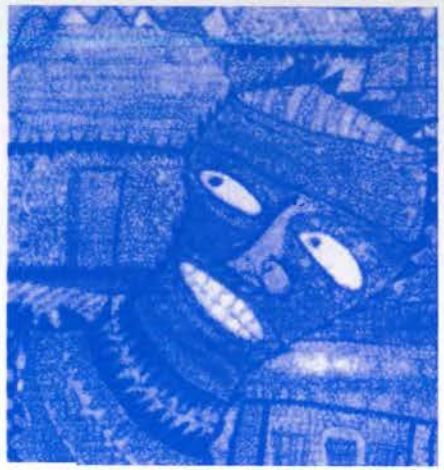
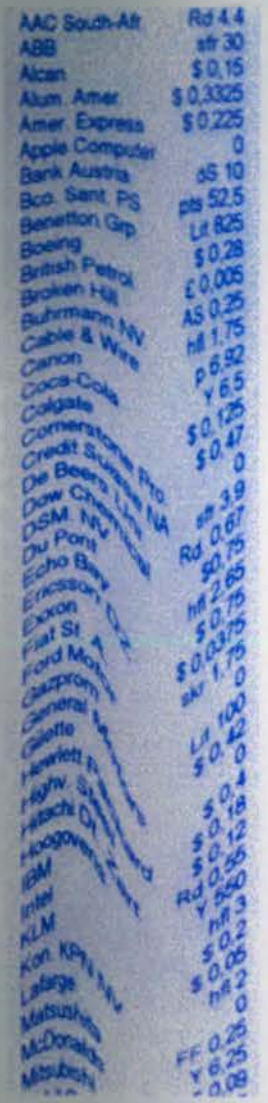


ISSN 0943–738X

ACOLIT Special Issue 3 (1998) • Postcolonial Theory & the Emergence of a Global Society

ACOLIT Special Issue No. 3



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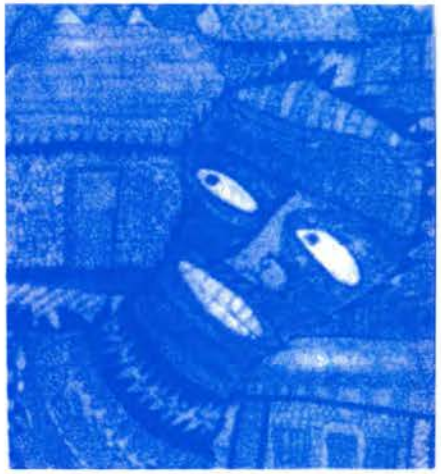

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Postcolonial Theory and the Emergence of a Global Society

Edited by
Gordon Collier
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Frankfurt am Main
1998

Impressum:

ACOLIT is a publication of the German Association for the Study of the New Literatures in English (ASNEL)

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ISSN 0943–738X

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Preface

The editors of this volume of essays, statements and points of discussion raised in two symposia on postcolonial theory are happy to publish these proceedings – no doubt somewhat belatedly – as the third special issue of ACOLIT.

The two events took place at the universities of Frankfurt (in the winter term of 1994) and Giessen (in the following summer term of 1995); these formed part of a research project, initiated and financed by the Ministry of Arts and Sciences of the State of Hesse, entitled "The Emergence of a Global Society." Colleagues from both departments of English had successfully applied for funding their research project "Postcolonial Literature," which, owing to the varying interests involved, was subsequently pursued from different angles. The Frankfurt group, Dieter Riemenschneider, Frank Schulze–Engler and Johannes Fischer, worked on postcolonial literary theory and minority literary discourse. In Giessen, Lothar Bredella was concerned with intercultural mediation and the reception of literary texts, Herbert Grabes with aesthetic theory, and Gordon Collier with Caribbean literature. Such a subdivision was not only considered plausible and appropriate against the background of the differing research interests of each of us, but was also meant to indicate the breadth and scope of postcolonial literature generally. At the same time, this set-up informed the structure of the two symposia, which had been planned from the outset.

We agreed to focus on two themes – "Postcolonial Theory" at the Frankfurt symposium, and "Caribbean Literature" in Giessen – and to organize them both along different lines. To present our project in public and to attract the attention of other scholars by opening the door, as it were, the Frankfurt group invited no less a specialist in postcolonial theory than Homi Bhabha, who presented his keynote lecture on "Anxious Nations – Nervous States." Additionally, colleagues from a number of German universities were requested to make brief statements related to the theme of the symposium and to share in discussion with Bhabha. "Caribbean Literature," the Giessen theme, was dealt with differently. After Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak had given her lecture (which was not available in written form), three guest

speakers – Arun Mukherjee, Rhonda Cobham, and Wilson Harris – gave their papers, which were followed by a general discussion.

The discontinuation by the Ministry of the overall project "The Emergence of a Global Society" just two years after its initiation dashed all hopes for further meetings on the other themes mentioned above, as well as slowing appreciably research that had been initiated under this umbrella. Thus a certain overall looseness does perhaps characterize the arrangement of the proceedings of the two symposia in the present volume. We hope that they will be related to, and judged against, the background sketched out here. The editing involved in the transcription of oral contributions has endeavoured to reflect the workshop spirit of the two gatherings.

We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Ministry for having enabled us to invite eminent guest speakers from the United States, Canada and Great Britain and for supporting a research project which we would have liked to continue, not least for its growing importance within the field of English studies. We thank our guests from abroad as much as our German participants for their contributions and their patience in waiting to finally see them in print. The delay incurred is, of course, due to the drying up of funds when the project was abandoned and to the subsequent difficulties the editors had to face in preparing this volume. Here we would like to thank especially all the young and committed (though notoriously underpaid) students who have helped us with finally getting this publication on its way: Marc Colavincenzo in Giessen, Johannes Fischer, Mark Stein and Markus Wegner in Frankfurt. We should, in conclusion, like to thank ASNEL (the German Association for the Study of the New Literatures in English) for enabling the publication of this ACOLIT Special Issue No.3. Happy reading!

GORDON COLLIER, DIETER RIEMENSCHNEIDER, FRANK SCHULZE–ENGLER

Anxious Nations – Nervous States

HOMI BHABHA

The title of my talk is "Anxious Nations – Nervous States." I think the referent of anxious nations is now well known, nations are very anxious at the moment, whether it is in middle Europe or in England where the anxiety of the nation is entirely around the marriages of monarchs or their failures. Britain is always made very nervous by these situations, as you are well aware. I also come from the United States, which is another anxious nation: Did Clinton actually breathe, inhale the marijuana or not, is a matter that has dogged him ever since, and his credibility seems almost daily to require bolstering or bashing. There is no way out of it.

The "nervous states" of my title describes entirely my own predicament at this very moment. Quite apart from the nerves that one always has before a challenging audience, this is a paper that was obviously fated to be given here because I found myself moving into the new work that I am doing. There are two projects – one is called *A Measure of Dwelling*, and there is another book that I am working on for a wider audience called *Notes on the New Cosmopolitanism*. It is a redefinition of questions of cosmopolitanism, and this text, as you would expect from me, is a hybrid version of the two projects, so I'm still finding my own way through it at this very moment – one reason for being nervous. The other reason for being nervous is that my project in this paper has been to look at the world – the context, the history – behind Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*.[1] And this brings me to the territory of English fascists in the inter-war period; I have made some forays into some German materials here, and as you can imagine, there is no nightmare worse than the one where as a quarter-baked or unbaked Germanist you start making interpretations of texts that you all probably know quite well. My excuse here is – and as writers we always find ways of ducking out of the most difficult situations with a little finesse here and a little shimmy there – my way out of this is to say that I am actually dealing with a parti-

1 Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989).

cular hybrid representation of German fascism. Indeed, that is exactly my view, and my focus is on how it emerges in Britain in the inter-war period.

Those of you who know my work know that I am very interested in questions of doubling, so since I first provided the title for this hybrid paper it has also accreted yet another title: one is as you have it on the paper, "Anxious Nations – Nervous States," and the other one is "Unpacking my Library." "I am unpacking my library, yes I am. The books are not yet on the shelves, not yet touched by the mild boredom of order. Instead, I must ask you to join me in the disorder of crates." With these words, as you know, borrowed from Walter Benjamin's essay "Unpacking my Library," I ask you to participate momentarily in the dialectical tension between the poles of order and disorder that have marked my life and my work these past few months since arriving in Chicago to take up the chair of Literary Theory at the University of Chicago. As I drew out books from crates in the most unlikely pairings, Maud Ellman's *The Hunger Artists* interleaved with Peter Carey's *The Fat Man in History*, the questions pressed. Does the order of books determine the order of things? What kind of history of one's self and one's times is coded in the collecting of books? Driven by these thoughts, I was led to a somewhat unlikely yet intriguing reading of Benjamin's concluding paragraph. The inspired *flâneur*, you will remember, conjures up images of his wandering world through the cosmopolitan disorder and discovery of his old books: Riga, Naples, Munich, Danzig, Moscow, Florence, Basel, Paris, memories of the rooms where these books had been housed, only to remind us, as Benjamin does, that for the collector the acquisition of an old book is its rebirth. It was then that it struck me, unpacking my own library, with memories of book-buying in Bombay, Oxford, London, Hyderabad, Paris, Champaign–Urbana (which all locals say is neither champagne nor urbane), that it is the disorder of our books that makes of us irredeemable, vernacular cosmopolitans committed to what Benjamin describes as "the renewal of existence." The formal connection that I am suggesting between a kind of transdisciplinary pedagogy and a revisionary cosmopolitanism is part of my new book and must wait for another occasion. My purpose here is more circumstantial, even anecdotal, but not without relevance to a kind of contingent, disordered historical dwelling bestowed upon many of us by the most interesting books we collect today.

As I unpacked my book crate, which is beginning to sound more and more like Pandora's box, two texts emerged in an unexpected synchronicity,

one old, the other new: Adrienne Rich's "Eastern Wartime," from her splendid volume *An Atlas of the Difficult World*, and Martha Nussbaum, the classical philosopher's, essay "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," published with wide-ranging responses in the *Boston Review*.[2] In their different ways, both Adrienne Rich and Martha Nussbaum propose that our contemporary historical moment requires to be read and framed in translational temporalities of the new/old (or time lag, or the projective past), concepts I have tried to develop with greater or lesser success in *The Location of Culture*.[3] I was struck initially by a certain bookish disorder that becomes in both texts the primal scene for making a map of the late modern world. This is Adrienne Rich:

> ignorantly Jewish
> trying to grasp the world
> through books: *Jude the Obscure* *The Ballad*
> *of Reading Gaol* Eleanor Roosevelt's *My Story*[4]

For Martha Nussbaum it is the cynics the stoics, Kant, and Rabindranath Tagore's novel *The Home and the World* (an ill-fitting group despite their cosmopolitan sympathies, her critics have pointed out), that must be yoked together to revive what she calls "the very old ideal of cosmopolitanism, the vivid imagining of difference." It is the contingency of these unpacked books through their concatenation and contestation that produces a shared belief, I feel, in the need for Benjamin's ethical and aesthetic imperative in most of his work – certainly the essay on translation, the theses on history, as well as the essay on unpacking his library. That is, the ethical imperative and, indeed, the aesthetic imperative of what he calls the renewal of life through relocation, dislocation, and resituation, which of course is my own existential predicament at this time.

For Rich and Nussbaum, such a renewal leads to a global reorientation of the patriotic or nationalist perspective, but for both some difficult unanswered questions remain. What is the sign of humanness in the category of the cosmopolitan? Where does the subject of global inquiry, or indeed global injury, stand or speak from? To what does it bear relation? From

2 See Adrienne Rich, *An Atlas of the Difficult World: Poems 1988–1991* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991) and Martha Nussbaum, with respondents, *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, ed. Joshua Cohen (Boston MA: Beacon, 1996).

3 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

4 *An Atlas of the Difficult World*, 36.

where do we claim the responsibility to speak? And here the resemblance between them ends. For Nussbaum, the identity of cosmopolitanism demands a spatial imaginary, the self at the centre of a series of concentric circles that move through various cycles of familial, ethnic and communal affiliation to the largest one (she writes), that of humanity as a whole. The task of the citizen of the world, she writes, lies in making human beings more like "our fellow city dwellers, basing our deliberations on that interlocking commonality." In her attempt to avoid nationalistic or patriotic sovereignty, Nussbaum embraces, I believe, a universalism that is profoundly provincial, provincial in a specific historical sense of the term. For Nussbaum too readily assumes the givenness of a commonality that centres on the self. The cosmopolitan self in the world becomes, in the classic sense of 'provincial,' the satrap of a benign, belated, liberal benevolence, genially generating its cosmopolitan concentric circles of equal measure and comparable worth. And if that were the problem we would not have to struggle so hard to find answers to the whole question of minoritization today. If communities were set continually at an equal distance, a middle distance, if social disjunction was indeed something that could concentrically and spatially be embraced, we would not, I think, be speaking here today and tomorrow in the numbers that we are. The problem is, the situation is much more complex.

But who are our fellow city dwellers in the global sense today? Are they the eighteen or nineteen million refugees that lead their unhomely lives in borrowed and barricaded dwellings? The hundred million migrants, at a conservative estimate, of whom over half are fleeing poverty and gender persecution world-wide? Or the twenty million who have fled their homes from health and ecological disasters? These extreme conditions are not at the limits of the cosmopolitan world as much as they emphasize a certain liminality in the identity or subject of cosmopolitanism that is mobilized by Martha Nussbaum. It is a subject peculiarly free, in Nussbaum's influential work, of the complex affect that makes possible social identification and affiliation across the disjunctive and discontinuous terrains of the contemporary world order. She neglects those identities that arise from fissures in the larger social fabric, Richard Sennett has said in response to her, which contain its contradictions and its injustices, remaining necessarily incomplete versions of any individual's individual experience.

