates a space for different reactions within the linguistic contact zone.[53] Appropriation, in its "othering" of language, sometimes results in attempts at self-scrutiny and dialogue. A practice of meaning that consciously operates within the context of intersubjective relationships opens up the lexicogrammar for a creative exploitation, which is not reduced to the normative representation of language appropriation as *catachresis* (i.e. an improper use of words). Instead, it creates the need for constant re-invention as a consequence of an intersubjective voluntary or involuntary linguistic dispossession. Along these lines, in language lies the potential of encounter, dialogue and exchange based on clearly located and accountable speaking positions which enable us to think about our reciprocal identities as, to quote Marcia Langton, "a field of intersubjectivity in that it is remade over and over again in a process of dialogue, of imagination, of representation and interpretation".[54] It implies the possibility of a new logic, based on mutual alterity, and a retracing of zones where practices of proximity occur.

Wherever European colonisers and Indigenous peoples met, a conversation would be improvised, at least for a brief space of time. In 1788, a British officer, William Dawes, recorded the mutual learning of language between himself and an Eora woman, Patyegarang:

> Dawes?
> Can Ga Ru?
> Ga?
> Out of Doors?
> You?
> You?
> Walk, come.
> Ca?
> ....
> No, wee.

[53] See further Bill Ashcroft, "Constitutive Graphonomy: A Post-Colonial Theory of Literary Writing", *Kunapipi* 11.1 (1983), 58-73.

[54] Langton, *Well I Heard It*, 33.

> Dada, dada.
> Patye.
> Tete, tete.
> Why, you are shivering.
> Putuwa.
> Put your hands in mine.
> To warm one's hand.
> Patye.
> Short for Grey Kangaroo.
> Agh!
> Goodbye, meaning "hello".
> ...
> Goodbye.
> They have no word for it.[55]

In a sense, Dawes inscribes increasingly repressive power relations in his writing as Patyegarang is excluded from the process of recording. In Dawes's notes, there is the "recording of one side of a dialogue, a direct report of things happening".[56] However, immersion in the ambiguities of these first conversations interrupts the pretence of language exchange as linear translation; rather, it reveals that in-between period/space where the English and Eora languages were related by a mutual apprehension, "as if the movement of the word-sounds, their fertile conjunctions, phonic parallaxes and even their echoic red-shifts have become a subtle medium of expression, a way of keeping open a communication where relative positions are still fluid".[57] In Dawes's notes, we find an enunciation that is unavoidably related to the differential access to speaking positions, but also the admission of mutual difference, a partial interconnection posited by the subjects' existence within the same speaking space.

As W. E. Du Bois explained, the shadow of the colour-line often implies distance despite "much physical contact and daily

[55] Paul Carter, *The Calling to Come* (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 1996), 6-7.

[56] Ibid., 3.

[57] Ibid., 4.

intermingling".[58] Today, there are no promises of reconciliation 'with' the Indigenous peoples of Australia; the rhetoric of homogenous community and selective hospitality of the Australian nation-state continues to be bound to the non-existent ownership of human, animal and natural resources of particular territories.[59] "The intersection between race and property continues to play a definitive role in constructing and affirming Indigenous dispossession".[60] However, the claim of 'owning' the nation-state and the public technologies that create its imaginary boundaries is displaced by Indigenous artists through a diverse economy of artistic exchange set in motion by a performance of "re-appropriation". Indigenous appropriations of technologies such as the English language alert non-Indigenous peoples to their presence and thus to their co-habitation of the Australian nation. In this sense, as Terry Goldie suggests, "being Australian", might be explained through Heidegger's philosophy not as a subject who understands his or her being, but as "Da-sein": "Da-sein always understands itself in terms of its existence, in terms of the possibility to be itself or not be itself. Da-sein has either chosen these possibilities itself, stumbled upon them, or in each instance already grown up in them".[61] Non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians are variously alerted to their intersubjective relation. Sometimes, they have already grown up in this, as in the case of some Indigenous Australians who are constantly made aware of 'whiteness'; either they choose to admit this relation and interpret it in several ways as in non-Indigenous professions of shame, guilt, denial etc., or they simply stumble upon something that alerts them to this relation. Notwithstanding the un-

[58] William Edward Burghardt Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Bensenville, Ill.: Lushena Books, 2000 [1903]), 128.

[59] See further Irene Watson, Fiona Nicoll, Brett Neilson, and Fiona Allon, eds., "On What Grounds? Sovereignties, Territorialities and Indigenous Rights", *Borderlands* 1.2 (2002), available online: www.borderlandsjournal.adelaide

[60] Aileen Moreton-Robinson, "The Possessive Logic of Patriarchal White Sovereignty: The High Court and the Yorta Yorta Decision", *Borderlands* 3.2 (2004), Available Online: www.borderlandsejournal.adelaide.edu.au/vol3no2_2004/moreton_possessive.htm

[61] Terry Goldie, "On Not Being Australian: Mudrooroo and Demidenko", *Australian Literary Studies* 21.4 (2004), 100.

official political line of *terra nullius*, non-Indigenous Australians become cognizant of their relation with Indigenous Australian peoples every time their incursions meet with resistance.

Itala Vivan

A Writer In-Between Worlds. An Interview with M. G. Vassanji

I met the writer M. G. Vassanji in January 2007 in the island of Zanzibar, where he was on vacation with his family. Zanzibar is the place his grandparents came from, while he himself grew up in Dar es Salaam and Kenya in an Indian family.

The time is 10 o'clock in the morning and the meeting place a shadowy corner under fringed palm trees protecting us from the tropical heat and moving graciously in the light breeze from the sea.

I.V. When you come back to these places your family came from, do you find they have changed, and if so, how?

M.G.V. Everything has changed, but this world is still very relaxed, even compared to Nairobi, where things are five times faster. After the bloody revolution in the '60s Zanzibar went through a very traumatic period and then a phase of repression that are now both over. The basic trading instinct of the people of the coast – the Swahili culture – is still visible, but there is still a lot of poverty, people who go barefoot... For instance, I went to the island of Lamu a few days ago and I was struck by the low standard of living.

I.V. I am also coming back to Zanzibar to visit, and I have been doing so from time to time over the past 30 years or so: my impression is, that even if the atmosphere is far more relaxed now than it used to be back then, there is a much greater separation between one cultural (or racial?) group and another – a general pattern of fragmentation.

M.G.V. Well, in the old days people were mixed, as you can still see from the way old houses are positioned, one close to the other. Yet, in the past, together with the mixing there was also difference between, let's say, Africans, Arabs, Indians. That has changed also because many Indians left, and the Indians who come here now come as foreigners, not as people who lived here. But when in the street people address me in English and I reply in Swahili, they pick up my Swahili and are happy to talk Swahili. I feel very much at ease here.

I.V. But you have always written in English: why not in Swahili?

M.G.V. English is my literary language. I was brought up in three languages which were used for different purposes. English was the language of literature, so it was perfectly natural for me to use it for fiction.

I.V. How was it that you began to write, and to write fiction?

M.G.V. I always loved to write for myself when I was in school, and would keep a diary when I left the coast for the United States. I enjoyed writing but I never thought I would make a career out of it, – when you are young you don't think you can become a writer, be successful and bring up a family on that. But after I had a job in Toronto in the 1980's – I had moved to Canada from the US in 1979 – I started writing for good. I still thought at that time that I would go back to Africa, and in fact whenever I do come back here I feel that this is home for me.

I.V. But you did not read English at the university, right?

M.G.V. No, my education was in physics and I graduated from MIT where I then became research associate in nuclear physics. At that time I was overwhelmed with a sense of loss, feeling deprived of all the stories, and the history, of my past and so I started to write, first short stories and then a novel, to cope with that pervasive feeling.

I.V. And what is writing for you now – still connected to memory, or what?

M.G.V. Memory of course is still there and is a kind of push, but it has to be shaped into something different. Initially it was that – going back to memories – although there are different kinds of memories – personal memories, communal memories, family memories… and also historical, national and mythological memories, all of that. Memory is inside each human being, it is what you are and you cannot forget it – it is a sort of hard disk of your existence. Now writing is my only job. For nine years I wrote while working as a nuclear physicist – it was not difficult, however, because it meant to switch to writing when leaving my calculations. Two very different activities totally separate from one another. I am sure it would have been hard to keep up with a job if I had been a professor of literature, because the two things would have interfered. To me it was like walking from one room to another.

I.V. In the contemporary world there is this great debate about Islam, integralism, terrorism…

M.G.V. …and Bush, and the US. It is a very ugly and difficult situation indeed. I find it awkward to use the word 'Muslim' in order to divide certain people from other people. We did not grow up that way, with divisive labels, for we were a community. And for many people it is still that way, and they would like to be themselves, without distinctions. It is like my feeling both an Indian and an African, because that is what I am, both of them. I used to be religious and I am not now, but people who believe are often loaded with such problems of identity. The world treats us as if we were one big people, independently from the fact that we might be Swahili or Hausa or Indonesian: we are 'Muslim', and that's it. But I say, if your house is on fire, it is not the Indonesian who comes to rescue you if you are here on the Eastern coast of Africa. The ancient idea of community is still uppermost in our lives. I take the problem at a personal level and try to solve it that way, yet I still feel a sort of sympathy for all those people who are locked up in between borders and called 'Muslim' and treated accordingly. Yet there are people

who allow themselves to be treated like that because they have that sort of consuming identity and this fact is very dangerous especially for youths growing up in this world of ours.

I.V. We are deep into a nightmare. After the beginning of the new millennium in an atmosphere of hope and confidence, 9/11 plunged us all into this mire where we are now.

M.G.V. It's a cage we are locked in, this Muslimness involving all of us and erasing all differences. In the past century integralism was confined to certain sections of the Arab world and one was able to take distances from that, but that has gone away.

I.V. To go back to your writing, which were the most important readings for you in your formative years?

M.G.V. When I was at the university in the United States I could enjoy the advantages of a system which was basically very liberal, that is, while taking science I could also read a lot of literature, history and so on. In my student's years I discovered Dostoevsky – it was the '70s and Dostoevsky linked with existentialism. Later on Conrad had a big impact on me because he dealt with more or less homeless characters wandering around the world and dealing with ethical issues and discovering themselves. I also read Umberto Eco's *Il nome della rosa*, in fact I read it twice in a row because I liked it immensely, for it has a strong story inside it, and a lot of history. A Portuguese writer whom I read early on was Saramago.

I.V. Having grown up bilingual – or rather trilingual – what do you think of the educational system of Tanzania using both Swahili and English?

M.G.V. I believe that Swahili is an important language for communication but I do not think it is going to develop as a literary language. Swahili has problems if you want to write literature, but also when dealing with other parts of the world, because it lacks technical and scientific lexicon, and how is one going to manage with Swahili in highly specialized contexts? English seems necessary in

more than one instance. Growing up bilingual or trilingual is not such a big problem, after all – also in many European countries you have to speak two or more languages and this is not considered a problem but rather an asset. When we grew up in Dar es Salaam we were brought up in four or rather five languages – two Indian languages, then Hindi (which was the language of the movies), and then of course Swahili and English. Yet nobody thought this was a problem. English was for reading and studying, while the other languages were for more intimate and direct communication: yes, Swahili made me feel closer to people than English. Now when I go to India I can still make the connection with people there by using my Indian languages, although they have changed through time, and yet use English when needed. Africa could do the same, keep English for certain purposes and yet live with the African languages of each area.

I.V. And what about English and the market economy we are living in?

M.G.V. Well this is one more aspect which makes English necessary, in Africa more than anywhere else. In this continent the 60s had marked a drive for independence and self reliance, but now, half a century later, we see how dependent the continent is on other countries. Yet I believe the problem is still the same – acquiring self reliance. Until Africa does that, there is no way out of the economic trap. This is true also for publishing in Africa. African publishers are experiencing all sorts of hardness, but they must get out of it by themselves and find a way to stand up on their own. For instance, years ago I was invited to a conference dealing with the issues of publishing in Africa – South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania – but organized and financed by the Swedes. I do not believe in that. Africans should, must find a way to solve their problems by themselves, without seeking a roof under the arm of European or American support. I come from an Ishmaili community and we worked hard to solve our problems by ourselves here in Africa. All these shops that you see here in Zanzibar, that is the kind of shop that we had then, that is my background. But we went to school and learned what there was to learn. My generation is the first generation

who finished high school. So it can be done – but it seems people do not want to do it. We need dignity, that is the point – instead of pleading and asking for help we should find our way to solving problems. This African attitude of waiting for others to help them is just shameful, shameful.

I.V. Do you think this attitude is the result of colonial situations?

M.G.V. I think this is a subtle issue. The former colonial countries are superior in terms of economic resources, and also historically. They conquered and subdued Africa and therefore put themselves in a position of superiority – but what about morality, and dignity? And there is also the fact that there are people who are happy to come over here in Africa and say, let us do something for Aids, we shall help you fight against it, etc. We should resist this trend and find strength in ourselves. When you are elsewhere and hear about Africa, it is as if Africa were a place where everybody dies of Aids, a place of death: but Africa in fact is not that, it is a place full of life and joy and creativity, of laughter and music.

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Morey G. Vassanji is an important contemporary novelist who in his personal history and fictional work embodies the predicament of the postcolonial writer. Born in 1950 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, from an Indian family who moved there from Zanzibar and belonged to the Ishmaili community, he went to study in the United States and became a nuclear physicist with a job at MIT. Gradually he developed a passion for writing fiction and ended by quitting his job to become a full time writer in Toronto, Canada. It seems he often goes back to Dar and also to Zanzibar, which he is very fond of, leaving Toronto where he has been living since 1979. As he writes in his website, "if pressed to", he would define himself as an Indo African Canadian writer.

Vassanji has published a string of novels: the acclaimed *The Gunny Sack* (London: Heinemann International, 1989) which won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize; *No New Land* (Toronto:

McClelland and Stewart, 1991); *Uhuru Street* (London: Heinemann International, 1991; short stories); *The Book of Secrets* (New York: Picador, 1994), which was awarded the Giller Prize; *Amriika* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2000); *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (Toronto: Doubleday, 2003), which also obtained the Giller Prize; *When She Was Queen* (Toronto: Doubleday, 2005), a collection of short stories. His most recent novel, *The Assassin's Song,* appeared in August 2007 with Doubleday. In 1989 Vassanji and his wife Nuriehan Aziz founded and edited the first issue of an important journal, *The Toronto South Asian Review*, later called *The Toronto Review of Contemporary Writing Abroad.*

Vassanji's fiction deals constantly with the cultural and political situation of characters who live in-between different worlds and fight for the freedom of asserting an individual choice but cannot escape their lot – a multiple identity whose load is very heavy to bear. Both Vikram and Karsan, the heroes of his latest novels, are witnesses to unspeakable violence and destruction brought upon their communities and families by historical events, and cannot avoid taking upon themselves the brunt of their heritage. In *The In-Between Worlds of Vikram Lall*, the hero grows up in colonial Kenya and experiences the brutality of colonial rule and the violence of Mau Mau resistance; in *The Assassin's Song,* Karsan is the last descendant from a genealogy of Gujarati gurus descending from a mythical Sufi forefather. He witnesses the horrors following the partition between India and Pakistan. While refusing to take side and be part of the waves of violence, Vikram and Karsam are scarred by the devastating madness that has taken hold of their contemporaries.

Vassanji's novels are full of memories and traditions, of myths and history, but their structure and existential predicaments belong to our contemporary world and touch the reader with the immediacy and vividness of life itself.

REVIEW ESSAYS

Katherine E. Russo

Recent Reflections on the Australian Pain of Unbelonging

Germaine Greer, "Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood", *Quarterly Essay* 11 (2003), 1-78. Reprinted as Germaine Greer, *Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood* (London: Profile, 2004), 232 pp.

Sheila Collingwood-Whittick, ed., *The Pain of Unbelonging: Alienation and Identity in Australasian Literature*, Preface by Germaine Greer (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), 210 + xliii pp.

"For a gubba in Australia there can be no belonging. Ours is the trauma of never having belonged": with these words Germaine Greer has recently returned to claim a space for the "pain of unbelonging" of Australian settlers in her preface to the collection of essays *The Pain of Unbelonging: Alienation and Identity in Australasian Literature*.[1] "Unbelonging hurts" and the psychic pain of those who do not belong, according to Greer, is the reason for the unremitting brutal treatment of the Australian land, which is a constant reminder of the colonizers' rootlessness.[2] However,

[1] Germaine Greer, "Preface", in Sheila Collingwood-Whittick, ed., *The Pain of Unbelonging: Alienation and Identity in Australasian Literature* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007), ix-xii. Hereafter indicated as TPU.

[2] Greer recently spoke about Australian environmental issues as a consequence of the Australian "pain of unbelonging" in a plenary lecture entitled "Australia: What's Left?" delivered at the IX Biennal Conference of the European Association for Studies of Australia, Copenaghen, 27 September 2007.

she continues, there is no expiation of guilt through the pain of unbelonging, for white Australians are complicit in inflicting it upon Aboriginal peoples. Yet, judging from this new publication and the numerous and immediate responses to her first polemical essay on the matter, *Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood*, the colonial pain of unbelonging needs more healing, or at least, more discussion.[3]

Following Greer's invitation to think about the very foundations of the Australian national identity ("WJU"), the psychic pain of unbelonging provides the focus of the collection of essays on alienation and identity in the contemporary literatures of Australia and New Zealand, edited by Sheila Collingwood-Whittick. From the outset, the editor warns the reader against the homogenizing tendency of some post-colonial theory and acknowledges the need for more differentiation in the way the colonial experience of Australia and New Zealand is represented. Yet, she claims, the sense of unfamiliarity with the alien space is common to both national cultures. Driven by the desire to make the country more like home, British settlers of Australia and New Zealand not only attempted to transform the physical appearance of the country through architecture and botanical enterprises, but sought to neutralize the "environment's power to alienate"(*TPU*, xviii) through a literary and visual re-orientation of the way they looked at it.