And here lies, I believe, the difference between her and Adrienne Rich's cosmopolitan subject:

> I'm a canal in Europe, where bodies are floating
> I'm a mass grave I'm the life that returns
> I'm a table set with romm for the Stranger
> I'm a field left with corners for the landless
> [...]
> I'm an immigrant tailor who says *A coat*
> *is not a piece of cloth only* [...]
> I have dreamed of Zion I've dreamed of world revolution
> [...]
> I'm a corpse dredged from a canal in Berlin
> a river in Mississippi I'm a woman standing [...]
> I am standing here in your poem unsatisfied[5]

For Rich, the boundaries and territories of the cosmopolitan, concentric world are profoundly and painfully underscored and overdetermined. The 'I' is iteratively, interrogatively staged, poised at the point at which, in recounting historical trauma, the incommensurable localities of experience and memory each time ("room set for the stranger," "corners left for the landless," "immigrant tailor," "Zion," "canal in Berlin," "river in Mississippi") put the 'I,' a global 'I,' a cosmopolitan 'I,' in a different place. Indeed, in a place of such difference that the *Atlas of the Difficult World* articulates a defined and transformative dissatisfaction, a dissonance of the heart to that complacent circle that may constitute our fellow city dwellers, whatever that means. For it is precisely there, I believe, in the ordinariness of the day-to-day, in the intimacy of the indigenous that, unexpectedly, to our own surprise, we become murderous, unrecognizable strangers to ourselves. "Shouldn't Nussbaum be concerned," Michael Walzer asks, "that the crimes of the twentieth century have been committed alternatively by perverted patriots and perverted cosmopolitans?" It is to the perverse fashions of patriotism and its world historical masks that I now want to turn briefly.

20 April 1939, first leader in the *Guardian* newspaper. The heading of the leader is "Anxiety on Hitler's Birthday":

> Today, as in the days of Napoleon, European history is made by one man. He sets the pace, he holds the world in suspense of the question that transcends all other questions, day after day: "What will he do?" Never has that been asked with keener anxiety today, the fiftieth anniversary of Hitler's birth. Is he a great man or a small man? Undoubtedly both. He is the greatest living demagogue, he is a master of political strategy, he is extremely shrewd and a man of abrupt action. His mind is commonplace and he has few original ideas. Although he demands the utmost discipline, he is himself undisciplined. He is self-controlled with

5 *An Atlas of the Difficult World*, 44.

> respect to food and drink; his indiscipline shows [this is, I think, very brilliant, particularly for a newspaper] in other matters, notably in monumental and political architecture. His indiscipline is the cause of his extreme restlessness. It is said he is always on the move, can never sit or stand still even when submerged in brooding silence. If any difficulty or obstacle is put in his way, he breaks into a fierce rage. His fits of anger would sometimes last for days, he regards himself as an instrument of Providence sent with a divine mission. He clings to a few ideas about race and about the superiority of the German race, although paradoxically enough in some ways he despises the Germans.

The banality of evil has its own restlessness. Is it great or is it small? Monumental and premeditated or anxious and undisciplined? The anxiety runs deeper: is history being made by one man who clings to a few ideas of race, or is Hitler a demonic doubleman, a Napoleonic revenant with a disastrous *idée fixe?* Those of us who are familiar with the early-nineteenth-century discourses of oriental despotism will recognize in this Thirties' English portrait of Hitler a certain indeterminacy, a doubleness of inscription and address. Does Nazism provoke anxiety, or is the Hitlerian body politic itself in a state of anxiety? What will he or it do next?

Hitler's own often repeated answer to such a question was at once bombastic and banal, a commonplace answer which has over the last fifty years gained a terrible resonance that places it amongst the most traumatic truths of our times. "The spirit of the new Germany," Hitler declared in his Nuremberg oration, "does not manifest itself in parades and speeches, it is seen at its best when the ordinary duties of everyday life are carried out efficiently." In the inter-war years in England, the avowed project of the patrician fellow travellers of the fascist *Reich* was to provide modern British nationalism with an effective, mobilizing, populist myth, a mobilizing myth that depended on the self-action of the *Volk* rather than on an appeal to the inexhaustible wisdom of institutions and their patrician custodians. Pro-Nazi sentiment in the Twenties and Thirties attempted, I believe, to banalize, to quotidianize Hitler, and naturalize national socialism in order to propagate in Britain a racist, decisionist (in the technical sense of the word) and masculinist political imaginary. E.W.D. Tennant, who was to play some important part in persuading the Prince of Wales initially into taking an appeasing stance, wrote in March 1933: "History will record that nothing but this movement could have saved Germany from Bolshevism. We in Britain must begin to understand what happened in Germany."[6] And this is

6 E.W.D. Tennant, "Herr Hitler and His Policy," *The English Review* 56 (1933).

where I believe the kind of banalizing move comes in. "To an impartial outsider, the first impression of Adolf Hitler is rather disappointing. He is of medium height, more like a youthful edition of J.H. Thomas than of Napoleon." Of course, this is the luck of the researcher – when you find one archival thing talking about him as Napoleon and then you find another one talking about him not being at all like Napoleon, but the analogy is actually quite interesting.

> He has a most remarkable moustache. He said to me in conversation that he would like to cut it off, but feels that it is now too late, his moustache is too famous. He is probably one of the greatest orators of all times, his voice is attractive, powerful, and untiring. During the recent election campaign, wireless was an immense help to him; by this means he got in touch with hundreds and thousands of potential communists. They came to curse and they remained to bless.

Now this attempt to turn the house painter from Linz into J.H. Thomas, the lad from Swindon (Swindon is a railway terminal where trains turn around) who became a leading light in the National Union of Railwaymen in the late Twenties and later Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Colonies, is not simply an attempt to reduce the anxiety around the figure of Hitler and fascism more generally. In the image of Hitler's demagoguery lies the political lesson: the voice that carries across the internal, uneven, disjunctive waters of the nation, the non-concentric construction of the social, a voice that carries across the internal, uneven borders of the nation, turns an internally divided and differentiated *socius* into the common national subject, an imagined community of another sort that we must not neglect. And if the rhetoric of the banal or the quotidian is part of the language of populism – and I am particularly interested in this 'everyday' movement, in this 'everyday-izing' of the discourse of traumatic moments – we encounter in this voice that produces a seamless whole, according to witnesses of the day, the more coercive political etymology of the word 'banal.' The banal is a commonality or common purpose derived from compulsory feudal service, which through time comes to be naturalized as the commonplace or common usage; in this instance, the banal mobilized in the everyday process, movement, service of the nation.

"I found myself on cold dark winter dawns saluting the flag and singing the rousing anthems of the new Germany," writes young Elizabeth Fairholme in July 1937 in her diary, after joining the Women's Labour Service in order to experience the spirit of the new Germany:

> So powerful is the spirit and atmosphere of these camps that, just as the other girls forgot that they came of different classes, so for the time being I forgot I was of another nationality. Service becomes the object of each girl's life and service without recognition or reward. It is exceedingly difficult to describe how this is accomplished, this harmonious atmosphere within the camp. There is no printed code, no list of rules. The words of the song I sang daily in the camp became so deeply absorbed in my mind that, even now, I unwittingly in another place find myself uttering their meaning and intent clothed in different words as though, they were my own thoughts and opinions.

Elizabeth Fairholme, in the grip of *amor patriae*, is not herself free of anxiety in the midst of her obvious enjoyment. The only event that she remembers as having disturbed the harmony of the camp, was when a girl who had been cleaning pigsties all day and cutting wood "had failed to curl her hair for the evening meal of cocoa and black bread." Amidst a rather banal benevolence and a nation-less, past-less identity, for the once and future *claire enchanteuse*, there lies just around the edges the terror of not quite knowing who you are or what you are being subjected to, the anxiety of finding yourself uttering *their* meaning and *their* intent as *my* thoughts and *my* opinions, effectively acting, affectively identifying at the point at which you do not know what it is that you are being produced as an agent of.

If Elizabeth Fairholme, back in England in 1937, found all this somewhat difficult to understand, Slavoj Zizek, the Lacanian theorist from Ljubljana, finds it all too easy. In *For They Know Not What They Do*, a banal title in my double reading of that word, the banal as the everyday, the banal as the coercive (this is what I am interested in in my new work, which deals very much with the dialectics of what I call anxiety), Zizek suggests that the Jews are Hitler's, in Lacanian terms, *points de capiton*.[7] All the diversity of earthly miseries is conceived as the manifestation of the Jewish plot, for it is the Jew who manifests the enjoyment, impossible, unfathomable enjoyment (this is enjoyment in the psychoanalytic sense, *jouissance*), that is being stolen from us; and therefore the Jew provides for Hitler the knotting of the narrative threads of national degeneration, humiliation, moral decadence, and economic crisis. I find this account, despite its pliability and its psychoanalytic vitality, somewhat too simplistic for the process that I am describing, either the voice of Hitler or the voice of Elizabeth Fairholme or this particular notion of being the object and being the abject at the same moment, which is the anxiety that I am trying to probe right throughout this

7 Slavoj Zizek, *For They Know Not What They Do* (London: Verso, 1991).

paper: indeed, enacting it by giving you various voices of that moment as they were actually dealing with this predicament.

Now, Elizabeth's English enjoyment of the anti-semitic being of the German nation in this time, and in the psycho-political sense, certainly bears out in part Zizek's psychoanalytic reading. Elizabeth is, of course, at once the nation's *völkisch* unchosen subject, unmarked by nation or class, participating ironically in an almost pre-national ethics of service, and in another discursive space, within the same narrative, she becomes the vehicle for the state's paranoid, projected re-inscription of those very differences of race, gender, class, generation, nation (for instance, the objectification of the Jew as at once oriental, effeminate, corruptly bourgeois, cosmopolitan), those very signs if not sites of difference that were disavowed or displaced in the captation or capture of the new Nazi national subject. "In everything natural there is something unchosen," Benedict Anderson writes in the course of an argument that suggests that the naturalist mode of the national narrative is its moment of unisonance;[8] motherland, *Vaterland, patria, Heimat* become the transparent objects, he says, of national identification. These natural ties of the national sentiment produce, for Anderson, in his most influential and most brilliant book, the beauty of *Gemeinschaft*, a ghostly intonation of simultaneity across the nation's homogeneous empty time. My concern now is with the moment when the object of national identification turns anxiously abject, that moment when, for instance, Elizabeth Fairholme uncannily encounters herself automating life, unwittingly repeating the meaning and intent of others in words that are her own. Or, later in my talk, the moment when the English butler Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* is to confront his unwitting anti-semitism in the service of Lord Darlington, a guilt that rises suddenly from the depths of the unconscious in that text, and as a form of psychic reality presents us with problems of agency without intentionality, political effectivity attached to objects that are displaced or symptomatic. Is there a genealogy of this uncanny naturalism that constitutes this split subject of national identification, anxiety, and affiliation in a dialectic of national identity? Now, as you can see from this and from my other writings, I am rather impatient with theories of subject/discursive subject position or theories of interpellation, which always assume that it is through a captation of the subject that effective politics takes place. I am always interested in the subject being politically effective, both negatively and positively, at the

8 See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983): 131–132.

point of a slippage, at the point of an ambivalence, at the point of a partial identification, and this is an attempt in this particular paper to use actual historical documents and descriptive, personal, existential, phenomenological accounts of the process to try and argue the point that I have theoretically made at greater length.

The suggested link between nationalism and an anxious naturalism is clearly seen in the work of Fichte, often credited with being the father of modern nationalist sentiment. Together with Nietzsche, Fichte formed the matrix of the fascist appeal to the authority of a racial, philosophical tradition, as both Etienne Balibar and Hans Krüger have recently argued. Fichte has a particular relevance to the rather hybrid English fascist terrain of my lecture, for in the popular cultural and political journals of the inter-war period, like the *English Review*, Fichte, Nietzsche, and Renan, surprisingly, were the three thinkers most commonly used to familiarize the English public with the ideologies of the German state. It is, however, rarely remarked, I believe, of his *Addresses to the German Nation*[9] that its central metaphor for national identification is what we would call a 'scopic regime,' where the naturalist, unchosen love of the nation turns anxiously into a split identification. In a very different context, Balibar has recently argued, in his splendid book *Masses, Classes, Ideas*, that the very naming of the Germans and the German state in the work of Fichte is the product of what he calls an internal scission, a figure of ambivalence that plays on the impossibility and anxiety of the impossible coincidence of German nation and German state.[10] And this, I think, comes through right from the perception of the *Guardian* leader writer. In some ways he is defending and building the German ideal, in other ways he despises the German people; it's that whole problem.

In the midst of Fichte's metaphysics of the directness of national perception in the lectures, it is the patriarchal image of the father, I believe, that provides the natural modality of citizenship. But the discursive sign of the father enables only a form of identification that is indirect and elisional, what we may now call a 'phallic peripherality.' For it is the absent father rather than the mother (who appears, as he puts it, more directly as the child's benefactor) that constitutes the principle of the father's absent presence in the present of the national mirror, whereas the mother's imminent 'over'-presentness is supplemental, marked by the overbearing shadow of

9 J.G. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation* (Chicago/London: Open Court, 1992).

10 See Etienne Balibar, *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy Before and After Marx*, trans. James Swenson (London/New York: Routledge, 1994).

the father but more clearly held in the line of light, vision and national identity. The orientation to national subjectivity is caught, we may then say, in Fichte between the reflective frame of the mirror and the tain of the mirror.