As Bruce Clunies Ross already wrote two decades ago, the impulse of familiarisation largely influenced the early creative writing of non-Indigenous Australians and is still present in an ongoing endeavour to take possession of the country imaginatively.[4]

[3] "Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood" first appeared in *Quarterly Essay* 11 (2003), 1-78. Besides many reviews and articles on the essay published in the mainstream press, the letters to the editor of *Quarterly Essay* in response to Greer were numerous. Among the most important letters sent to the *Quarterly Essay* were those by Les Murray, 12 (2003), 67-68; PA Durack Clancy, 12 (2003), 71-74; Marcia Langton, 12, (2003), 77-82; Tony Birch, 12 (2003) 84-87; Fay Zwicky, 12 (2003), 75-76; Lillian Holt, 12 (2003), 69-70. These were answered by Greer in a letter to the editor published in *Quarterly Essay*, 14 (2004), 109-116. Later the essay and all the letters to the editor were collected in the book *Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood* (London: Profile, 2004). Greer's original essay, "Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood", will hereafter be referred to as WJU.

[4] Bruce Clunies Ross, "Australian Literature and Australian Culture", in Laurie Hengergham, ed., *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1988) 73.

In "Colonial Nomenclature" ([1823] 1970), John Dunmore Lang offers an example of how invaded territories acquired meaning in terms of their inclusion within a European perspective,

> 'Twas said of Greece two thousand years ago,
> That every stone i' the land had got a name.
> Of New South Wales too, men will soon say so too;
> But every stone there seems to get the same
> .....
> I hate your Goulburn Downs and Goulburn Plains,
> And Goulburn River and the Goulburn Range,
> And Mount Goulburn and Goulburn Vale!
> .....
> I'd have Mount Hampden and Mount Marvell, and
> Mount Wallace and Mount Bruce at the old Bay.
> I'd have them all the highest in the land,
> That men might see them twenty leagues away.
> I'd have the Plains of Marathon beyond
> Some mountain pass yclept Thermopylae.
> Such are th'immortal names that should be written
> On all thy new discoveries, Great Britain![5]

The re-naming of sites already mapped by Indigenous peoples was prompted by the longing for self-reflection and worked through the logic of "association" and "resemblance" to the mother land/tongue.[6] As Kevin Gilbert writes in his introduction to *Inside Black Australia*, "these British Boat People return to the wreck to salvage a plank and, holding it aloft, try to make comparisons with the indigenous tree and twist it to the semblance of the 'tree back home'".[7] The early poems of the first settlers often expressed a feeling of displacement as a consequence of the incapacity of

[5] John Dunmore Lang, "Colonial Nomenclature" [1823], in Brian Elliott and Mitchell Adrian, eds., *Bards in the Wilderness* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson 1970), 29.

[6] Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Political History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), 42-46.

[7] Kevin Gilbert, ed., *Inside Black Australia: An Anthology of Aboriginal Poetry* (Ringwood: Penguin Books Australia, 1988), xviii.

Australian referents to reflect the English language and convey self-recognition. In "English Wild Flowers" (1854), Caroline Leakey explains her love of English wild flowers as a consequence of her self-reflection,

> Oh! dearer to me are the sweet wild flowers
> A hand unseen on England showers;
> That are born unknown, and all unknown fade,
> Far and away in woodland shade;
> And dearer to me are those lesser gems,
> Peeping from earth on tiny stems,
> Than the vaunting glow of rare Eastern lands,
> And the gorgeous show which in proud pomp stands;
> For they have a voice, and they speak to me,
> With their eyes so full of love's mystery![8]

Hence, the pain of unbelonging and the need to create familiar points of reference has been the focus of poetry since the first appearance of Australian settler literature and it is not surprising that it still inspires a lot of literary works and analysis. Australian literary representations which work through association and comparison to Britain feed the settlers' vital need to silence their sense of alienation and claim possession of their new dwelling. Arguably, much contemporary literary analysis, which simply assimilates Australian literary texts within European theoretical frameworks and models, works in the same way.

Yet, the essays contained in *The Pain of Unbelonging: Alienation and Identity in Australasian Literature* indicate that the extremely variegated relationships Australians and New-Zealanders have with the place, locality and histories of their countries of adoption cannot be reduced to a unilateral and homogeneous "pain of unbelonging". The collection provides an analysis of Indigenous and non-Indigenous works, leaving the false impression of two countries defined solely by British settlers and Indigenous peoples. However, the collection is successful in problematizing a neat polarization between an Indigenous belonging and a non-Indigenous unbelonging. Through

[8] Caroline Leakey, "English Wild Flowers" (1854), in Brian Elliott and Mitchell Adrian, eds., *Bards in the Wilderness* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1970), 57.

a multifaceted reading of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous works, the collection respects the complexity and variegation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations to place. For instance, Eleonore Wildburger suggests that in Janice Slater's *Snow Domes* the pain of unbelonging stays with non-Indigenous Australians while Indigenous peoples have not lost their sense of belonging to the land, thereby questioning preconceived ideas of Indigenous Australian peoples as forlorn and meaningless beings. Following this point of view, Sue Ryan Fazilleau's "*The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* and the Pain of Unbelonging" makes a diagnosis of the "pain of unbelonging" as a consequence of Australia's veneration of Britain and the USA and deems Carey's fiction a literary version of group-therapy. Conversely, Elvira Pulitano gives a new original reading of Sally Morgan's *My Place* by suggesting a re-articulation of Indigenous Australian experiences of displacement as a form of diaspora.

Alongside the colonial familiarisation of place through comparison and association, another widespread remedy for those suffering the "pain of unbelonging" has been the attempt to appropriate and "capture the subjectivity of Indigenous peoples" in fiction as part of a wide range of forms of "indigenization", a term coined by Terry Goldie to suggest "the impossible necessity of becoming indigenous".[9] Settlers' literary representations of place and peoples have often been driven by the desire to become indigenous (Goldie, 1989). Today, as Marc Delrez suggests in his essay "Towards Settler Auto-Ethnography: Nicholas Jose's *Black Sheep*" (TPU), this has been taken quite literally. Even some of the most liberal among settler writers seem compelled to restructure their sense of national subjectivity in a way that appropriates Aboriginal elements. In the last ten years, several novels, such as *Black Sheep,* have been driven by an attempt to re-trace a few threads of Aboriginality or to assume an Aboriginal life-style. According to Delrez, these texts amount to a form of "autoethnography". As Marie Louise Pratt theorizes, autoethnographic texts are constructed by colonized peoples in re-

[9] Terry Goldie, *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Literatures* (Kingston, Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's UP, 1989), 15, 13.

sponse to or in dialogue with colonial representations and serve as a cultural or collective self-invention that can counter-act colonial representations.[10] However, in this case, they are the settlers' counter-response to indigenous representations.

It could be argued that Greer is a follower of this quest for indigenization, which is variously betrayed or even claimed in her writing. As a matter of fact, *Whitefella Jump Up* could also be viewed as an autoethnographic text, a call for a cultural and collective self-invention, for it proposes a re-birth of the nation as an Aboriginal Republic and prompts Australians to adopt and face their own Aboriginality. In her words:

> If you have read thus far it should be clear that my object in writing as a non-Aboriginal Australian addressing other non-Aboriginal Australians is to suggest a way out of the predicament in which we find ourselves as guilty inheritors of a land that was innocently usurped by our ignorant, deluded, desperate forefathers. The simple step that begins this journey is the simple admission that ours is an Aboriginal country. All of it. Every single bit. Try saying it to yourself in the mirror. "I live in an Aboriginal country". (WJU, 14)

This much-awaited acknowledgement of Indigenous sovereignty, according to Greer, would sever the embarrassing ties with the British and American nations and treat colonisation "from an 'Aboriginal point of view", that is, as an insignificant event which was attempted and failed. This nation re-making gesture would recognise the inherent and uneradicable Aboriginality of Australia, which is "a characteristic of the continent itself" (WJU, 72). Moreover, it would recognise the Australian peoples' Aboriginality, provided by the often denied sexual and cultural relations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Besides the long and well-documented history of sexual and love relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, the influence of Aboriginal cultures on Australian culture is due, according to Greer, to the domestic work of Aboriginal women in white houses. Thus, it is not only genetic

[10] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 1992), 7-9.

but cultural. The relationship between Aboriginal and settler women and children, Greer suggests, has resulted in widespread Aboriginal influence on the formation of the Australian character and way of life, for which she gives some very interesting evidence taken mainly from her everyday experience and Australian settler literature. The egalitarian spirit, loud way of speaking, spontaneous and direct approach, evasiveness, shyness, yarning, segregation between sexes, sport mania, use of Aboriginal words, and the broad flat vowels, complex diphthongs and murmuring nasality of Australian English are all Australian characteristics which, according to Greer, demonstrate the effects of the gentle but pervasive influence of black Australia on "the way we behave, the way we speak, the way we feel about lots of things" (WJU, 62).

Indeed, Greer's engagement with the social forgetfulness and cultural amnesia about Indigenous/non-Indigenous contact and co-habitation is a great step forward. Moreover, her invitation to undergo a self-examination and her call for a cultural and collective self-invention open up a space for a constructive dialogue about identity and a new understanding of the nation's foundation. As Lillian Holt writes in her response to Greer's essay, "We need to dream, dream big, dream this country into full existence".[11] Yet, it seems impossible to believe that all the groups of peoples that form Indigenous Australia may consider colonialism as just an insignificant event. The various groups included in Indigenous Australia and which have fought to be recognised as distinct nations have been affected very differently by colonialism.[12] However, Greer's depiction of colonialism ignores the most violent, systematic, orderly and sanctioned processes of colonisation such as the eugenic practices of the 1930s, the segregation in reserves, the forced severing of family ties, and vaguely addresses the problems which derive from the Stolen Generations period. Her passage from a white to a black Australia ignores the racism on which the nation was founded and seems, at the very least, to replicate the pattern of appropriative

[11] Lillian Holt, "Correspondence", *Quarterly Essay* 12 (2003), 69-70.

[12] Before contact, there were many groups of people inhabiting the Australian continent, such as the Yolngu, Pitjantjatjara, Warlpiri, and Waka Waka, but after the British invasion they were all renamed "Aboriginal".

"indigenization" described above. Wouldn't it be fairer, as Marcia Langton writes in her response to Greer, to acknowledge frankly the frontier history that gave white Australians their ascendancy, their control of the land and the resources that have made them so wealthy?[13] A fascinating consequence of this acknowledgement could be the attempt to learn from Indigenous peoples new ways of being in the country, but also, most importantly, new ways of relating to each other based on the mutual acknowledgement of our different speaking positions. In the history of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations, power relations have often, but not always, been made effective by the absence of reciprocity in the recognition of difference. As Langton explains, "From inside, a culture is 'felt' as normative, not deviant. It is European culture which is different for an Aboriginal person … [The non-Aboriginal subject] fails very often to allow Aboriginal people to articulate their own models of what they perceive 'Europeans' to be".[14] In a similar fashion, Greer avoids asking Indigenous peoples what their visions of non-Indigenous Australians are and what they would think about their adoption of an Aboriginal identity, excluding them from the conversation she is having with other non-Aboriginal peoples. Hence, as Anita Heiss wrote in response to her essay, "Greer says she didn't write this for or about blackfellas, so the fact that blackfellas like me don't appreciate it shouldn't really matter to her".[15]

The road towards the acknowledgement of Indigenous sovereignty is long, but it has had already a fair share of travellers. Greer is apparently unaware of the recent shift in some literary analysis from self-reflection to an attempt to take responsibility for the nation's history, environment and legacy of racism. This is most evident in Greer's stereotypical portrayal of the Australian way of life and behaviour which doesn't take into consideration the great variegation and complexity of ways of belonging or unbelonging to the Australian nation. Moreover, in the last ten

[13] Marcia Langton, "Correspondence", *Quarterly Essay*, 12 (2003), 78.

[14] Marcia Langton, *Well I heard It on the Radio and I Saw it on the Television…* (North Sydney: Australian Film Commission, 1993), 37.

[15] Anita Heiss, "Whitefella Go Jump", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Weekend Edition (18-19 September, 2004), 10.

years, Indigenous sovereignty has become a much debated issue among Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian scholars of Whiteness studies, which has seen the recent publication of critical works by, to name a few, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Irene Watson, Ghassan Hage and Suvendrini Perera.[16] The question of the nation's white self-representation is more complex than Greer's stark opposition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Today, while nations reinforce their frontiers and multiply their border controls, the Australian contact zone works in a way that is more intricate than the imagined space portrayed by Greer. The re-irruption of the myths of security and permanent threat in the discourses of Australian politics has raised the sovereignty of the Australian nation and its borders to the status of truth in order to create internal consensus.[17] The discursive construction of the Australian nation-state, based on the fear of a foreign contamination and the need to regulate borders, is reinforced by the amnesiac removal of the "polluting memory"[18] of Indigenous sovereignty; but it also serves as a justification for the rigid control of Indigenous peoples and immigration. In Australia, "at the heart of the imagining is the shore as border

[16] See further Aileen Moreton-Robinson, "I Still Call Australia Home: Belonging, Place, Indigeneity and Whiteness in a Postcolonising Society", Paper presented at the Critical Contexts and Crucial Conversations: Whiteness and Race Symposium, (Coolangatta, 3-5 April 2002); Aileen Moreton-Robinson, "The Possessive Logic of Patriarchal White Sovereignty: The High Court and the Yorta Yorta Decision", *Borderlands* 3.2 (2004), available online: www.borderlandsejournal.adelaide.edu.au; Irene Watson, Brett Neilson and Fiona Allon, eds, "On What Grounds? Sovereignties, Territorialities and Indigenous Rights", *Borderlands* 1.2 (2002), available online: www.borderlandsjournal.adelaide.edu.au; Ghassan Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Paranoid Society* (Annandale, N.S.W.: Pluto Press, 2003); Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (Annandale, N.S.W.: Pluto Press, 1998); Suvendrini Perera, ed., *Our Patch: Enacting Australian Sovereignty Post-2001* (Perth: Network Books, 2007).

[17] In a recent paper entitled "The Emperor's New Clothes: Postcolonialism and Globalisation" delivered at the University of Naples "L'Orientale" (2005), Bill Ashcroft argued that "The capacity to raise the myths of Security and Freedom to the status of truths is a key feature of the new imperial power, but this power rests absolutely on the bedrock of representation".

[18] Ghassan Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Paranoid Society* (Annandale, N.S.W.: Pluto Press, 2003), 98-99.

... At the heart of this thinking is the combative machinery of a 'legalised' sovereignty uneasily aware of Aboriginal presence and Indigenous Sovereignty".[19] Thus, the Australian nation-state, "sovereign", "limited" and "fraternal" on an "imagined basis" exerts and extends its sovereignty through different dispersed practices such as a renewed insistence on assimilation; the denial of Indigenous title; an appointed advisory board in place of an elected Indigenous representation such as ATSIC; new forms of biopolitical interventions; the consolidation of national borders; punitive responses to asylum seekers; the redefinition of citizenship in ethnocultural terms; renewed attempts at regional expansionism.[20] Hence, the acknowledgement of Indigenous sovereignty should also de-naturalise the idea that Australia is a sovereign nation which can exclude new migrants and treat Indigenous peoples as wards of the state.

Yet, in the hope that there might be a possibility for Greer's dream, the answer to the settlers' longing for a place to call home might be offered by Indigenous Australian writers and thinkers who continue to call for accountable speaking positions.[21]In a recent reflection on the (im)possibility of sovereign Aboriginal laws, Irene Watson writes: "it is in thinking through how to engage with Aboriginal sovereignties that Australian society in the main becomes 'stuck' where the ground of 'impossibility' lies, but it is this ground 'exactly' where our thinking should begin".[22] In Indigenous Australian cultures, place comes before time and narrative and it enables 'situated' and accountable dialogues. Situated speaking positions establish recognizable patterns of co-habitation, drawing the maps on which the past can be inscribed and in which the future

[19] Katrina Schlunke, "Sovereign Hospitalities?", *Borderlands* 1.2 (2002), Available Online:www.borderlandsjournal.adelaide.edu.au/vol1no2/schlunke_hospitalities.

[20] Suvendrini Perera, "Acting Sovereign", in *Our Patch: Enacting Australian Sovereignty Post-2001* (Perth: Network Books, 2007), 5.

[21] See further Irene Watson, "Aboriginal Sovereignties: Past, Present and Future (Im)possibilities", in *Our Patch: Enacting Australian Sovereignty Post-2001* (Perth: Network Books, 2007), 31-34; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000).

[22] Watson, "Aboriginal Sovereignties", 25.

can find its roots. I believe this is a way of acknowledging and respecting difference rather than trying to appropriate it. As Clifford Geertz writes,

> The truth of the doctrine of cultural (or historical – it is the same thing) relativism is that we can never apprehend another people's or another period's imagination neatly, as though it were our own. The falsity of it is that we can never apprehend it at all. We can apprehend it well enough, at least as well as we apprehend anything else not properly ours; but we do so not by looking behind the interfering glosses that connect us to it, but through them.[23]

Australians are now living in a place in which Indigenous Australian peoples are sovereign, but whose sovereignty has yet to be fully recognised. As Greer suggests, the distance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples has been created to counteract the anxiety and fear of being dispossessed of what was never ours in the first place. In the political discourses on Indigenous peoples, the boundaries of differentiation are drawn to exclude or limit the spaces of complicity. The distinction between the national 'us' and the foreign 'them' is marked up by the recourse to stereotypical constructions. However, these constricted identities are positioned in an oppositional framework to minimize the possibilities for mutual recognition. What further divides Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is the non-recognition of reciprocal difference. As Homi Bhabha writes, to regard the "politics of difference" as obsolescent is to forget that those who experience the partial incipient conditions of global life with the greatest intensity and inequity are minorities, who have always been denationalised subjects and whose "free attempt of recognition" is denied in the name of a majoritarian normalisation or neutralisation of "difference",

> At its best, I believe, the politics of difference lives on to rethink the minority not as an identity but as a process of affiliation ... that eschews sovereignty and sees its own selfhood and interests

[23] Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983) 44.