The visibility of the national mirror, then, cannot but be liminal rather than, as Fichtean metaphysics would claim, supersensual. The citizen subject held in the temporality of the national present, constituted in this fraught game of fatherlands and mother-tongues, turns *amor patriae* into a much more anxious love. Explicitly so, when you realize through some of the readings of Samuel Weber that the psychoanalytic genealogy of anxiety is a sign of a danger implicit at the threshold of identity; precisely that moment of object- and abjectness, that split moment that I have been effectively describing through historical archives and documentation, in Tennant, in Elizabeth Fairholme, in the *Guardian*. Anxiety emerges as an articulation of in-between, "between identity and non-identity, between internal and external," continually raising that in-between as an agential problem, a problem of agency.[11] I am not just saying that the in-between is something that somehow disavows any kind of fixity of position, but it becomes the place for interrogation, the place for a critical reflectiveness. This anxious boundary that is also a displacement of the peripheral has a specific relevance to national identification when we realize that what distinguishes fear from anxiety in the psychoanalytic sense is a certain occlusion of the naturalness of the referent. Anxiety emerges, Freud says, in response to its perceived danger, and of a loss of perception attached to familiar and familial images, situations, and representations. The indeterminacy of anxiety, then, produces, as with my reading of the Fichtean national mirror, a traumatic divergence of representation on the one hand and signification on the other; all the trauma of the problems of signification, raised at the point of representation.

It has been suggested in different ways by Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Tom Nairn, and Tzvetan Todorov that nationness is the Janus-faced strait gate of modernity, and all who enter shall look backwards. And now there is what we may call an anxiety of the antecedent (we might also say that this is pointed out by Samuel Weber and psychoanalysis more generally); the psychic experience of anxiety is like being caught in the space between two frames – a double frame, or one that is split. Time and time again, the sign of the complex, unassimilable phenomena and paraphernalia

11 See Samuel Weber, *Return to Freud: Jaques Lacan's Dislocation of Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991): 154.

of racial marking emerges in the discourse of nationality with its banal evil. It is as if the *Aufhebung* that sublates the nation's anteriority – its dynastic, pre-democratic, vertical image of society – and raises the national idea to the level of its historicity turns demonically from *Aufhebung* into an archaic, articulatory temporality of the nation's enunciation and the nation's performativity. So it is not as if this atavistic past is in the past and reached for, but it is in the very production, in the very performance of a particular kind of discourse of national identification. Time and time again, the nation's pedagogical claim to a naturalistic beginning with the unchosen things, the neutral things, of territory, gender, parentage, *amor patriae* in its own discourse, turn into those anxious, ferocious moments of metonymic displacement that mark the fetishes of national discrimination and minoritization – the racialized body, the homophobic defence, the single mother, the chosen fixated objects of a projective paranoia that reveal through their alien outsideness the fragile, indeterminate boundaries of the national imaginary of the 'people as one.'

Is it possible to read Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, centred in the very British bathos of the butler Stevens, "a gentleman's gentleman," as a parable of the anxiety and ambivalence involved in the service of the interwar English nation? The temporal montage of the novel is a three-levelled palimpsest: the authoritarian populism of the Thatcherite late Eighties, its moment of enunciation restaging (like a *mise-en-abyme*) the Suez-centred mid-Fifties with its post-imperial confusions (which is the historical, diegetic present of the narrative), which in turn frames the country-house, patrician fascism of the fellow travellers of the late Twenties and Thirties. Ishiguro's narrative retroactivity articulates these temporalities, the present of each moment partialized and denaturalized by the process of the others. Ishiguro's narrator establishes a performative identification with an aristocratic, Tory traditionalism, enacted in the customary belief in the dignity of service. In the English context, service of course has a double cultural and historical genealogy. It represents an implication in the class structure, where service normalizes class differences by extravagantly acting them out as an affiliative practice, perfectly seen in the metonymic mimicry and the idiomatic naming of the butler as "a gentleman's gentleman." "A butler's duty is to provide good service," Stevens meditates, "by concentrating on what is within our realm [...] by providing the best possible service to those great gentlemen in whose hands the destiny of civilization truly lies."[12]

12 Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989): 115–117.

Please remember that other, very similar, close moment in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: we must endure and indeed propagate service by concentrating on the rivets; as long as we repair our little boat then we do not need to look any further. Again, a very similar moment in Eliot's *Waste Land*; all three writers, of course, in different ways postcolonial, although now canonized as very much part of the English tradition. The brilliance, I believe, of Ishiguro's exposition of the ideology of service lies in his linking the national and the international, the indigenous and the colonial, by focusing on the anti-semitism of the interwar period and thus mediating and stitching together race and cultural difference through a particular form of difference, Jewishness, which, in the English context, confuses the boundaries of class and race and represents the insider's outsideness. Jewishness, then, stands for a form of historical and racial in-betweenness that again resonates with Walter Benjamin's view of history as a "view from the outside, on the basis of a specific recognition from within."[13]

If domestic service, figured through the butler, is that unchosen moment that naturalizes class difference by ritualizing it, then the narrative's attention to Jewishness and anti-semitism raises the issues of gender and race and, in my view, places these questions in a postcolonial frame. It is during the polishing of the silver, the mark of the good servant, that the narrative, unconsciously almost, deviates to recall the dismissal of two Jewish maids at the insistence of the then fascist Lord Darlington. The gleam of the silver becomes in my terms the moment of the Fichtean national mirror where the master's paternal authority is both affirmed, and in this case tarnished, by the housekeeper Miss Kenton's pressing of the charge of anti-semitism against both Darlington and Stevens. This is the ambivalent moment in the narrative when the memory of anti-semitism and the interwar English–Nazi connection turns the naturalism and nationalism of the silver service into the anxiety of the past. The preservation of social precedents embodied in the butler's service is undone in the temporal, narrative antecedents that the presence of the Jew anxiously unleashes in the national present. The English silver, the mark of the gentleman's possession, the mark of the lord's mastery, the mark of the gentleman's gentleman, the butler's duty and service, becomes engraved, I believe, with the image of Judas Iscariot, the sign of racial alterity and social inadmissability. But the anti-semitic

13 See Peter Osborne "Small-Scale Victories, Large-Scale Defeats: Walter Benjamin's Politics of Time," *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, ed. A. Benjamin and Peter Osborne (London: Routledge, 1994): 93.

historical past initiates, as anxiety is wont to do and as I have been arguing, a double frame, a split frame of discrimination and domination that produces a narrative where Jew and colonized native, anti-semitism and anti-colonial racism, are now intimately linked in a textual and temporal montage.

For the British fascists, such as Ishiguro's Lord Darlington, argued for the Nazi cause on the grounds that Hitler's success was intimately bound up with the preservation of the British Empire. And if you read Griffiths' classic work[14] (and the best work to date, the most archivally researched work on this, a work from which I have benefitted greatly, a work without which I do not believe that Ishiguro would have been able to write his novel), this whole argument that I begin to see coming in the common popular journals of the time, the important affective argument about the British Empire and Nazi support for it, is actually missing largely from the more canonical historical materials for reasons that I don't fully understand, because the popular press, the popular intellectual journals, the public intellectual journals, were absolutely full of it, as were certain kinds of very important documents. In *My Life*, Oswald Mosley, the founder of the British Union of Fascists, remembers his first meeting with Hitler in April 1935, a luncheon in Munich during which he recalls that Hitler's first statement was that he wanted no more than neutrality from Britain in his struggle against Russia and communism. And I quote from Mosley: "In return he would, most importantly, have been ready to offer all possible guarantees for the support of the British Empire in perpetuity."[15] E.W.D. Tennant, who was undoubtedly amongst the most prominent of Lord Darlington's guests and had certainly basked in the afterglow of Stevens' glinting silver, had this to say in 1933 in an article entitled "Herr Hitler and his Policy," published in the very influential *English Review* and circulated in Parliament:

> The evidence that I saw supports the idea that the burning of the *Reichstag* and the consequent seizing of the Karl Liebknecht house was an act of providence. The Karl Liebknecht house was set up as a printing works where communist propaganda was prepared for distribution all over the world. There were thousands of pamphlets in many languages, including thousands for distribution amongst the natives of India and South Africa. Much information of the highest interest to the British Empire and particularly in regard to India's freedom and the Anti-imperial League.[16]

14 Sir Percival J. Griffiths, *Empire into Commonwealth* (London: Ernest Benn, 1969).
15 Sir Oswald Mosley, *My Life* (London: Nelson, 1968): 365.
16 Tennant, "Herr Hitler and His Policy," 373.

The link between British anti-semitism and the colonialist racism of this period has been largely left unexplored by the canonical historians of the period. It goes further, I believe, than the two related imperial dreams, one in the West, the other in the East. The victim-role shared by both, Jews at this period and colonial subjects, was the denial of their fundamental rights to be recognized as peoples, however contradictory and complex that designation might be for displaced or postcolonial communities. To the extent that both Jewish intellectuals and anti-colonial freedom fighters were linked through the much vaunted Bolshevik plot, they became the agents of a profound patrician anxiety in Britain. For these marginalized and discriminated peoples, with their different histories of diaspora and domination, were attempting to construct forms of community and identity at that stage which were implacably opposed to returning to what an influential section of the English intellectual and political right defined as the urgent necessity "for a biological angle of vision in viewing mankind, biological worth combating and eliminating degeneracy."

The last phrase comes from Anthony Ludovici, one of the leading public intellectuals of this interwar decade, who would certainly have been one of Lord Darlington's country house *habitués*. He had just returned from Nuremberg, to which he was invited as a guest of honour. (You know, to be invited to Nuremberg for the games became the major focus of the English social season. In fact, Ribbentrop, somewhat before that, had a posse, I suppose you should call it, of about twenty-four or twenty-five German gentlemen who spent their time taking minor members of the aristocracy to tea at Fortnum and Mason's, or out to dinner, or to country parties; there was a huge kind of construction of this sort of less official social scenario. I mean, Hitler was actually going mad. He said, "What is that idiot Ribbentrop doing? We have to finance all these English tea parties and all these buffets and luncheons." The diplomatic history of this time is absolutely fascinating – Ribbentrop trying to turn the German embassy into a kind of English country house. But by giving you that little anecdote I have destroyed the punch of where I was going to get, so let me try and recover it for a minute.)

I must remind you of this phrase, "a biological angle of vision in viewing mankind, biological worth combating and eliminating degeneracy." The last phrase, as I said, comes from Ludovici, who had just returned from the Nuremberg games, to which he was invited as a guest of honour. With Hitler's speech ringing in his ears, Ludovici proclaimed the benefits of what he

called "a polity of silence over the ceaseless chatter of democracies where the impudence of degenerate non-entities is pampered and defended. The *Führer* repeatedly assured us, and assured Germany, of the benefits of her silence," Ludovici wrote, "if only as a therapeutic measure, and the *Führer* points to the advantage which, as a silent nation, Germany enjoys over all the vociferous and chattering nations of Western democracy." Laid over this silence, please remember the voice-over of Elizabeth Fairholme's chants and anthems, her moment of profound confusion about where she was and who she was. Let us not judge her easily, but let us learn from that moment when the object of identification becomes its abject subject.

But let us not forget that in that very England there were other voices too. Now, I am going to have to sing something which somebody who knew that I was working on unofficial, everyday documents of this period sent to me: a song that was actually sung about this whole country-house milieu and its fashionable *and* influential – not just fashionable – patrician fascists, who were using these informal challenges of political influence. And this is a song sung against it by the young communists in Britain and also by members of the Labour Club. And it is sung to a tune which is well-known in the States and England, called "There is a Tavern in the Town." I never knew it before I received this. Every now and then my rhythm-line falters and you will have to help me, but blessedly it's short enough. And this is the way it goes:

> In Bucks there is a country house, country house
> Where dwells Lord Astor and his spouse, and his spouse
> And Chamberlain and Halifax
> To manufacture fascist facts, fascists facts.
> Fare thee well, the League of Nations,
> Hail to peaceful penetrations,
> And good-bye to international law, law, law.
> Adieu democracy, adieu, adieu, adieu,
> We have no further use for you, for you, for you.
> We'll pin our faith to fascism and war,
> What is the national government for, government for?

The words of this marching song return us to that place where we started, in the sundering of concentric cosmopolitanism and the attempt to understand the behemoth that haunts the banality of the dialogue we sometimes have with our fellow city dwellers. In that past present that is our time, the conversation is once again as we knew it before the disuniting of people and the degeneration of civilization.

But at this conference, devoted to the issues of postcoloniality, let me conclude with an old friend who caught my eye after many years as he emerged unexpectedly from the chaos of my book-crates as I was unpacking my library. For no one understands both the degradation and the defiance of the minority condition better than my friend, the photographer Mr Styles, who works from a cockroach-ridden studio in the New Brighton township of Port Elizabeth, South Africa. There is something quite campy about his name, Styles, something apposite to the trendy theoretical themes of mimicry, hybridity, camouflage and performativity which I have done something myself to perpetuate. Only, he must use these devices, in which I have some faith, in the milieu of the work camp and what were the South African apartheid labour laws. In Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, Styles recycles work permits and provides false identities. By replacing the identity photograph on a pass, an illegal township worker is fitted out with a new city identity. But when one of his clients protests, "that means living as a ghost," Mr Styles shoots back:

> When the white man looked at you at the labour bureau, what did he see? A man with dignity or a bloody passbook with an N. I. number? Isn't that a ghost? [...] All I am saying is to be a real ghost, if that is what they want [...]. Spook them into hell, man![17]

Now, a recent change in the writing of cultural criticism has left the prose plainer, less adorned with the props of the argument's staging. Where once quotes festooned the text with the frequency of garlands at an Indian wedding, there is now a certain sobriety to semiotic and poststructural celebrations. The -isms and -alities, those tails that wagged the dogma of critical belief, no longer wave new paradigms into being. The death of the author or the interral of intentionality are occurrences that arouse no more scandal than the sight of a hearse in a Palermo suburb. Critical practices that taught to detotalize social reality by demonstrating the micrologies of power or the diverse enunciative sites of cultural discourse are suddenly disarmed. Having relaxed our guard, hoping perhaps that the intellectual modes we sought to foster have passed into the common discourse of criticism, we are now caught, to put it plainly, with our pants down. Deprived of our stage-craft, we are asked to face the full frontal reality of the idea of culture itself, the very concept whose mastery we thought we had limited if not dissolved in the language of signifying practices and social order. Now, this is not our

17 Athol Fugard, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, in *The Township Plays* (Cape Town/Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993): 185.

chosen agenda; the terms of the debate now – the canon debate, the culture wars, the question of minority literatures in finding its presence – these are not agendas we set and aggressions we set around the agendas, but we have to respond to them. For in the midst of the culture wars, in the midst of the construction of identities and institutions around questions of minority discourse or postcoloniality, in the midst of these canon manoeuvres, we can hardly hide behind the aprons of aporia and protest histrionically that there is nothing outside the text. Wherever I look these days, I find myself staring into the eyes of a recruiting officer. Sometimes, he is like the American conservative Dinesh d'Souza, who stares at me intensely and says, "Western Civ. needs you." At the same time, a limp little voice in me also whispers, "Critical Theory needs you too."