> as partial and incipient in relation to the other's presence. This form of minoritarian identification converts the liminal condition of the minority – always partially denationalized – into a new kind of strength based on the solidarity of the partial collectivity rather than the sovereign mastery.[24]

Hence, while 'difference' is necessary for any process of individual becoming, it is denied to some and easily dismissed by those who possess it. The way power locates, defines and maps human behaviour still plots out the possible ranges of behaving and being. Therefore, to continue to pose the questions of difference and subject positioning is to rethink 'identity' as no longer a pre-established position or a uniform entity, but as an agency that gains its power in unexpected performances and encounters. The intermingling of displacement and going home brought to literary texts by the "pain of unbelonging" has inevitably inscribed in the settlers' writing the desire for a recuperation of "place" as a site where traces of their history exist. Yet, what comes out in the collection *The Pain of Unbelonging,* and is missing in Greer's *Whitefella Jump Up*, is that while the encounter with the powerful sensibilities of Indigenous Australian writers might come at the expense of our inward ease, we might find home in the possibility of establishing relations of solidarity across borders. We may find a force unintended by global and national powers in their writing, which makes consumption transformative, and their writing strategic and subversive. The nation-state's claim of "owning" its imaginary boundaries is not unsettled by our dwelling in self-reflection or dialectic appropriations of Aboriginality but by multiple agencies intervening in literary exchanges. Once we enter these exchanges, once we accept their gift, it is impossible to see ourselves and the place in which we live as untainted by the memory of what neo-colonial powers seek to distance (149). As Kobena Mercer writes,

[24] Homi Bhabha, "Statement for the Critical Inquiry Board Statement", *Critical Inquiry* 30.2 (Winter 2003-4), available online: www.uchicago.edu/research/jnl-crit-inq/issues/current/30n2.Bhabha.htm.

> If the "responsibility of the artist" lies in the quality of his or her response to what calls for thinking, criticism contributes to the conversation not by imposing the closure of its own conceptual system, but by entering into a critical, dialogical, relationship with the voices that do the calling. Here, embattled by the winter winds across our common home, the challenge of the changing same invites us to keep the conversation going throughout the contested terrain we share in common.[25]

[25] Kobena Mercer, "Black Art and the Burden of Representation", in *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 258

REVIEWS

Helen Tiffin, ed., *Five Emus to the King of Siam. Environment and Empire* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2007), 260 + vii pp.

Reviewed by Marie-Hélène Laforest

Environmental activists have long been sounding the alarms over the disastrous effects of men's inconsiderate exploitation of nature and today they are joined by many other voices, all clamouring for action on the part of governments worldwide. To the concern of scientists and, alas, too few politicians, scholars in the humanities have also added their pleas, giving rise to new disciplines like ecohistory, ecofeminism and ecocriticism.

As the names indicate, these are interdisciplinary fields, very much like postcolonial studies, the editor Helen Tiffin's main research area. She indeed draws a number of parallels between the two in her introduction to *Five Emus to the King of Siam*. By becoming ecocritics, scholars can deal with questions like the relation between 'nature' and 'culture', strategies for conquest, imposition of knowledges, theories of indigeneity and diaspora, as well as issues of representation in more interconnected ways; it would be another means of pursuing, in Edward Said's terms, the worldliness of literature.

The focus of the volume is defined at the outset: it wants to consider the "unbalanced environmental 'exchange' within the context of British imperial power and colonial rule, as well as charting some contemporary environmental legacies of those (still) inequitable imports and exports, transportations and transmutations" (xvii-xviii). In this light, although the fourteen essays included have an Australian and Pacific matrix, attention is extended to the

Caribbean (Claudia Brandenstein), India (Meenaskshi Sharma) and Canada (Carrie Dawson). Unfortunately the focus on British imperialism and the few occasional references to France do not allow one to get a sense of the competition between France and England which must have had some weight in the havoc produced in the ecoscapes of the colonies.

Attention is drawn time and again to the settler colonies where, in the authors' view, destruction of the environment was even more dramatic than in colonies of exploitation (later on in the volume a similar claim is made for island spaces). In Australia, lack of respect for indigenous cultures led to the radical substitution of traditional agricultural or pastoral practices. Sheep farming, which involved the transport of animals, plants and people, is taken as emblematic since, as Leigh Dale demonstrates in the opening essay, it led to a "widespsread ecosystem change". But interestingly enough, through a process of representation, this fateful modification could be disconnected from settler agency and attributed to the sheep. Empire was after all as much about representation as anything else, thus Andrew Mc Cann's and Gillian Whitlock's essays which consider the ethical implications of representational practices are of great interest.

Towards the end of the book comes the state of the art by Sue O'Brien. She traces the birth of ecocriticism – also called green cultural studies – to a 1978 article by William Rueckers who first proposed to study literature and literary criticism in the context of ecology. Since then, this serious, complex and challenging undertaking appears to have taken foot solely in the Anglo-Saxon world. It is to be expected, however, that it will gather momentum and that the environment will be added to race, class, and gender which have become the staple paradigms of postcolonial literary studies.

Reconfiguration of the colonies' landscape, which by itself caused considerable damage especially to the sensitive ecosystems of islands – as Ruth Blair explains – implied much more than a scenic change. While Britain's interest abroad expanded and was consolidated in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, massive interventions on the flora was the means to export the ideas of progress, harmony, and beauty – with the consequent loss of

cultural identity for the local peoples. Wilderness, the bush were domesticated and even edenic islands were transformed into the more familiar image of European spaces – as Anna Johnston shows in the case of the South Pacific islands. Missionaries associated their paradise-like environment with 'wantonness' and proceeded to introduce European-style housing to combat it. Non-European settings were in any case viewed as antitheses of civilization and of moral order, a notion that has its roots in Enlightenment thought through the association between humans, climates, and landscape.

This idea returns in Chris Tiffin's article, from which the title of the volume is taken, when acclimatisation societies proliferated and in 1865 the Queensland Acclimatisation Society sent "two kangaroos to the Royal Zoological Society in London, two scrub turkeys to New Caledonia … and five emus to the King of Siam" (165). This exchange is indicative of the massive redistribution of plants and animals which took place in the mid nineteenth century. Justified by Biblical mythology, Europeans set out to "replenish the earth" by sending species from one part of the globe to another, hybridising and domesticating them. It was not long before the principle of acclimatisation of plants and non-human animals was also applied to humans, adding a dash of Darwinism to it; thus it was understood that centuries of exposure to inclement territories and struggle against savage natives had "strengthened the British organism" (174) and through the same logic rendered 'natives' genetically inferior.

One of the many fascinating aspects of the contributions is the nineteenth century shift in the perception of nature. The authors illustrate contradictory responses to the environment as Europeans moved from notions of the picturesque and the sublime to focus on the uses to which the land could be put in order to better profit from it. Such is the case of James Anthony Froude's and Anthony Trollope's descriptions of the Caribbean in the wake of the collapse of the sugar industry. Both observers deconstruct the romantic image of the previous century's traveller: in their eyes, beauty is superseded by utility and the lavish mountains on Dominica, for instance, are crying out to British settlers to come and develop them.

Anthropocentrism is targeted as the great culprit in the destruction

of both the environment and 'other humans', an attitude which the editor sees as inseparable from Eurocentrism. There is no doubt that European greed irredeemably destroyed many a landscape, but so have older "native" methods of farming, which, instead, seem to be idealized by some of the contributors. Moreover, establishing such a direct connection between anthropocentrism and Eurocentrism could let populations outside of Europe off the hook by keeping them in an idyllic relationship with their environment and other animals. Also, there are affirmations contained in the volume which appear unconvincing: in trying to explain the European conquerors' actions, one finds that these "settler-invaders were not, from their perspectives, murdering the inhabitants and destroying indigenous ecosystems; they were rendering their 'new' land 'fruitful'" (xxii). Assertions like these do not hold true before many of the texts produced, for instance, during and after the conquest of the Americas.

Nevertheless one can concede that what certainly struck the imperialist Britons was the speed at which the natural landscapes were disappearing – unlike what had happened in their own lands. This seems to have been contemporaneous with the recognition of the value of indigenous cultures by some Europeans. Thus the development of national park projects which are cited in the volume as a positive example of environmental conservation which began precisely in the colonies. Unfortunately in quoting Richard Grove's work which sustains this thesis, no mention is made of the fate of the people who had inhabited or drawn their sustenance from these territories before they were destined as game parks or protected areas.

The persistence of colonial relations and imperial attitudes in today's world are analyzed in two of the essays: one by Robert Dixon whose study of interference in the internal affairs of the Republic of Bougainville (200,000 inhabitants) in the South Pacific is paradigmatic of neo-colonial exploitation of independent nation-states. Whereas attention is paid to the potentially harmful effects of contemporary forms of tourism by Tiffin herself and by Jo Robertson, ecotourism, too, is taken to task. In many cases, as Helen Gilbert describes them, these are pseudo-ecological trips, but at the same time they are perhaps a sign of the local populations'

sensitization to the dangers implicit in their formerly reckless profiteering of nature. In the difficult balancing act which poverty and demographic pressures put on most of the earth's population, ecotourism could, despite its limits, be considered a step forward.

Five Emus to the King of Siam contains many enjoyable pieces and a wealth of biographical references for scholars interested in learning more about the field. One is left with a dual message: firstly, that it is the human species' dominance, the "natural prioritazation of humans" which must be questioned and, of course, acted upon and secondly, that ecocriticism is a great occasion for postcolonial scholars to expand and implement their ethical project.

Judith Lütge Coullie and J. U. Jacobs, eds., *a.k.a Breyten Breytenbach. Critical Approaches to His Writings and Paintings* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004), 336 pp.

Reviewed by Jane Wilkinson

"Woordword" is the title chosen by Breyten Breytenbach for his exhibition of paintings, which opened in Cape Town in 1999. An Afrikaans term meaning 'becoming word', this title shows how interwoven word and image are in his production and in his vision of the creative process, as several of the essayists argue in this volume. Yet only three of the 14 essays engage primarily with Breytenbach's paintings. Moreover, apart from the reproductions on the front and back cover of the book the rest – eight in all – are disappointingly in black and white. But for a writer who "explores the inherent instability of the sign, be that sign pictorial, linguistic, or even the material body" (xii) and who describes himself as a "footloose painter of metaphors and scribbler of colours" (249), distinctions between different art forms and genres are perhaps misleading. The author's constant shifts in identity – an "identity-in-transit" (240), a fluid "point of passage through which the images and perceptions move" (227-8) – implicate the vehicles of his creativity, caught in an endless, metamorphic flow.

Marilet Sienaert's "The I of the Beholder: Identity and Place in

the Art and Writing" focuses on the importance of movement and transformation in Breytenbach's creative practice and his constant and increasing engagement with questions of place and identity (224). Reading his poetry and painting through the "prism of shifting identity and location", she recalls how the author himself has defined both identity and the creative process "in terms of the ability to renew oneself and to 'keep moving'" (225). After touching on the pervasive presence of themes of travel and nomadism in his work, Sienaert relates Breytenbach's emphasis on transformation to an intermingling of the Buddhist principle of "constant arising and ceasing" with the postmodernist vision of the shifting I (226-7). Probing into the identity-in-transformation depicted in his self-portraits – but for Breytenbach all painting (and writing) is self-portraiture – she analyses the subject-object, perceiver-perceived relations that emerge, showing how the expression of self/selves is constituted through a problematic, creatively contradictory interaction with language and landscape (227-8, 230). Through a close reading of a poem ("come thaw") and of a self-portrait (on the cover of *Painting the Eye*), Sienaert illustrates the author's images of transformation. In the poem, "the frozen landscape thaws and shifts to become a poem", recalling Breytenbach's definition of the Surrealist "cadavre exquis" as a "syntax of motion" (232-3) and suggesting relations to Kristeva's notion of the semiotic (235). The interplay of I and eye(s), I and other, eyes and/in paintbrush and palette in the self-portrait focus attention on the process of both painting and viewing, offering a pragmatics of creation. The viewer-reader is invited to participate in the process of 'making' by 'moving', thus contributing to the constitution of "an ideal metaphoric space in which tranformation can take place" (240).

A biographical "frame of sorts" is provided by the editors' introduction. By exploring the contradictory visual presentations of the author on the front and back covers to the Faber edition of one of Breytenbach's autobiographical works, Lütge Coullie and Jacobs engage with the theoretical issues raised by biographical projects in general and by the analytical project of their volume. Biographical issues are also broached in the opening essay, in which Louise Viljoen analyses the father/son relation in four of

Breytenbach's early poems, presented both in English and in Afrikaans (this is another important feature of the volume, allowing us to read several hitherto untranslated works, accompanied by the original versions). In each poem she traces a different father figure: biological, poetic, divine, political, although there are also frequent interrelations both between the father figures themselves and the son's reactions to them. The relations tend to determine "in a particular way the poet's complex and shifting subjectivity by the way they influence the position he takes with regard to language and representation" (2). In all four cases, Viljoen notes, the author experiences the father "in terms of silence and absence" (33).

Ampie Coetzee's study of "Poetry as the Presentation of a Representation" focuses on the author's subversive, self-reflexive play with metaphors, analysing the poetics embedded in his verse (an aspect also confronted in Susan Saayman's study of the interplay between visual image and verbal text in the metamorphic figure of the butterfly). Lisbé Smuts probes into other poems in "'I is a Complex Place': Transforming and Disseminating the Subject in Poetry", where she discusses the self-reflexive processes of transformation at work in Breytenbach's poems in dialogue with texts by Derrida, Kristeva, Barthes and Lacan. Breytenbach's use of the mirror and the mirror-image is discussed in nearly all the essays in this volume. J.M. Coetzee concentrates on "the Reader in the Mirror". Through his exploration of the "hidden voices *against* which Breytenbach speaks" (84), particularly in his prison writings, Coetzee analyses and criticizes Breytenbach's aporetic positionings and "interchange[s] between self and other" (88). Both prison writing and mirror images are also central to Erhard Reckwitz's "Broken Mirror: The Prison Memoirs", which I found particularly interesting in its approach to the question of time and temporality. Reckwitz shows how concentration on the inner life leads to a suspension of the 'natural' order of time, with "an associative, proliferating écriture [as] the only adequate mode of textualisation" (109). A "writing in circles", in short, that invokes a "reading in circles" entangling the reader too in a potentially endless "chase down the chasms of the unconscious" (111).

Breytenbach's prison writing offers the possibility to link

his work to that of other African writers. For Ileana Dimitriu, *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*, together with Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died* are "carnivalesque rituals of renewal", a useful prelude to J.U. Jacobs's study of the relations between Breytenbach's work and his idea of Africa. Jacobs examines his "ancestral and nomadic art of memory, masking and metamorphosis", tracing the presence and evolution of the poet's Africa from work composed in the late 60s and the 70s to books and lectures belonging to the 90s. Although Breytenbach's African identity/ies has evolved in time, his vision of Africa as "the continent where the reality of metamorphosis is paramount" (162) is central to all his work and to his conception of creativity. Africa is a place where "[w]ords have a magic dimension" and can "cast a spell, and physically take on shape through structure – a reference field, a history, finally a reality" (175). Jacobs concentrates most particularly on *Memory of Snow and of Dust*, in which the author attempts a "textual re-incorporation of South Africa into Africa" (163), and *Return to Paradise*, reading both as nomadic, rhizomatic works. Echoes of nomadology are also present in the Fernando Pessoa lectures which Breytenbach delivered at the University of Natal in Durban in 1996 and in his notion of a "Middle World", whose inhabitants "have a fascination for metamorphosis, and [whose] consciousness is characterized by multiplicity, not duality. By moving and making, Breytenbach says, 'the flowing identity is reshaped by confrontation and change … the perspectives shift, you bring something more to the landscape, your relativity is a pollutant, you rewrite the world" (173).

Breytenbach's critical writing is addressed by Jacobs's co-editor, Judith Lütge Coullie, in a "free-ranging" guide that takes the form of a semiserious ABC. The guide permits a revisitation of some of the themes and keywords already singled out in previous essays, integrated with others, some of which are tantalizingly and self-reflexively short as, for example, "l is for literature: 'a *South African literature* in fact doesn't exist'". It also marks the transition from the essays dealing more specifically with poetry to those that pay more attention to Breytenbach's painting (Sienaert, Sandra Saayman, Breytenbach interviewed by Sienaert), his engagement

with the "politics of memory" and the TRC experience in *Dog Heart* (Tim Trengrove Jones), his treatment of gender (Andries Visagie) and his theatrical production (Louise Viljoen).

Visagie locates Breytenbach's constructions of "the masculine subject" within his "complex, paradoxical view of the self that appears and disappears within the never-ending process of interpenetration between existence and non-existence" (296). His essay provides a useful extension and rethinking of Coullie's earlier considerations on the "glaring (and outmoded) absence of women" in the author's critical writing (216-7), in no way justifying the absence, but thinking it through in relation to Breytenbach's refusal of "any attempt to totalize subjectivity". Visagie looks into the gender implications of the author's treatment of figures such as Isis and the Khoisan trickster god, Kaggen, and of themes such as homophobia and death. Although there is undoubtedly an evolution in his engagements with gender, particularly in the section of *Dog Heart* addressed to his daughter, Visagie points to the contradictions that continue to emerge. "The open-ended and value-free nature of a fluid and contingent masculinity makes it vulnerable to reappropriation by the still reverberating historical discourse of violent masculinity" (325), even if, as Visagie concludes, the author "presents the reader with a complex view of masculinity which is not indifferent to a renegotiation of its premises. Breytenbach's male subject, in his recalcitrant affiliation with patriarchy, is striving to achieve a masculinity which will not be shackled to violence and repression" (325).