What is at issue today is not the essentialized or idealized Arnoldian notion of culture as an architectonic assemblage of the Hebraic and the Hellenic, much as we are being continually asked to believe that it is so. In the midst of the multicultural wars, we are surprisingly closer to an insight from T.S. Eliot's *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, where Eliot demonstrates a certain incommensurability, a necessary impossibility in thinking culture. Faced with the fatal notion of a self-contained European culture and the untenable notion of an uncontaminated culture in any single country, he writes, "we are therefore pressed to maintain the ideal of a world culture, while admitting it is something we cannot *imagine*. We can only conceive it as the logical term of the relation between cultures."[18] I think the *Notes Towards a Definition the Culture* is an absolutely brilliant text, partly because it sublates the whole postcolonial issue to talking about the provincial, the provincialities of culture, the provinces of culture. It is a very underused text, a text that I continually use because it is full of the most interesting insights, as I hope in the last minute of my talk to convince you of. The fatality of thinking of local cultures as uncontaminated or self-contained forces us, then, in Eliot's sense, to conceive of global culture, which remains unimaginable. Now, what kind of cultural logic is this? It seems to me significant that Eliot, at this undecidable point in his argument, turns to the problematic of colonial migration. Although in the main about settler societies, Eliot's words have an ironic resonance for the contemporary condition of Third-World migration and the constitution of minority discourse. He writes:

18 T.S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948; London: Faber & Faber, 1968): 62. Further page references are in the text.

> [The migrants of modern times] have transplanted themselves according to some social, religious, economic or political determination, or some peculiar mixture of these. There has therefore been something in the removements analogous in nature to religious schism. The people have taken with them only a part of the total culture [...]. The culture which develops on the new soil must therefore be

– and this is the uncanny moment –

> baffingly alike and different from the parent culture: it will be complicated sometimes by whatever relations are established with some native race and further by immigration from other than the original source. In this way, peculiar types of culture-sympathy and culture-clash appear. (64)

This part-culture, I believe, this partial culture, is the contaminated and yet essential connective tissue between cultures, at once the impossibility of culture's containedness and the boundary in-between. That is what I mean by the interstitial. It is indeed something like culture's in-between, baffingly both alike and different. To enlist in the defects of this unhomely, minority, migratory, partial nature of culture we must revive the archaic meaning of 'list' as 'limit or boundary.' We must enlist at the list. Having done so, we introduce it to the polarizations between 'liberals' and 'liberationists,' the sense that the translation of cultures, whether assimilative or antagonistic, is a complex act that generates borderline affects and identifications, peculiar types of sympathy and peculiar types of culture-clash. The peculiarity of culture's partial, even metonymic presence, lies in articulating those social divisions and unequal developments that disturb the self-recognition of the national culture, its anointed horizons of territory and tradition. The discourse of minorities, spoken for and against in the multicultural wars, proposes a social subject constituted through cultural hybridization, the over-determination of communal or group differences, and the articulation of baffling alikeness and banal divergence.

Discussion

Q: I would like to ask a question about the title of your talk, "Anxious Nations – Nervous States." I was asking myself what the linkage between anxiety and nervousness might be. And I am afraid I didn't quite understand what their connection is. Are anxious nations turning into nervous states?

H.B.: You know, the way we write titles is to catch somebody's attention; so I wouldn't take that too seriously. But having said that, I think that's a very fair question. The 'nervousness of nations' is, in fact, a phrase that is increasingly used, at least in the English language press which I read. The very nature of nervousness is the condition of contemporary national aspirations. And it goes beyond the metaphoric, idiomatic use of 'nervous condition.' It struck me as being interesting that if nervous conditions in the most general sense deal with certain delusional structures, certain hysterical structures, certain symptomatic structures, certain kinds of paranoid structures, in the most general sense of the term, then there are two points. One, that we do witness in everyday journalistic reportage, Bosnia or Sri Lanka or Pakistan, the structures of these kinds of paranoid projections in the everyday construction of new nationalisms. Nationalisms that in some way are not sustainable economically or politically, but in other ways, ethically, morally, you can see where they are coming from. My second attraction to using the term 'nervous nations' is that, if you read a spate of more recent writings on the nation, then the vocabulary of a certain kind of nervousness or neurosis is used in the social sciences in a very popular way. For instance, Tom Nairn's chapter, which I think is still a very brilliant one although the book has been somewhat overshadowed by Benedict Anderson – the chapter called "The Janus-faced Nature of Modernity"[19] – uses explicitly the language of psychoanalysis, explicitly the language of schizophrenia, etc. But not at all in a technical sense, but in a very popular sense. You get this in Ernest Gellner, you get this right through. So my second reason is that in a disciplinary sense there is a whole language around nations which is about neuroses; and I put it in the terms of "nervous conditions" because I didn't want to say "neurotic nations." It's more elegant the other way around.

Now, having said that and having taken my cue from that – and I thought about that for a long time – I asked myself when I wrote "DissemiNation"

19 In *The Breakup of Britain* (London: Verso, 1986): 329–363.

already what is this language of psychoanalysis which clearly refers to a very different kind of subject than the citizen subject, what is it doing here? And I have never been one to transport vocabularies from one discourse to another, I prefer to translate them. So in "DissemiNation" I actually talked about the notion of anteriority as a form of temporality, rather than as a revelation of the unconscious or something like that which happened to be tradition. But then, more recently, both from a pedagogical point of view and from a kind of political–ethical point of view, I have become very interested in the whole structure of anxiety, in that particular genealogy that I produced in the paper around anxiety: anxiety as a threshold problem; anxiety as an affective issue to do with in-between states; anxiety as a way of actually regulating something that may be a sign of danger while constructing something new or having to face something new; anxiety as the affect of a splitting frame or a doubly inscribed psyche. So I am very interested in anxiety that is produced, and in particular, obviously, in the referent for this anxiety. The referents are twofold, as I said in the lecture and so won't repeat myself; and I broke away from my text because I am interested in the way in which anxious moments are also subaltern moments, are subversive moments, are moments of agency. They are not the denial of agency; out of them come certain necessities for strategy, for re-thinking. Fanon, I think, is a great writer in some of his work on this particular point.

But there is another more pedagogical, institutional use of anxiety that I am trying to develop in my new work, which is to think of the question of interdisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity and the reverberations it has in the academy. You know, where you all of a sudden say "I want to teach this, rather than that." And you are told: "What are you trying to do, are you tearing down this temple of learning? Do you want to create bloodshed in the campus?" Well, what am I doing? I am just changing a particular kind of disciplinary ratio or a certain disciplinary territory.

So I am very interested in the way in which transdisciplinary work provokes this kind of anxiety, and I feel that we will understand much more about what particularly in the United States goes under the title of 'the culture wars.' In a way it's a very, very serious thing. The National Endowment of the Arts, the National Endowment of the Humanities, takes the most intrusive interest in what is being taught in syllabuses, in conferences, in exhibitions, art exhibitions, and applies the most procrustean disciplinary models. And the argument is that civilization as we know it is lost. I am not interested in getting involved – I mean, as a late entrant to the American

academy I do not want on either side to try and participate in what then works out as a kind of psychodrama of revolutionary paranoia on the one hand, and a kind of perverted mastery on the other. This sado-masochistic relationship I am willing to leave to others. But I am interested in the anxiety that is involved, and I am interested therefore in producing a kind of dialectics of anxiety for the pursuit of interdisciplinary pedagogical work.

Q: Where does this anxiety stem from? Is it a very recent phenomenon or a phenomenon that has been there for a longer time? You seem to be saying that this is something that is going on now.

H.B.: Well, I have to say if we are talking about a concept like this we cannot say that it is just now. Obviously, it is inherent in the very policing of disciplines, in the very construction of certain disciplines within particular institutional bodies. That's the kind of question which would have a certain kind of structural, functional component that would not allow us, if I answered it like that, to deal with current issues. And I would say that there are two reasons why I would locate it in a more contemporary moment – I don't mean now as 'the day before yesterday'; I am talking about maybe five, seven, eight years ago – because, spectacularly, this has become a big issue. I mean, in America it is a big issue and in Britain it is an issue because they take the same articles from American newspapers and reprint them. You know, saying, "We should be getting worried about this too," and they said "Well why, you know nothing much is going on there." And they said "No, no, no, but you know violence always spreads from across the Atlantic." This kind of *pas de deux* paranoia, anxiety, I think is a more recent issue, and it is an issue that in its broadest sense depends upon the emergence into the academy of second-generation minorities, migrants, women, people of colour, sexuality. All these issues begin to become important issues under the general aegis of the question of subjectivity. I have always tried to think about the epistemological level and the institutional level at the same time – I do think that there is something in the untenability of the individualist or/and liberal-based paradigms of disciplines, which were in some ways imploding from within. They were already problematic from within. Then, in a transdisciplinary way, questions of subjectivity and representation emerge.

So that I think it is a fairly recent move, and I would like to just conclude, if I have given you something of an answer, with what I think is the difference between a Sixties model of interdisciplinarity and a more recent Eighties model, because this is part of my piece, this is part of the historical dimension of the work I am doing. It seems to me that interdisciplinarity has been there from certainly the early modern period, which was a profoundly transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary period. It was only later on, when it was codified as a subject for study and Renaissance literature became a canonical late-nineteenth-century pursuit, that everyone became rather tight and retentive and anal about its boundaries. But I think that there is no question that there is a shift in models of interdisciplinarity on this basis, and there is a kind of what I call 'foundationalist' model for interdisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity – that is, that the discipline is in some way satrapped. You know it is there, it is constituted, and then around it you can frame that discipline with other disciplines, producing a kind of depth-perspective model. You have your discipline; you put a little history around it, a little geography around it, a little something else around it; and you then are able to say that you get the Victorian world picture or something of that kind.

I think what has happened, because of certain kinds of theoretical, demographic, cultural and social changes within the academy and outside it, is that we are now in what I call a more liminal model of transdisciplinarity, and I would refer you back to the answer I gave to your colleague a moment ago; that we are in a place where we understand that when the discourse of nationalism is using, in an idiomatic way, the language of psychoanalysis, something about the erosion of the sociological paradigm or the political-theory paradigm to deal with that problem is being evinced. At that limit it strives for another language. Sometimes it bowdlerizes a language, sometimes it produces a hybrid language, but the interest of that text shifts from its central tenets to its marginal articulatory moments. There is a kind of move between the discourse and what it signifies, and a kind of problematic tension between the two. And we are, I believe, in that realm of interdisciplinarity. Now, the problem with that realm of interdisciplinarity, when it comes up against the Social Science Research Council or the National Endowment for the Humanities in the United States, is that the funding becomes very problematic. At least within the Anglo-American academy, all of a sudden departments lose their power and all the students go to programmes, but programmes do not have the power to hire. The hiring is done

in departments largely, with a small component financially coming from the programme. So you have these huge rows where the programme is getting the students and says "We need particular kinds of interdisciplinary work," and the department says "But you know Professor so-and-so or Doctor so-and-so's German grammar is not adequate for us to appoint him or her to teach psychoanalysis." And we say, "Well you know, that may be so, Sir, but there is another problem here to be dealt with." All the very acute disciplinary issues are sort of taken up, and a number of very good appointments are not made.

Q: Let me go back to psychoanalysis and let me formulate a translation of my own, since it seemed to me that while you mentioned Zizek you didn't actually mention Freud. But I take it that Freud was very much in the background of your talk, because his essay on mass psychology and ego analysis very much pertains to the issue of your talk. If I understood the move you made correctly, it seems to me that you were arguing for the following: what Freud analyzed in his essay was a way of dealing with that anxiety you were talking about. Freud described the formation of the ego ideal as actually the ethics of service that you mentioned on the one hand, and, on the other, a so-called collateral identification which produces a self-image with all the other citizens that are related to the ego ideal, the leader or what have you. So what you did, it seemed to me, was to take that model and tear it apart, because you said you were interested in the very moment of anxiety. Freud says: "There's this anxiety, and then this kind of double identification happens," which of course also means a very, very conflictual process, and it means that the anxiety is contained, but can always break free when there is a panic or when the leader dies. And what you said was, let's take this moment before this happens and let's see whether we could not empower this anxiety in a different way. If that is so, I wonder what it means for your psychoanalytic framework? It cannot obviously remain intact –

H.B.: – No, absolutely not.

Q: – So what are the consequences? Can there be a psychoanalytic theory that actually describes these processes you are interested in? The second question would be, can there be a theory of these processes or just very particularized or particular histories of very particular moments or actions or options?

H.B.: Let me thank you – that is a most useful contribution and I think you have got my reading. We should be modest about this, dealing with Freud or tangling with Freud; you are right. And I think that is precisely what I do. I have always found that the – whatever it is – fourteenth chapter on the identification of ego and intercollectivity has to me been unsatisfactory, partly because of the structure of hypnosis that he deals with. To talk about mass, the construction of a collectivity, and move to hypnosis is actually a way of evading rather than resolving the problem of identification.

But it seems to me that that is precisely where I want to put pressure. I want to say in and around something like the hypnotic, which produces a kind of identification: supposing we reintroduce the question of anxiety, where do we come up? That's where I have been trying to put pressure. Partly because of my relation to psychoanalysis and indeed to Freud, who emerges of course in the paper but, as you probably noticed, being the acute listener that you are, that relation came through around the work on anxiety, the text on anxiety and its symptomatology. That's where I called upon Freud this time, just because I feel that there are various things with that notion of the collective that I'm not particularly happy with. It has its resonances with Althusser, you see, and I am not particularly happy with that, and I just feel that the actual mechanisms of identification are not worked through to my satisfaction, at the point of anxiety, at the point of enunciation, at the point of performativity; and I have tried to endow that moment with agency.

Now, that's on the technical side of it. On the more meta-theoretical side of it, you asked what kind of psychoanalytic theory do I do. Well, the kind of psychoanalytic theory that I do is, quite simply, controversial, and one that refuses to participate in the first rule of psychoanalysis, which is to kind of sit in one school or another. I have always resisted that. And so, to put it briefly, I have tried to work with and through Freud while resisting the notion of oedipal return. I have always tried to go for those unresolved and incomplete moments in Freud where he talks about splitting and is confounded himself. He says splitting is something different from repression, but I don't quite know what it is. In the last paper, he leaves the whole question open. My particular interest again in Freud is to go, to take that question of splitting, to endow it with an agency, and to take the problem of projection, for which we do not have the meta-psychological paper which was promised to us (whether it is lost or was never written, we don't know), to try and re-think the problem of projection in a political and social way at

that point. My interest in Lacan, again, is in somehow staging the temporality of the subject. I talked about camouflage right through my paper. But I am interested, to put it very briefly, in not merely staging Lacan at the point at which there is an eliding of the object of desire, but I am interested in the objectivities and the objectives of that desire. So I am continually stopping the Lacanian iterativeness, the Lacanian split, at various moments. What is it doing? So mine is, if you like, a kind of hybrid and boundary crossing and a translation of certain kinds of psychoanalytic theories.

Postcolonial Representations: Disruption or Consolation?

TOBIAS DÖRING

I was most grateful that Homi Bhabha made a point about titles and their function to catch the attention of an audience. We only have a few minutes to speak, so I apologize for taking the liberty of not talking about the attention-grabbing question "Can the Subaltern be Read?" that I announced (which still interests me and which I may explore on another occasion),[1] but simply to give an extended response to some points in Bhabha's lecture. I think it is extremely important that he has addressed the German context so specifically – a point which hasn't been picked up as yet. But I feel that this context is relevant, because we should not only think in oppositional terms of 'them' and 'us' but also consider how postcolonial studies are of concern for the 'here' and 'now' in Germany.

When you talked about the alignments of the British upper class with fascism, I was interested in the ways in which Nazi Germany seemed to offer strategies for the survival of Empire which, in the late Thirties, were much needed indeed. Because what happened when Britain eventually decided to fight Nazi Germany was the enlistment of colonial subjects into the ranks of the British army and, thereby, an empowerment of the colonial subject, which in turn furthered the process of decolonization. When you discussed Ishiguro and referred to butler Stevens's service *ethos*, you also referred back to Marlow's ethos to get the rivets and keep the steamer going. This is where I would like to briefly focus on a German text, which I don't happen to have with me now in my luggage but which has been on my mind for some time and which I think could provide an interesting context.

It is a well-known narrative written in 1986 and situated in that year. The text is structured around an anxiety generated by three events which all

1 See *Can "The Subaltern" Be Read? The Role of the Critic in Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Tobias Döring, Uwe Schäfer & Mark Stein (*ACOLIT Sonderheft* Nr. 2; Frankfurt am Main: Institut für England- und Amerikastudien, 1996).

happen in the course of one day and which are all narrated. The first is the discovery of the remains of a Nazi camp, down at the back of the garden of the first-person narrator – a return of the repressed German past; the second is a brain surgery operation on the narrator's brother – another traumatic event constantly re-surfacing in her memories and reflections; and the third event happening on that day of narration is well-known in world history: the breakdown of the nuclear power station in Chernobyl in April of that year. The point about the combination of these three traumatic events in the same short text may be to show the inability to come to terms with them in the language available to the narrator. She talks a great deal about the blind spots in her language and of her memory in trying to come to terms with the events, while the everyday life in her little village goes on as before, while the quotidian, as you termed it last night, dominates all around. I am talking about a text by Christa Wolf with the German title *Störfall*, which I think translates as 'disruption,' 'disturbance' or 'breakdown.'[2]

Why am I raising this point? I am interested in what happens at the very end of that text, which is also the end of the day that is being narrated. The narrator goes to bed, but she can't go to sleep because of the many moments of anxiety that have come over her all day. So she picks up her bedside reading and starts to read, of all books, *Heart of Darkness*. She even quotes a few sentences from it, and finds in fact consolation in Marlow's reflections on the blind spots in his own enterprise. It is as if the language to cope with what has happened to her on that day, which she could not come to terms with, has somehow been retrieved through that text: "Ja, dieser Marlow weiß Bescheid. Er hat alles schon gesehen und begriffen, hundert Jahre vor dieser 'Unserer Zeit'." ["Yes, this Marlow knows a thing or two. He already saw and understood everything, a hundred years before 'Our Times'."] (p.117). Now, what I am interested in is the way in which Conrad's colonial fiction here serves as a sign of recognition, a frame in which we always already find ourselves. According to the narrator of *Störfall*, Marlow is the one who knew it all, who has said it all. I am also interested in the availability of this text as bedtime reading: it is virtually placed on the shelf next to our beds. And it is here that I would like to question the place of reading, the place from where we do our reading. And now I come to my question, this is also the question that I raised earlier this morning. When you talked about Ishiguro's novel and used it for your reading of the moment of anxiety, I asked myself how this relates to the level of representation it has achieved in

2 Christa Wolf, *Störfall* (Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, 1987).

the cultural industry of Britain and also of this country. It is a Booker Prize winner and, of course, also the subject of a Merchant Ivory production, a dream team who otherwise specialize in regenerating and recycling imperial fantasies like E.M. Forster's. Is there not a point (and I remember the theory of commodification that was referred to last night as well) at which the in-betweenness of these texts which you emphasized becomes recuperated into the consumer culture – becomes, so to speak, a consolatory moment? I think that the Ishiguro story, as far as its dissemination in the medium of film is concerned, pampers to British nostalgia about Empire much more than generating any anxiety. It seems to have been retrieved from this in-betweenness and recaptured by an entertainment industry. So is the next thing we are going to see a Merchant Ivory production of *The Enigma of Arrival*?[3] I'd be interested in the response you might give later on.

Response

H.B.: The whole problem of the political is that, in the moment of the transformation or relocation or translation which is the interstitial moment, there has to be vigilance. It may be assimilated, of course; it could be assimilated, or it could not be assimilated. Now, the interesting thing in the particular kind of commercialized media commodification in the entertainment industry that you mentioned, Tobias, is the trace of the interstitial. And let us state three instances, starting with Ishiguro. What I described in my analysis as the collaboration of anxiety and the interstitial as the enunciation of a particular politics – that is precisely what the Merchant Ivory film gets rid of. And how does it get rid of it? By opening the film with this whole anti-semitic thing out on the table. My argument, in fact, was that the question of the double frame of the Jew in this colonial text is actually worked through the transferential temporality of the book, because the whole book is profoundly transferential and retroactive. When that is worked through, then you begin to understand the sexuality of a certain politics, the politics of a certain sexuality, the racism of a certain politics and of a certain space. That interleaved, that imminent (not immediately recognizable in my reconstitution yesterday), to be remembered, the politics also to be re-negotiated and remembered – that is precisely what the commercial venture of the film will

3 V.S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987).

not do and cannot do. That interstitial move cannot be represented, that whole psychic–political structure of the book itself, its use of contingency in the construction of the event – that is what the film will not do.

Let us go to another one: *A Passage to India*. The explosive moment of the book, the incommensurable moment of the book – and I think incommensurability is something else I talk quite a lot about in my book – the incommensurable moment is the non-meaning of the caves. Not the anti-rationality, not the symptomatic unconscious of it, but the non-meaning of the caves. When it gets represented filmically, it becomes the hysteria of Adela Quested, represented by all those images, if you remember, of the hand-held camera as she's walking and all those images of gods and phallic structures and erotic positions.

Let us go to *Apocalypse Now*, alias *Heart of Darkness*. At the centre or rim of that text, there is that whole problem again of the non-meaning. What does it mean, this whole thing, or how can we have meaning in this space, or how can we cope ethically and socially with being in the space without the meaning and yet having to act? The whole issue which is so central and productive in *Heart of Darkness*: Kurtz's voice as the symbol of that. What Marlow says is – he doesn't say "I want Kurtz" – but "I wanted his voice." And think of the incorporative fantasy there also: "I wanted his voice." Now, what happens in the film is you get a voice – but that tenebrousness, that darkness, that impossibility to name or place which is the whole problem of *Heart of Darkness* despite the colonial project, is concretized, and the whole interstitial moment is lost. And how is it concretized? You get a hunk of Marlon Brando at six million dollars in the middle of the film lit from the back. Do you remember that scene? This huge Marlon Brando in the middle of the emptiness; there is this signifier, this signified, absolutely.

So I am saying that, in the commodifications, each time the interstitial is not only assimilated but is commodified in these particular formal ways. I think the issue is the threat of the interstitial – is precisely the site at which the commercial viability is constituted. Just let me say that I don't think this is actually Raj nostalgia. I would disagree there. I think that *The Far Pavilions* may be Raj nostalgia, but the *Jewel in the Crown* is really about a belated liberalism trying to encounter contemporary issues of social diversity and ethnic diversity. That's, in a sense, what I think it is, because each one of them is not a picture of nostalgia but is, rather, about the impossibility of empire.

The Politics of Postcolonial Theory

FRANK SCHULZE-ENGLER

I would like to begin my short statement with a quote from V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*: "The empires of our time were short-lived, but they have altered the world forever; their passing away is their least significant feature."[1]

I would actually like to concentrate on the last part of this observation, "Their passing away is their least significant feature." It seems to me that this sentence is pointing in two different directions. The first direction is actually one in which a lot of postcolonial theory has travelled. In this reading of the sentence, the empire has not really passed away, colonialism is still very much with us, and the task of theory is to dismantle those colonial–imperial discourses that still dominate the formerly colonized world. Despite all the 'post-'s added to 'colonial,' this well-meaning, if by now not exactly breath-taking perspective is ultimately based on a politics of decolonization. Unfortunately, this politics is not only far too narrow to allow for an adequate understanding of the manifold conflicts among which the new literatures in English are being produced (and in which they seek to intervene); this politics of decolonization also actively re-invents and privileges its necessary antagonist – empire – which it needs to validate its own epistemological stance.

The prime text of this politics of decolonization is, of course, a book which carries this re-invention and privileging in its very title, *The Empire Writes Back*.[2] The writing-back paradigm that the "Little Green Book" has initiated and codified has, it seems to me, several highly problematic consequences for postcolonial theory.

First, it locates the dynamic of historical and cultural agency in a hypostatized 'centre.' The cultural activities in the formerly colonized parts of the world are presented as an ongoing reaction to a dynamic which originates

1 V.S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Men* (1967; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969): 32.

2 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989).

elsewhere. Secondly, local contexts are devalorized: what is important is the way postcolonial literature subverts, interrogates and re-writes the imperial discourse, but not how it reacts to specific historical, political, social and cultural contexts in postcolonial societies. Thirdly, it results in a crippling of the critical potential of theory, since its privileging of colonial discourse effectively prevents it from dealing with other political conflicts that lie outside the politics of decolonization. (Interestingly enough, one branch of postcolonial theory actually refers to itself as 'colonial discourse analysis.')

An example of these new conflicts that can no longer be contained in the politics of decolonization that underlies the 'writing-back' paradigm is the question of human rights. Here one need only think of Wole Soyinka's concept of the "Transitional Politics of Human Rights"[3] to see the critical gaps in the writing-back paradigm. A dangerous consequence of privileging the subversion of colonial discourse is that criticism is not directed towards new ideologies of nationalism, fundamentalism and authoritarianism. The problem here is not just a one-sided version of intertextuality: the writing-back paradigm actually is in danger of remaining silent in the face of new oppressive discourses of power based on anti-colonial or anti-imperial rhetoric.

Edward Said, whose *Orientalism*[4] has often been misused as a convenient epistemological recipe for transforming all and any criticism of postcolonial affairs into a rhetorical effect of a hostile Western discourse, included a – probably rather self-critical – passage in his *Culture and Imperialism* which brings out this danger quite clearly:

> Few people during the exhilarating heyday of decolonization and early third world nationalism were watching or paying close attention to how a carefully nurtured nativism in the anti-colonial ranks grew and grew to inordinately large proportions. All those nationalist appeals to pure or authentic Islam, or to Afrocentrism, *négritude*, or Arabism, had a strong response, without sufficient consciousness that those ethnicities and spiritual essences would come back to exact a very high price from their successful adherents.[5]

At this point I would like to return to the original sentence by Naipaul, and to focus on the second direction of that sentence, "their passing away is their

3 See Wole Soyinka, "The Transitional Politics of Human Rights," in *Matatu* 11: *Voyages and Explorations: Southern African Writing*, ed. Geoffrey V. Davis, (Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994): 143–153.

4 Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (1978; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987).

5 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993; London: Vintage, 1994): 370/371.

least significant feature." This direction seems to me much more interesting and also politically more significant. Here the question is no longer how to undermine or subvert colonial–imperial discourse but how to analyze, explore and critically engage the different modernities that "the empires of our time" have created. This entails, I think, bidding farewell to the politically correct safe haven of decolonization discourse, which in any case has more often than not turned into a legitimizing ideology for Third-World elites.

If I read it correctly, much of Homi Bhabha's work seems to explore this direction. Particularly the "DissemiNation" essay,[6] which we here in Frankfurt have struggled with for some time, seems to be motivated by this interest in new migrant conditions and cultures that can no longer be contained in images of cultural stability, but which also can no longer be reduced to a decolonization paradigm.

Yet there seem to be two problems here that I would like to mention. One concerns the terminological associations of 'hybridity,' the other the migration of cultures.