In conclusion, my only reproach after reading this intensely stimulating volume, apart from the rather scanty presence of reproductions of Breytenbach's artworks, is for the lack of a general bibliography and of an index of names and subjects, which would have been particularly useful in tracing the interweavings of concepts and references between one essay and another as well as in the author's manifold production. But the wealth of bibliographical references – also to the catalogues of Breytenbach's exhibitions, both in South Africa and abroad – prod the reader her/himself to "move on", beyond and through and then back again to *a.k.a Breyten Breytenbach*.

Itala Vivan, ed., *Corpi liberati in cerca di storia, di storie. Il Nuovo Sudafrica dieci anni dopo l'apartheid* (Milano: Baldini Castoldi Dalai, 2005), 446 pp.

Reviewed by Jane Wilkinson

Ten years after the end of the apartheid regime, the "new South Africa" continues to be a country in search of stories and histories. Itala Vivan's latest collection of essays by South African, British and Italian scholars is in many ways a sequel to *Il Nuovo Sudafrica dalle strettoie dell'apartheid alle complessità della democrazia* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1996). Not only does it update the information provided in the previous volume, but it extends the range of issues that are confronted, using the corporeal and narrative motifs of its title to probe into the various aspects of the cultural production of the country. *Corpi liberati in cerca di storia, di storie* is divided into two parts, "State and Society" – with essays by Kader Asmal, Jo Beall, Thomas W. Bennett, Mike Terry, Gabriella Venturini, Cristiana Fiammingo and Alan Hirsch – and "History and Culture" – with essays by Itala Vivan, Giampaolo Calchi Novati, Marcello Flores, Roberto Pedretti, Tiziana Cauli, Andries W. Oliphant, Lucien Legrange and Martin Botha. The essays are preceded by a brief introduction, an updating of the chronology prepared by Roberto Pedretti and Cristiana Fiamingo for *Il Nuovo Sudafrica*, and a map of present-day South Africa. The book ends with an extremely useful bibliography, completed by indications of the major periodicals, documents and websites available for further study.

Vivan concludes her brief introduction by drawing attention to the images donated by the South African artist Cecil Skotness, which introduce the different sections of her book. Dating back respectively to 1956, 1983 and 1998, they provide a visual comment on South Africa's fragmented social body and its laborious coming together, marked by the scars and stitchery of its painful past – the process alluded to or analysed in all the essays. The recomposition of the country's "liberated bodies" is effected not only by political, economic, juridical and social means (engaged with more directly in the first part of the collection), but also and especially through culture.

This is demonstrated most evidently in the essays by Vivan and Oliphant, which offer a "new anatomy" of South African literature and its mutant bodies. Oliphant observes how in post-apartheid South Africa – a term that has been much contested, but which is difficult to substitute – the opening of the doors of what Fanon called the biggest prison in the world has allowed a recomposition of the country's multilingual body. Not only has the official status already accorded to Afrikaans and English been extended to nine African languages, but others too – of African, Asian and European origin – have been recognized as languages of South Africa with a right to being protected and developed.

This has meant a further recomposition: that of the nation's literary body. Literatures nearly always considered in the past to be following a 'separate development' of their own are now seen as participating in a common process of interweaving and influence. A process that is furthered by a massive programme of translation between the different languages and by the policies of new and old publishers and presses. But there is also another form of cultural recomposition in progress. Literary works show a tendency to reflect back on the past, remapping or remembering it as the basis for a future intended to include the whole of the national body, with its own multiple and variegated bodies, languages, memories and histories. The experience of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, addressed directly in essays by Flores and Pedretti, and indirectly in nearly all the other contributions, is just the most evident example of a wide-ranging search for history, histories and stories. As in the TRC, the histories interrogated and renegotiated are both oral and written, personal and collective – an evident example is the case of the concealed but not quite cancelled stories of the slaves and their descendents reconstructed in writings by Zoe Wicomb and Achmat Dangor, who invent – in the sense both of finding and creating – other, 'coloured' tesserae to add to the South African mosaic.

Within the field of historical writing proper, there is a reinforcement of the impulse to probe into and rewrite the historiography and mythography of the nation (see for example Calchi Novati's revisiting of the stories, interpretations and reinterpretations of the Anglo-Boer war forced into its latest reconfiguration as a South Af-

rican, national War). But historiography itself tends more and more to take on other forms, adopt other means of expression and communication such as exhibitions, museums, monuments and public holidays and feast-days, shifting the perspective from which they are viewed and used. Calchi Novati recalls Nigel Worden's discussion in Vivan's previous collection of how December 16, commemorating the Day of the Vow and the 1838 battle at Bloodriver, has become the Day of Reconciliation; March 21, the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, Human Rights Day; June 16, commemorating the Soweto revolt of 1975, Youth Day. The naming of the new Feast Days is dictated by the will both to commemorate and to unify. Vivan recalls the 1996 exhibition "Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of Bushmen", devoted to San culture and its relations with South African history, and the heated discussions it gave rise to. She then broaches the issue of the destiny of the monuments conceived in the apartheid era as part of the government's cultural and political machinery and that have come to incarnate the ideals and history of apartheid. Instead of being removed, the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria and the Monument to the Taal (language in Afrikaans and therefore also Afrikaans language) in Paarl are embraced as part of a unified national history, flanked by new monuments, museums and architectural structures that will act as text-books for the public of the future: the Constitutional Court of Johannesburg, the Museum of Apartheid, the Monument to South African Women, the Memorial to Steve Biko. As Pedretti comments, "monuments, museums, sites of memory, moments and days of commemoration and recall accompany economic and social policies that cannot prescind from the ineluctable need to treat the wounds apartheid has inflicted on the social body" (280).

Among the many visual attempts to interrogate the past, I would add the example of the District Six Museum in Cape Town. After the forced removals of its inhabitants and its violent rasing to the ground, District Six had survived in the South African and not only South African imaginary largely thanks to the stories of Richard Rive and Achmat Dangor. Today, the Museum provides further spaces of survival, calling on its visitors to contribute to the building of community memory by inscribing signatures and comments on a calico memory cloth, and adding their names and

descriptions and stories about their houses to the laminated street map that covers the floor. Other visual interrogations of the past and of its representation in South African history paintings include Penny Siopis's "Piling Wreckage Upon Wreckage" or "Patience on a Monument 'A History Painting'" produced, before the end of apartheid, in the late '80s, or Cyril Coetzee's revisiting of the myth of Adamastor, mediated by André Brink's 1993 novel, *The Fall of Adamastor*, in his vast *T'kama-Adamastor* painting commissioned for the William Cullen Library in 1996 and unveiled two years later. In what will hopefully be her third collection of essays Vivan will undoubtedly be integrating her previous volumes with studies of the contributions by South Africa's visual artists to the reappraisal and representation of their country's past.

The retrospective turn discussed in *Corpi liberati* is also to figures from the past rehabilitated after centuries of misprision and scorn. In 2002 the "Hottentot Venus", Saartjie Baartman, was finally buried in her home country. Vivan recalls how for Wicomb it is no longer possible today to write a history of South Africa without citing Baartman. Other 'revenants' include Zakes Mda's Nongqawuse, but also Eva-Krotoa whose haunting returns, though perhaps less well known, are almost as frequent as those of Baartman. On the back cover of the Italian edition of *Imaginings of Sand*, André Brink recalls how he felt the need after the 1994 elections to revisit the silences of the past and the only way to do it was by adopting a woman's voice. Another return is to the oral poetry of the San transcribed and translated more than a century ago, lost in dusty volumes on library shelves, apart from occasional examples included in anthologies. In 2004, the Afrikaans poet, Antjie Krog, published a new translation of the poems collected over a century ago by Bleek and Lloyd – and it is fitting that Krog is also the author of *Country of My Skull*, in which she gathers together, meditates and reelaborates the testimonies to the TRC she had listened to as radio reporter for the South African Broadcasting Corporation.

Pedretti recalls the stress laid by the TRC "on the value of stories and individual narratives listened to in a public space that virtually overlapped with the nation itself" – a "ritual, scenic space". Flores rightly notes how the "choice to privilege truth over justice" has

meant giving value to "lived experience, introjected perception, the truth that hinges on individual narrations and the myths that are hidden in the recesses of community memory". The TRC has more to do with the future than with the past, as Pedretti observes, but the same could be said for most of the issues and the works referred to in this volume.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Brad Butler and Karen Mizra, eds., *Cinema of Prayoga. Indian Experimental Film and Video 1913-2006* (London: no.w.here, 2006).

Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim, eds.; *Remapping World Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics in Film* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006)

Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: the Key Concepts (Routledge Key Guides)* (London: Routledge, 2006)

Shohini Chaudhuri, *Contemporary World Cinema: Europe, the Middle East, East Asia and South Aisia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006)

Anke Bartels and Dirk Wiemann, eds., *Global Fragments. (Dis)orientation in the New World Order* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007)

Merete Falck Borch et al., eds., *Bodies and Voices. The Force-Field of Representation and Discourse in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007)

SUMMARIES

Bill Ashcroft

The Post-Washington Consensus: Post-colonial Globalization

The 'cultural turn' in globalization studies around the end of the twentieth century came from the influence of the humanities and specifically from post-colonial studies, which developed a language for questioning the imperial cartography that has defined global relations since the early modern period. Now the change occurring in global economics may best be understood by cultural discourse. The 'Washington Consensus', an outline of the principles of global economic control, is now resisted and potentially transformed by a 'post-Washington consensus', a cultural rather than simply an economic formation. More specifically, the entry of two giant players into the global scene, India and China, may best be understood by cultural discourse, rather than economic analysis.

Alessandra De Angelis

Noh Masks, Weaving Metaphors and Gender Stereotypes in Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*

This essay aims at unveiling how gender stereotypes work in Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood,* through the analysis of the film's visual icons, particularly Noh masks. It seeks to show how the use of Noh devices in this Samurai-style remaking of *Macbeth* helps in constructing the image of a cruel, icy Lady Macbeth/Lady Asaji, who jeopardises the strict linearity and morality of the feudal Japanese culture in which she is trapped. Mimicking the movements of a wicked snake, and made up as an *Onnagata*, Asaji is the most impressive visual icon of the film, portrayed as an elusive and deceptive figure. Only at the end of the film, when she disappears from the set, can events follow their codified path, and order be re-established. The spatial and visual arrangement of Asaji's character reveals sexist prejudice. As an "abject disrupter" who confounds men and their moral codes, she must be erased.

Bianca Del Villano

The Gothic Detective in William Hjortsberg's *Falling Angel*

William Hjortsberg's *Falling Angel* (1978) presents a combination of different genres. It opens as a detective story but soon develops into Gothic romance, providing a critique and re-interpretation of both genres. It also reflects a parallel twist in the protagonist's identity, swallowed by a spiral of doubt about himself and his intimate beliefs. Set in New York in the 1950s, the novel centres in particular on the figure of Harry Angel, a hard-boiled private eye suffering from amnesia and shell-shock. His search for Johnny Favorite turns into a desperate search for his own lost identity. His mental disorders finally find a 'Gothic' explanation, suggesting a reflection on the questions of subjectivity and alterity. This article analyses the 'case' of Harry Angel, discussing at the same time the complex genre pattern proposed by the author.

Celeste Ianniciello

***The Satanic Verses* as a 'Text-in-Motion'**

Starting from Appadurai's theory of globalization and his definition of Salman Rushdie's novel as a "text-in-motion" between different places and cultures, this essay seeks to draw a parallel between the polymorphous configuration of the globalized world and the stories of migration and transformation narrated in *The Satanic Verses*. The encounter with cultural difference, experienced both by the protagonists of the novel and by the protagonists of the so-called "Rushdie affair", are analyzed as traumas of deterritorialization caused by the unpredictable and sometimes dangerous disjunction between global flows of people, images and ideas. Particular attention is paid to the way the novel deals with hybridization or cultural translation stemming from migration and the modern necessity of such cultural blasphemies.

Cristina Nisco

Corpo-realities: the Space of Writing in Lucinda Roy's *Lady Moses*

This paper focuses on the interrelation between bodies and spaces in the construction and writing of identities in *Lady Moses* (1998), a novel by the English writer of Caribbean origins Lucinda Roy. It shows how a black diasporic female identity emerges from its relationship to different locations – geographical as well as of the mind and of desire. The novel is divided into three sections – London, the New World and Lunama – which also represent three different steps in the transnational journey leading to the protagonist's racial and gender self-awareness. In travelling between UK, America and Africa, space is variously but constantly written on the protagonist's body, just as her body writes and modifies – 'corporealizes' – space. A new idea of writing is implied: words are no longer linear signs, but assume a tridimensional spatiality, the corporeity of a physical sign.

Katherine E. Russo

"Post Me to the Prime Minister": Property, Language and Indigenous/non-Indigenous Relations in the Australian Nation

The power of the English language in shaping ideas of Australian national culture and citizenship has been pervasive. Consequently, the 'use' of the English language has been variously questioned by Indigenous Australian peoples. The codification of the 'correct' and 'appropriate' use of the English language has naturalised and legitimised colonial claims of exclusive 'property' over the language defining the boundaries set to exclude/include peoples in Australia's "imagined community". However, the neo/colonial 'possessive investment' in the representation of English as a non-Indigenous property is disrupted by the process of 'appropriation', through which writers such as Romaine Moreton diversely disrupt neo/colonial claims of property, opening up endless possibilities for the roles English language users can play, and for how the importance of this use is viewed by others.

Itala Vivan

A Writer In-between Worlds:
M.G. Vassanji Interviewed by Itala Vivan in Zanzibar

Itala Vivan meets the Indo-African-Canadian novelist M.G. Vassanji in Zanzibar, a place that leads both of them to look back at the cultural history of East Africa, Vassanji's place of origin. The writer talks about his writing life and the role of memory in his fiction, linking his Indian and African past with the present of the African continent he is now visiting. Both interlocutors are journeying, and this situation gives their conversation a special flavour of fleeting intimacy as if their lives were suspended in time and space, allowing them to observe things from a distance, in serenity yet with a sort of abandonment.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Bill Ashcroft is a founding exponent of post-colonial theory. Co-author of *The Empire Writes Back,* he has published numerous articles and over twelve books including *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, *The Gimbals of Unease: the Poetry of Francis Webb*, *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies*, *Edward Said: the Paradox of Identity*, *Post-colonial Transformation*, *On Post-colonial Futures*.

Alessandra De Angelis is a PhD student in "Cultural and Postcolonial Studies of the Anglophone World" at the University of Naples "L'Orientale". She is working on Post-Apartheid South Africa, particularly on representations/narrations of the figure of Krotöa, a sixteenth-century Khoikhoi woman who has become a very popular emblem of the history of colonization at the Cape.

Bianca Del Villano holds a PhD from the University of Turin and is now working now as postdoctoral fellow at the University of Naples "L'Orientale". Her main interests include the contemporary novel in English and Shakespearian criticism. She is the author of *Ghostly Alterities. Spectrality and Contemporary Literatures in English* (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2007).

Celeste Ianniciello is a PhD student in "Cultural and Postcolonial Studies of the Anglophone World" at the University of Naples "L'Orientale". She is working on the relation between I/eye and place, focus and locus in female migrant subjectivity. In particular, she is concerned with the visual (auto)biography of female artists from Middle-Eastern and Mediterranean countries.

Maria Cristina Nisco holds a PhD in "Cultural and Postcolonial Studies" of the Anglophone World" at the University of Naples "L'Orientale". She works on representations of the black female body as seen through literary and visual works. Her thesis concentrates particularly on the practices of re-signification that derive from working with and on the black female body and that question the politics of representation defining the image and the corporeity of black women.

Katherine E. Russo holds a PhD from the University of New South Wales, Sydney, and teaches at the University of Naples "L'Orientale".

Her research focuses on Australian and Mediterranean migrant cultures, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian strategies of appropriation, intercultural practices such as editorial relations and cross-cultural exhibitions. Her recent publications include *ContamiNATIONS*, a special issue of *New Literatures Review,* and, as co-author, *Middle Passages: English for Cultural and Postcolonial Studies*.

Itala Vivan obtained her first degree in Comparative Literature and then specialized for the PhD at Rutgers University where she went on a Fulbright scholarship. She has taught at the universities of Bari, Udine, Verona and Milan and also at Rutgers and Columbia in the US. She writes in the field of comparative and later postcolonial and cultural studies. Her first book was *Caccia alle streghe nell'America puritana* (Rizzoli 1972), and her latest *Corpi liberati in cerca di storia, di storie: il nuovo Sudafrica dieci anni dopo l'apartheid* (Baldini Castoldi Dalai 2004). Vivan has also been active in the world of publishing, and from 1987 to 1995 edited the first series of classics of African and Caribbean fiction translated in Italian.

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Frequently cited references may be included in the text by an abbreviation (in parentheses, followed by page number). Full title publication details and indication in parentheses of the abbreviation to be used for it thereafter must be supplied in a note at the first mention.

Examples:

Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), 19.

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Jean Louis Comolli, "Machines of the Visible", in Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath, eds., *The Cinematic Apparatus* (London: Macmillan, 1980), 156-183.

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Harold Williams, ed., *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963-65), vol. III, 330.

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Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979-1985), 25.

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