As far as 'hybridity' is concerned, I wonder how the conceptual associations of this term with a condition of sterility can be overcome. In biological parlance, a hybrid is an organism which is not only characterized by a cross-over process but also by the fact that it cannot reproduce itself. Now, it is easy to see why the 'writing-back' paradigm would have no problem with this, since it continually needs to refer back to the dynamic of the centre anyway in its perennial re-creation of the 'postcoloniality' it has in mind. In the context of concepts that may help in exploring the cultural dynamic of new, regional or migratory forms of modernity, however, the just-mentioned associations of hybridity seem much more disturbing.

The second problem relates to the fact that it is not just people but also cultures that migrate. To what extent are the problems tackled in "DissemiNation," for instance, applicable to postcolonial modernities in what used to be called the 'Third World'? Is the postcolonial condition essentially a migratory one? One could, of course, argue that the transgression of cultural boundaries is not necessarily linked to the movement of people only, but also to syncretic processes that characterize all cultures 'back home,' wherever that may be. For, as James Clifford has reminded us in *The Pre-*

6 See Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994): 139–170; published previously in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990): 291–322.

dicament of Culture, "One no longer leaves home confident of finding something radically new, another time or space. Difference is encountered in the adjoining neighbourhood, the familiar turns up at the ends of the earth."[7]

Discussion

Tobias Döring: I'd like to comment on Frank's statement and pick up on your critique of the Little Green Book paradigm, and to enquire about the politics of theory which you raise in your title: it appears to me – certainly starting, as you do, with Naipaul and ending with him – that the centre–periphery still has some value if you consider the politics of theory in terms of the politics we engage in. And I take it that we as First-World readers – and I apologize for anyone who is not included in that term, so I should speak for myself –should still find it useful to work within that framework, precisely because of what it has done for what used to be considered "our" texts. Is it not, for us, worth a lot along these lines? And I would indeed think that Naipaul is a strong case here to argue that point, instead of specializing in a new version of – well, call it a gaze fixed on particularities, on complexities elsewhere. It may be a different case for writers or critics who work in an African context. It's a contradictory dependence on and resistance to the colonial or imperial.

Frank Schulze–Engler: What I would tend to stress is the need to historicize the writing-back paradigm. It seems to me that what the Little Green Book has done is precisely to dehistoricize it, to set it off as a general model for postcoloniality, and also to draw methodological conclusions which are almost of a sort of discipline-building nature. And this is, I think, where its main fallacy lies. I would not want to argue at all against the importance of the writing-back paradigm in an historical context. This always comes up, in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, in Cary, in *Heart of Darkness*. What often does not come up is the next step – Achebe considering his own development as a writer and ending up writing a book like *A Man of the People* a few years later, which is something quite different – in a sense, maybe a 're-writing' of his own position, or whatever you want to call it. Certainly, here this context of writing back is surely not something in the foreground. It is writing towards the realities of contemporary Nigeria in the mid-Sixties crisis. So I

7 James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1988): 14.

am not trying to say that the writing-back paradigm is of no use whatsoever; not at all. What I am questioning is its primary status as the sort of central methodological concern for postcolonial studies or for postcolonial theorizing, postcolonial literature. With reference to Naipaul, I think he is a very good example. Take *The Enigma of Arrival* and its central image, the sort of reflection on the picture by De Chirico and his fictionalizing of it, and the notion that in a migratory act you arrive by ship, you enter an unknown city, which may be dangerous, and if you make it back to the original quayside, you may be able to do that, but then the ship has gone, there is no way of returning. And it seems to me that this is a whole moment of the new cultural dynamic, or whatever we are going to call it, which I feel the new literatures are really embedded in and are working with; that this is lost if the writing-back paradigm is placed centre-stage.

Tobias Döring: I take your point about the historical theory that you are talking about. But still, our history is not one movement world-wide. I for one would hesitate to say, "Oh you know, Achebe, *Heart of Darkness* and all that, early Sixties." And I ask: has insight arrived here, at this historical point in time, into this problematic? For me re-writing is still useful as a starting point.

Frank Schulze–Engler: Obviously, the idea is not that you could have a universal classification saying "writing-back paradigm from 1960 to 1965" and nothing else later. It is a question of individual writers, of individual national and regional literatures.

Tobias Döring: And of reading situations.

Frank Schulze–Engler: Yes, and you might well find somebody even now wanting to work on the writing-back paradigm. So this is not something you can say is just gone. What I am reacting against is the notion that it should be set up as some sort of normative model and I suspect that the Little Green Book is perhaps proposing this, maybe as a subtext.

Syncretism and Eclecticism in Postcolonial Theory

WALTER GÖBEL

I have come to postcolonial studies from the field of African–American literature, and postcolonial theory is not my main field of research, so if I have an oblique approach to things postcolonial, you'll know why. I'd like to start off with a few remarks on the relationship of postcolonial theory to deconstruction, because I am currently working on an essay on Hillis Miller.

After the 'thin descriptions' of deconstruction and a tendency towards enclosure within self-referential language games, for which Hillis Miller is a good example, I have been fascinated by postcolonial theory because it is so multiple and syncretist in nature and because it seems to enable the cultural critic to grasp the irreducible paradoxes of experience and to escape mere intertextuality. For me, postcolonial theory has offered avenues of escape from the intricacies of a seamlessly worded world which tends to silence subversive signifying in its prison-houses. This reading of the postcolonial enterprise is inspired by Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*, the most exciting exploration within postcolonial theory that I have encountered so far.[1] As postcolonial voices are articulated from conflictual marginal positions, monologic gestures of intertextual dominance and of containment are generally suspended in Bhabha's model by explorations within interstitial spaces or by plotting battlegrounds of conflicting and contradictory strategies of empowerment, behind and between which localized micrological facets may evolve. Similar ideas of the articulation of the non-containable can be found in Gayatri Spivak's essays.[2] The cost of such conflictual or interventionist positionings beyond and between cultural boundaries seems to be the use of syncretist and eclectic theoretical

1 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

2 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990).

strategies. Or even, as indicated in Homi Bhabha's lecture, giving theory a relatively subordinate status among various discourses and working towards some form of theoretical *bricolage*, which I find fascinating. The scope of postcolonial theory thus becomes much more comprehensive than that of traditional deconstructive models, as it can open up various ways towards the articulation of the new and can evade vicious circles of containment or of scepticism which develop in the prison-houses of language, such as Hillis Miller arrives at after what he has called "the disappearance of God."[3]

As I understand it, Homi Bhabha follows the deconstructive model quite some way, but also subverts it by interpreting the idea of identity (of a nation, of a culture) in a different way. Identity is no longer unattainable because it is bound up with the idea of alienation and estrangement from a distant or obscure source of meaning or being (Miller); rather, identity is an unfinished project, waiting for its enunciation just beyond the confines of cultural articulations in the interstices of signification. Identities are thus not sought in an unstable and ever-receding past, but plotted out within the purview of conflictual futures. Deconstructive scepticism is turned into postcolonial optimism, as slippage becomes a source not of nostalgia and loss, but of anticipation. Bhabha's model also sidesteps Edward Said's dilemma between containment and subversion, by locating subversion in the beyond.

The past functions not as an abyss which swallows all Archimedean points, but as a heap of broken images with the help of which new futures can be constructed by daring Benjaminian leaps which will appropriate, annex and transform the past at will in moments of Messianic time – thus Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*, surely with some reference to Nietzsche.

To sum up and re-focus: while the deconstructive centre is bored by its successful gestures of containment and plays postmodern games in the metropolitan centres of Western cultural society, such games are played in earnest on the margins and become means of enunciating the formerly contained and suppressed. In another respect, however, the postcolonial spirit seems more modest than the poststructuralist or deconstructive one. While, for example, Hillis Miller, after a futile search for an Archimedean point, is caught in self-referential circularities, postcolonial criticism has a pragmatic aspect and seems to sidestep ontological commitments. Or is there merely a blindness to the ontological implications, a wilful blotting-out? Spivak has, for example, spoken of a 'situational practice,' but can such a

3 J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God: Five 19th-Century Writers* (Cambridge MA: Harvard UP, 1963).

practice exist without universal implications? For how can you intervene locally or internationally without some guidelines to direct your activities, be they ethical, political, or philosophical? The same holds true for Bhabha's cultural and regional interventionism in interstitial space. Both models presuppose that there is some orientation beyond the local, some idea of universal commitment – perhaps in the form of some basic human conviction. I'd like to place a question mark here; that's something I'd like to discuss – especially after Homi Bhabha's lecture, which ended on the final note that between the migrants and the displaced there is a baffling alikeness, especially in the discourses of the various minority groups. I would like to know where this alikeness resides – which seems to me to be some optimistic hope for a new kind of cosmopolitan orientation. Where is the ontological or humanist base for the linking of liminality and cosmopolitanism? Can it – must it, perhaps – be found in some residual or new humanism? A dialectic between micrological analysis and macrological commitment surfaces here. Such a dialectic also affects the level of description, albeit in a quite different sense. May the shape of interstitial space not be affected by macrological systems – the economic, for example – which often seem to exclude or swallow up interstices in their global sway? May such systems not affect and deform the models of hybridization, which can encompass defensive identification as well as the total collapse of the ego according to Fanon?

So much on the relationship of deconstruction and postcolonialism – the general scope, that is. I would like to add a few questions that refer to the practical scope of the postcolonial enterprise, and some of these questions have already been touched upon – for example, by Frank Schulze–Engler. Question One: Can African–American culture, an important source of ideas and images for postcolonial theory, be regarded as postcolonial or merely as affected by general ethnic and economic discrimination; and, related to this: how is the postcolonial model to be applied to various (un?)related fields? Does the applicability of postcolonial models beyond the direct sphere of the postcolonial (for example, to gender studies) not demand a more general definition of the label – as 'theory of culture,' for instance, or 'dynamics of culture'? A reorientation which, I believe, is already reflected in Bhabha's title *The Location of Culture*. And again, in Bhabha's lecture we had an extension to the persecution of the Jews by the Nazis, or to Kazuo Ishiguro's writings, an author who is not in a postcolonial situation at all. Such a broad perspective highlights the general centrifugal tendencies within postcolonial

theory today. We are thus faced with the question of how to limit the field of investigation.

Question Two: doesn't the narrowing down of the general theory of the dynamics of cultural systems to the postcolonial label, perhaps against its emancipative intention, homogenize and demarcate groups of peoples and nations who are reinterpreting their pasts at quite different speeds and in different directions? And does this perhaps prolong the visibility of colonial discourse? Must postcolonial theory thus not necessarily aim at making itself redundant, or acknowledge a more general base – which it has to some extent implicitly acknowledged by becoming in various ways a companion of postmodernism (at the price of perhaps losing its political commitment)?

Question Three: What is the difference between art and life in postcolonial studies? Is there no principal difference (as is often assumed in cultural studies and the New Historicism), or may art, as the frequent appeals to works of art suggest, have a special function in the exploration of interstitial spaces? If the general tendency within postcolonial theory is towards the exploration of differences between cultures which cannot be easily contained, should not also the differences between discourses be again defended against the facile homogenizations of poststructuralists, New Historicists et al.? Can art have a special function, if perhaps not in exploring an ethics of care – Nussbaum was mentioned yesterday – then in the exploration of new horizons of enunciation (in interstitial or interdiscursive spaces)?

I am, finally, going to touch upon another matter that interests me: Question Four: What is the local colour of postcolonial theory, especially in its interventionist versions? Could there be some East-Indian element somewhere? Is the history of the Indian subcontinent with its multiple fusions and mediations of cultural differences, with its irreducible heterogeneity, not in some way a hotbed for the growth of the interstitial, the hybrid, the uncontainable? But that is a very marginal question, which, paradoxically, subverts the implications of Question Two.

The Aporia Between Original and Copy in Postcolonial Literary Theory

JOGAMAYA BAYER

The aporia between original and copy in postcolonial literary theory constitutes the object of this paper. The search for an originary, authentic identity dominates the development of a postcolonial literary theory. In this process, the attempt to reinforce authenticity is not free from the occidental cultural philosophy in which the original is valorized in comparison with the copy. The attempt to reinvoke a national culture in the construction of an original theory cannot overcome this paradox.

To begin with, I will point out some statements by Plato. In the tenth book of *The Republic* Plato, the most important postulator of occidental philosophy, calls the writer and the painter imitators of the imitated: God being the first creator, and the carpenter or artisan the second, because the latter manufactures his chair according to an idea. The artist imitates this creation of the artisan. Thus Plato's conclusion is: mimetic art is far distanced from truth because what is created is *phantasma* and not something existent (*onta*). The imitator does not understand how something is, but only how it appears. This mimetic art is inferior; it deals with and, in turn, also creates the inferior stuff.[1] For Plato, truth is intrinsically related to the authentic, while a copy is of inferior quality. This dichotomy has influenced occidental thinking to such an extent that the cultural relationship between the centre and the periphery has become a construct of it.

In the theoretical discussion of postcolonial literature, the influence of this dichotomous approach leaves its trace – a trace that is noticeable in the writings of some important theoreticians of postcolonial literature.

One prominent critic, C.D. Narasimhaiah, points to the relevance of India's earliest works of poetics in the formation of a canon for Indian literatures. He acknowledges more affinities between India and the West if the West is regarded as owing allegiance to Plato, and Aristotle's imitation of

1 Plato, *Der Staat*, tr. Rudolf Hufener (Zürich/Munich, 1974): 483, 484, 488, 492.

life is denied. He maintains that Aristotle's poetics is based on empiricism while the Indian poetics is idealistic. Narasimhaiah's valorization of the authentic is manifested when he talks about mortgaging our minds to the West, which manipulates our thinking, and when he disparages our parodying of the West. He demands our own languages, which would be equivalents of Western concepts.[2] He quotes T.S. Eliot in order to justify his own argument, and thus becomes trapped in an aporia: he has to accept the influence of European cultural philosophy in order to argue against it. Narasimhaiah's demand for an Indian poetic the theoretical roots of which go back to Bharatha about two thousand years ago[3] ultimately falls into the trap of longing for the pure and the originary which for Bhabha cannot be fulfilled. For Bhabha, the invention of an originary counter-myth of radical purity disregards the shifting margins of cultural displacement.[4] He attempts to display the importance of hybrid moments in the construction of a theory. Bhabha further denies a separation of totalized cultures that nurtures the utopianism of a mythic memory of a unique collective unity.[5] He is sceptical about the traditional culturists' demand for a model; such a demand for a single tradition is simplistic, because cultures are never unitary in themselves. He acknowledges the ambivalence of contradictory forces in a society which makes untenable claims to inherent originality or purity of cultures.[6] Bhabha's scepticism towards a truly national culture is shared by Spivak, who is polemical about the "identitarian ethnicist claims of native or fundamental origin."[7] Spivak hopes that the indigenous elite will be sensible enough "not to produce a merely antiquarian history which seeks the continuities of soil, language and urban life in which our present is rooted and, by cultivating in a delicate manner that which existed for all time, [...] tr[y] to conserve for posterity the conditions under which we were born."[8]

2 C.D. Narasimhaiah, "Towards the Formulation of a Common Poetic for Indian Literatures," in *A Common Poetic for Indian Literatures*, ed. C.D. Narasimhaiah & C.N. Srinath (Mysore, 1984): 1–10; here 4.

3 Narasimhaiah, , "Towards the Formulation of a Common Poetic," 5.

4 Homi K. Bhabha, "The Commitment to Theory," *New Formations* 5 (1988): 5–23; here 5, 7.

5 Bhabha, "The Commitment to Theory," 18.

6 "The Commitment to Theory," 19–22.

7 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Poststructuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value," in *Literary Theory Today*, ed. Peter Collier & Helga Geyer-Ryan (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990): 219–244; here 225.

8 Spivak, "Poststructuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value," 228.

Both Bhabha and Spivak underline what Ashish Nandy presents in his analysis of the psychology of colonialism in his work *The Intimate Enemy*. For Nandy, the imposed burden of being perfectly non-Western only constricts the ordinary Indian's cultural self, "just as the older burden of being perfectly Western once narrowed – and still sometimes narrows – his choices in the matter of his and his society's future."[9] Nandy further warns that the pressure to be the obverse of the West distorts the traditional priorities in the Indian's total view of man and universe and destroys his culture's unique form, for this pressure in fact binds him even more inextricably to the West. For Nandy, the quest of the Nationalists for a definition of the true West as much as for the true East traces its roots to the cultural arrogance of post-Enlightenment Europe. Nandy finds that it is the non-modern India which has survived colonialism. However, it rejects nationalism and coexists with the modernists, whose attempts to identify with the colonizer have produced "pathetic copies of [...] Western man."[10] This contains not only the strategy for survival of the postcolonial but potentially also leads to a qualified rejection of the West. The self-critical version of Indian traditions inherent in non-modern India's ethnic universalism sees westernized India as a sub-tradition which, in spite of "its tragi-comic core, is a digested form of another civilization."[11] The pragmatism inherent in this culture lies in the willingness to accept boundaries within the construction of self-image while avoiding a separation from the non-self. This is "the clue to India's postcolonial world view."[12]

To sum up: the attempt to define an original poetics can lead to a revival of an authentic culture, as we see in the case of Narasimhaiah. However, theoreticians like Bhabha, Spivak and Nandy point to the misconception of this move towards the pure and the originary – since it ends in an aporia, because the valorization of the original as being nearer to truth, and therefore better, conforms to occidental culture.

9 Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1988): 73.
10 Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, 73, 74.
11 *The Intimate Enemy*, 75.
12 *The Intimate Enemy*, 107.

Some Pragma-Theoretical Considerations

PETER O. STUMMER

Concerning postcolonial theory and its hang-ups, I should like to suggest some pragma-theoretical considerations. I have one preliminary remark and four statements, the latter admittedly hovering somehow between propositions proper and straightforward questions.

The preliminary remark is the following: my considerations are more in the nature of, shall we say, visceral ruminations than cerebral ratiocinations. They need their feet solidly planted on the ground of social context and not their heads held high in the clouds of lofty postmodern individualism, which secretly takes for granted – let us not forget that – what it publicly denounces from a, more often than not, protected rostrum.

The first statement: there ain't no 'post-' in postcolonial, to vary a famous book title. From Aidoo to Osundare, writers in Africa cannot perceive, not for the life of them, any legitimacy in using the slightest tinge of 'post-.' For them, the colonial might have changed colours but it certainly has not gone away; and 'post-,' obviously, in that context is understood as controlled, as constrained, as left behind. The neo-colonial status, however, is not controlled, not constrained, and certainly not left behind.

The second statement: where is the protest against SAP universalism? Low voices, it is true, like Sivanandan, have spoken of IMF fundamentalism – yes.[1] But in all this mere metaphorization of subverting this and subverting that, answering back and writing back, not even the subaltern investigators discuss the havoc wrought by the indiscriminate insistence of the World Bank on structural adjustment policies. Small wonder, I feel, for the former settler colonies and most of the theoreticians – not the ones I have mentioned so far, but many others – are not part of the Third World. And even India qualifies for less than such and such a percentage.

1 Kevin Watkins, senior policy advisor of Oxfam, for instance, describes the devastating effects of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) on African countries, *New Statesman and Society* (8 April, 1994): 24–25.

The third statement: how eurocentric and centralist is the human-rights concept after all? So far, only Frank Schulze–Engler has referred to this. True, the powers that be tend to wield it selectively and parsimoniously, as a political ploy which is not to interfere in the overriding economic interest. And in recent times, one of the more succinct and convincing essays pointing this out, as far as American policy goes, is Chomsky's *The Year 501: The Conquest Continues*.[2] But how else, I ask, ought we to have helped the incarcerated Ngugis, Soyinkas, Mapanjes and Saro–Wiwas of the past; how shall we help the Pakpahans now and in future?

The fourth statement: the constant harping on difference only paves the way for new hegemonies. Far from making diversity democratically palatable or at least acceptable, exaggerated insistence on difference has led to increased separatism and ghettoization, and in unison with, if I may put it like this, the recent genetic somersault of Murray and Herrnstein notoriety, has managed to bring back the racist myth-making of the nineteenth century.[3] Questions more than answers, I admit; but they keep worrying me.

2 See Noam Chomsky, *The Year 501: The Conquest Continues* (London: Verso, 1993).

3 See Charles Murray & Richard J. Herrnstein, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Clan Structure in American Life* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

Spatial Relations in Postcolonial Discourse

The Global, the National, and the Local or Regional

WERNER SEDLAK

When I received the invitation to this symposium, I wondered what my contribution could be. Looking at the invitation more closely, I discovered two spatial concepts: a) "global society," the general title of the *Landesforschungsprojekt*, and b) "anxious nations," the title of Homi Bhabha's address. Coming from the south, in this case the south of Germany, I thought: well, perhaps a little bit of southern regionalism might do some good. Hence the title of my statement. Remembering Homi Bhabha's lecture last night, I would like to emphasize that "local or regional" does not necessarily mean 'provincial.'

I propose that in talking about postcolonial literatures or discourses we ought to go beyond binary notions like 'centre versus periphery' or 'colonizer versus colonized';[1] instead, we ought to apply three- (or more-) dimensional spatial concepts such as Ulf Hannerz does in his book *Cultural Complexity*, especially in his last chapter, on "The Global Ecumene."[2] And because of the dynamic character of spatial relations, we of course have to include a further dimension, which is history or at least temporality. For a first illustration, let me refer to Ngugi wa Thiong'o's novel *Petals of Blood*, which depicts the changes in a local community called Ilmorog in Central Kenya during the first dozen years after independence, changes brought about by national development strategies and global forces, in this case international capitalism, with which the ruling businesses elite of the country have allied themselves.[3]

1 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989).

2 Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning* (New York: Columbia UP, 1992): 224/225.

3 Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood* (London: Heinemann, 1977).

In the main part of my statement I am going to focus on the local or regional. My reference point will again be African texts in English, and the local or regional in this type of postcolonial discourse can be assigned the following characteristics:

– A local community can be an indigenous community but it need not be so. Examples of indigenous communities are to be found in Soyinka's novel *Season of Anomy* ("Aiyéró") or in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* ("Abazon"). An example where indigenousness becomes problematic is the Indian community in Vassanji's novel *The Gunny Sack*, a diasporic community in Tanzania.[4]

– The local community need by no means be ethnically pure. Example: the hero of Vassanji's novel is very critical of the self-centredness of his own ethnic community and tries to overcome this kind of ethnic segregation. Concerned with multi-ethnic communities and their destruction under apartheid are, for example, Richard Rive in *Buckingham Palace: District Six* and Don Mattera in *Gone with the Twilight: The Story of Sophiatown*.[5]

– Although postcolonial discourse relies on the local or regional, it satirizes particularism and separatism – a good example is Nadine Gordimer's short story "Once Upon a Time" in *Jump and Other Stories*.[6] It is also directed against parochialism, against provincialism – think of Soyinka's *Season of Anomy*, where the young leave the community, going out into the world in order to return and bring back their skills for the use of the community. Aimed against colonial and other kinds of hegemony, postcolonial discourse favours political participation and equality. I am thinking, for example, of Ikem in Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, who becomes highly critical of the national leadership, which has deteriorated into personal dictatorship. Ikem draws on the support of Abazon, his home region, and even the imagery of his political journalism is taken from a regional experience of drought.[7]

4 Wole Soyinka, *Season of Anomy* (1973; London: Arena, 1988); Chinua Achebe, *Anthills of the Savannah* (London: Heinemann, 1987); M.G. Vassanji, *The Gunny Sack* (London: Heinemann, 1989).

5 Richard Rive, *Buckingham Palace District Six* (1986; London: Heinemann, 1987); Don Mattera, *Gone with the Twilight: A Story of Sophiatown* (London: Zed, 1987).

6 Nadine Gordimer, *Jump and Other Stories* (1991; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992).

7 See Ikem's "Hymn to the Sun," Achebe, *Anthills*, 30–33.

A final note: so far I have concentrated on physical notions of place that are created in postcolonial discourse. But this does not mean that spatial relations in postcolonial discourse are restricted to the level of physical or political geography. When we think of texts like Ben Okri's novel *The Famished Road* it is obvious that a supernatural dimension may be fused with physical space, and in this manner postcolonial discourse may acquire a magical or mythic quality which is reflected in a multi-dimensional concept of spatiality, including not only the local ('the home'), the level of national politics and the world, or even contemporary historical development (i.e. "the famished road"), but also the worlds of the living and the dead, or of spirits and various dreams. I am thinking of the speech of the drunken herbalist in *The Famished Road*, where all these levels merge.[8] Yet, even in Ben Okri's more complex framework, I think, the local or regional seems to preserve its crucial status.

To conclude, the local or regional remains a major arena of conflict in postcolonial discourse. It is open to influences from outside and it can be corrupted – for example, by Mme Koto in *The Famished Road*. On the other hand, the regional or local remains a source of resistance and challenge to national and global forces, as in the father's support of the beggars in Okri's novel. The African texts I have referred to have appealed to wide international audiences in different parts of the world – think of Ben Okri's winning of the 1991 Booker Prize in Britain. This shows that, on the level of literary reception, there is what one might call a global culture to back up this local and regional resistance and challenge.

Discussion

H.B.: In my accounting of the preceding statements it seems that there are four issues. One, some periodization of decolonizing, postcolonializing processes, some attempt to periodize the field. Two, an emphasis on localization or specification, whether it is in spatial or territorial terms or whether, at a more epistemological level, it is in the domain of what it means to generalize. And so the question of specification, what it means to generalize or theorize, has something to do with historical, social and cultural contextualization, but it also has something else to do with the question of discursive authority: how do you construct authority in theory, how do you

8 Ben Okri, *The Famished Road* (1991; London: Vintage, 1992): 382.

construct authority in discourse, what is the place of authorizing? Thirdly, there has been the issue around difference, which Peter Stummer vigorously represented. And it seems there again that our various colleagues have focused on what I would call the question not only of the representation of difference, which has of course been a major focus of semiotic or poststructuralist theory, but the regulation of difference, which is an issue that leads more directly to certain ethical, political domains and, therefore, to the whole question of representation in the political sense, the question of the delegation of authority, the question of who speaks for whom, the question of an enunciative ethics and, indeed, the question of rights and the subject of rights. Fourthly, I think there was a very important and interesting issue emanating from the question of the ethical and the enunciative, which is the question relating to some kind of vision beyond or beside our theoretical and analytic endeavours. Is there a move away from a kind of deconstructive cynicism, however attractive it may be, however disturbing? Is there some need to establish a kind of post-poststructural optimism, if not utopianism? I am actually quite delighted to be identified as somebody who has written against the grain of the cynicism, against the grain of the secularity and, as we discussed earlier, towards actually being able to take, to grasp, the moment of agency where you least expect to find it. Finally, I think I want to add one further issue, which again we have attended to to some extent, and I personally don't have much more to say to it: about the very status of theory in the whole construction of a form of knowledge systems. And I said how I thought that one should always rediscover it, it should always be a *retrait* rather than "and that's where I stand"; but I certainly think that that's an issue that has been worrying people.

So, now I have done – I hope reasonably efficiently – my very altruistic and collective duty; and now I can return to some petty narcissistic concerns. Within the general format of what I take to be this morning's contribution around these five issues (forgive me if I have been deaf to some or exaggerated others) a question came up which in some ways relates to me, although, as I say, that is in itself a kind of neurotic identification; this issue of hybridity. Somehow, every time I go anywhere they always greet me as "Hello Hybrid," you know.

And I spoke some time ago at a large conference in Amsterdam held by the Ministry of Culture, and I gave this sort of plenary speech where I was deeply impressed prior to my speaking that this absolutely brilliant opening speech by the Minister of Culture kept echoing the terms of what I was

actually going to say, at which point I thought he has the authority, he really deals with policy, he said it so much better than I. What am I going to do now? He did his part, he did it lightly. And then I asked: "Who is this incredibly enlightened man, why don't we have people like this in England?" I was so impressed, we really jived together. Somebody said, "Yeah, but I did give him the synopsis of your talk before." So this man was trying to be terribly welcoming to me, but actually it stole my thunder completely, I had nothing left to say. But I did say, on that occasion, that I use this term hybridity – only, on a later occasion, to be met by the ghost of my own words. On the underground train in London a few days later, somebody who had been at this conference in Amsterdam kept thumping me on the back in the middle of this crowd saying "Ah! Hybridity! Hybridity!," you know. He obviously thought that this was a joke that I had developed for the Dutch.

But I would like to address this issue, and it does seem to me that there are two or three issues. The version of the objections to a version of the notion of hybridity presented this morning is not one that I clearly recognize from my own work. Now, there is no reason that I should. The term is now being taken up since I initially developed it in a set of papers, and has been used fast and has been used loose; and everyone has a right to do that, and that's absolutely fine. But I would just like to remind you of the modest enterprise of my own construction of the term and what it was meant to do and what it tried to do. And, with respect to Frank Schulze-Engler, I would like to say that I have not confronted the biological origin of the term. Now, maybe I should have; but that was certainly not where it came to me from, because I thought that there was already a translation or a transformation of that term into the linguistic context, which was in the work of Bakhtin – which, as it happens, I did not really read until I had actually developed what I had to say. And then Ernesto Laclau asked me to go to his theory seminar at Essex and talk about the theory of hybridization. At that point I read up Bakhtin, and began to see. That was certainly where it came to me.

It came to me in two contexts: it came to me in the context of the work of Bakhtin, so it was already a discursive concept and for me the biological imaginary played no part at all. I mean, that may be a limitation on my part. I am sure the term hybrid is also used in aerodynamics, but there is no way that I would somehow relate to it.

The second context for it was a very, very local, specific context in translation studies in the early to mid-nineteenth century in colonial India

and in colonial Africa where, particularly in the construction of Bible translations, local priests, local translators, local publishers were always talking about the hybrid forms of certain kinds of terms and words. The way in which they were talking about them is the way in which a particular term had a form of double inscription or double signification. So that I remember reading in the archive – a double and split signification, I should say – a Bible translator who said, "Isn't it terrible that we have this translation being circulated which refers to the Holy Ghost as the *bhût*," which is the ghost, the spooker. And he said: "This is a completely logical problem. Can we imagine that we have been trying to convince these Indians that the Holy Ghost is a *bhût*?"

My interest in the question of hybridization was not to think of a kind of new mutant, a new sterile mutant at all, but – again I am only speaking here for myself, but you may not have had me in your sights at all – that my interest in it emerged originally (I think I first used the term, although I used transformations of that term all the time) when I was thinking of mimicry and camouflage and various other resistant deappropriatizing strategies. I first used the term in a paper I called "Signs Taken for Wonders," on missionary discourse.[9] And I used it, in fact, to talk about a resistant demand made by some peasants who were refusing conversion in the most subtle, rhetorical ways, because on the one hand they could not be seen to be turning away the missionaries, they could not say, "Well, we don't believe in all this." They said, "No, we do believe in all this, we love the Bible, in fact we would love to have a few copies of it" (I then also traced the way in which these copies of Bibles were often sold in the markets to wrap up food and other things), "but we cannot be converted because, although everything you say is true and beautiful, it comes from the mouth of meat-eaters." And I call this the demand for a vegetarian Bible. Now, my idea at this point in trying to talk about hybridization was to stress the performative moment when signs of cultural difference come to be articulated on the site of contestation and on the site of cultural translation in a form that is a form of resistance, but where signs relating to the origins of the traditions are no longer maintained, so that there is a process of displacement and derecognization going on; so that, in fact, the

9 See Homi Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree outside Delhi, May 1817," in *"Race", Writing and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986): 163–184; also repr. in *The Location of Culture*, 102–122.

demand for a vegetarianism and the word of God is not one that any sect, either in the Christian faith or any in the Hindu, can actually talk about. It is a new negotiatory object constructed at the point of colonial interaction. That's what interests me. At this point, what gets constituted – which is strategic, which is in some ways transformative, and which is translational?

In that context, of course, I talked also about a third space. I am interested very much in both the political and the semiotic productivity of hybridization, the possibility of the negotiation of power; sometimes it falls on the right side, sometimes it falls on the wrong side, and indeed I am interested in focusing on the colonial space at the point of its production of meanings that will not be absorbed into earlier classificatory systems but with something specifically colonial emerging. This, it seemed to me, was one of the ways of talking about the cultural practices of colonization which was actually neglected, both by the most right-thinking radical nationalists and the most wrong-thinking or, indeed, wrong- and often lofty-thinking, imperialists. They all wanted to talk about some colonial object, some problematic colonial object. Henry Maine, of course, is one of the great exceptions to this, who was always saying we can't just talk about the colonized space as something of, you know, two things either merging or not. There is a whole other dynamic that gets set up when these different cultural influences or determinants or causes come together, and that is what I saw myself doing at that point. I have, of course, towards the end of my book developed what I earlier called hybridization in a theory of cultural translation. So, to me, the whole question of hybridization is part of this cultural translational and translocational issue; I have talked very specifically about the temporal and the spatial coordinates of this in *The Location of Culture*.

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Frank Schulze-Engler: I'd like to return to your criticism of my response to your idea of hybridity. I did criticize it in a certain context and I did say it was binary, but not in the way in which you have now responded to it, not in such a simplistic form. I had criticized it in the context of identity. And my criticism was that what this presupposes is that there is an origin, that there is something which is also what you mentioned. You said that your interest lies at the point of production of colonial meanings. So what hybridity presupposes, with the example of the Holy Ghost and the *bhût*, is that the Holy Ghost on the one hand represents an idea which is already established, the *bhût* comes into connection with it, and out of this emerges

the colonial meaning of it and is transformed. Now, that's still a part of what I have been criticizing as this oppositional model: it still defines colonial experience in terms of a reaction to the colonial – colonial in the sense of the colonizer.

H.B.: Yes.

Frank Schulze–Engler: But that doesn't work anymore.

H.B.: I am not saying that it works now, or if I am saying it works now, there are other concepts. I am saying that when I originated the particular term hybridization I originated it in the context of a particular colonial negotiation. In that particular colonial negotiation, in that particular issue, there isn't in my theorization the identity of a specific culture or the identity of a specific origin as you suggest. My interest, as I suggested, in the hybridization was the thing that comes after, the vegetarian Bible. That is the hybridized site of exchange.

Frank Schulze–Engler: You have also mentioned hybridity in connection with identity.

H.B.: Yes, I have mentioned hybridity in connection with identity in that way. I have not mentioned hybridity as if it is a mixture of the West and the East in some way at all, because I know my whole theory of identity, my whole theory of subjectivity, is not identitarian in that way. And it is neither binary in that way, so that my interest in hybridizations is in these objects or these forms of subjectivity that are produced – and I have said this quite clearly through a range of essays – which do not depend for their being or indeed for their circulation on the authorization of the one or other that might precede them. There is an issue here: do I actually believe that you cannot get rid of the fact that something precedes something else? Whether you give the something that precedes an *a priori* value of origin or not is different. My interest in psychoanalysis is precisely the fact that that which may come before is not necessarily an identity-conserving moment, nor is it an originary moment, because the temporality right through *Location of Culture*, at least as I understand it, is a temporality, problematic though it may be, relating to the iterative, relating to the retroactive, relating to all these kinds of temporal moods which will not in my judgement affirm the question of identity. Hybridity is precisely constructed, can only function under, in, and with those temporalities. The whole time-frame in which it gets constituted as an object of knowledge, I

am suggesting, will not affirm the question of identities or indeed the binary of marginal and central.

Monika Reif–Hülser: I'd like to come in on what you have just said. When I read texts of postcolonial theory I am often baffled by the term 'return.' It so often turns up, the term 'return'; it would seem to me there is a certain anxiety about the return of reality, the return of the subject, the return of I don't know what. And it seems to me that this has something to do with the notion of history and the notion of temporality. But a return in these textualities I am thinking of obviously always means "My God, something is coming again that we thought we had overcome; and now it's coming back." For instance, the subject as a threat. So I just wonder whether this is something that others have also realized. What is this anxiety about, this being afraid of something returning? Postcolonial theory as a mode of theorizing that conceives of itself as post-poststructuralist?

Peter O. Stummer: It is not fear, it is hope. I am quite happy that the subject has returned and it's actually feminism – I mean, believe it or not – where it comes from. They have always said it hasn't completely gone away, and I'm glad they did. So yes: the return of the subject is not something to be feared, it is something to be welcomed.

Q: You described where your third space is positioned, in a semiological interstice and perhaps also in some kind of a geographical interstice, where you mentioned the migrants and the marginalized also geographically moving. That's where the third space is somewhere positioned; but I had the impression that you filled it with a positive term related to cosmopolitanism in some way, at least the geographical interstice, the moving in-between. So there seems to be a certain optimism at the base of all this. Now, what is its basis? The last sentence of your lecture was "a baffling alikeness develops in this geographical interstice and a *minimal difference*" –

H.B.: – No, a *banal divergence* –

Q: – What gives you the security to know that a baffling alikeness will develop, and what does the alikeness consist in? Does it consist in the experience of alienation and displacement, or in something new?

H.B.: No. Let me answer both sides and let me start with vernacular cosmopolitanism. My interest in cosmopolitanism is partly generated by the fact that I'm doing some research around the term for a PhD seminar I am teaching in Chicago and a book that I am writing; it struck me by looking at particularly this period from 1880 to 1940 – something like that, even later, 1950 – there was the outbreak of a whole set of cosmopolitan societies, certainly in England and in America, but also in India. A number of people who were interested not simply in living in this in-between space that you have rightly pointed out, too, were actually forming communities – in Madras, for instance, in Calcutta, in Bombay, in Poona; the cosmopolitan society. And they would use 'cosmopolitan' as a signature in writing a number of tracts, and I am very interested in tract literature, which is often unattributed but circulated widely in the public sphere in journals and more popular papers. And the notion of the cosmopolitan was actually trying to produce a space which was not the kind of Rabindranath Tagore type of high-elite cosmopolitanism, the universalist cosmopolitanism, but was making certain very specific interventions. So, for instance, I have a document, which I think is absolutely fascinating, where the page is split into half: on one side of it is "What was a Brahmin?" and the other column is "What is a Brahmin?" And the one is the more canonical notion of what a Brahmin is, while the other is saying the Brahmin is this incredibly corrupt person who participates in a number of class differentials and exploits the system, etc., signed by "Cosmopolitan."

There is this attempt to try and vernacularize the more universal issue of what it means to be a cosmopolitan subject by mobilizing locality, a very specific locality. It seems to me, then, that there is a way in which, if you talk about what I call cosmopolitan vernacularism, you set the whole discourse of minority versus majority in a different context. You are saying, in effect, that there are cultures where the facility to deal and to translate within cultural codes and cultural languages comes not at the level of the empowered (that you have already a knowledge of Shakespeare and you decide to take on Dante and Goethe in that way), but you have, because of the imposition – the coercive imposition – of cultural types, learned to actually turn various kinds of cultural tropes and meanings and produce a different kind of world-view, a different knowledge of the mastery of those discourses. So that is just to give you a sense of that.

The optimism and what I referred to at the end of my paper was really that it has seemed to me, for much of my work, that, really, the most challenging differences are the differences that look small in the cultural domain. I am hesitant about generalizing, I have never believed in generalizing from very specific semiotic or cultural domains directly into other issues, because I don't think that all systems of power or being work in that way. And what I was suggesting towards the end was not at all a new consensuality – nor, indeed, a diminution of contestation – but I was suggesting that we will be surprised very often where the instance of cultural difference will emerge. We have no right to imagine that we will know whether the real troubling point will be at the level of the banal – as I was trying to define the banal, which was the common sense underwritten by the regimes of power – you know, not just banal as being, quite simply, commonsensical. And it's my conviction, looking at the way in which various kinds of culture wars get constituted – not only within the academy but in other places – that if you think you will always get the contestation around difference where you most expect it, there is something about the current moment that we don't quite understand. So my attempt there was not to say that there will not be difference or there will be more similitude in the world, but that we should not be confident we will know the way in which differences will be articulated, either contentiously or consensually. We should not presume that knowledge upon ourselves necessarily; we should understand that we have to work it out each time.

Q: So baffling alikeness is the new demarcation of difference?

H.B.: Yes, well, the baffling alikeness is the way in which sometimes the kind of consensus that gets developed between sites of difference surprises us: we would not have expected it. So, just in terms of cultural technology, one of the things that I found when I was doing some work on the Q'uran as a translative act in connection with my interest in Salman Rushdie was that the most – it was baffling to me in this particular way – that the most traditional and orthodox Muslim fundamentalists were arguing that the purest way of presenting the Q'uran now for wider dissemination is clearly not through the book, because that textuality is already a polluting medium, but through using the most sophisticated of techniques – audio and stereo. It just struck me there, for instance, that a peculiar technology, which is seen to be democratizing and modernizing, is actually being used quite often for a very archaizing notion of what a subject is, what a

community is, or what indeed language is. Equally, in India now – the use of camera angles of a type which are particularly conducive to the media, to television, being used and encoded for the purposes, in the *Mahabharata*, of Hindu nationalist identification, not in the content but in the technological positioning of the spectator through that. Again, a medium that is imported from the West, considered to have a certain kind of political opening-up or political sharing function, is used in a very specific traditional way. Those are the baffling divergences, and sometimes banal differences, I think, that we're talking about.

In Pursuit of a Paradigm

The (Di)Stress of Postcolonial Theory

BERND SCHULTE

When I started reflecting on the topic of this statement, Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* came to my mind. You will probably remember that in the very first chapter Walter Shandy says, when complaining about his wife, "The misfortunes of my poor Tristram began nine months before he was born." You may also remember what Mrs Shandy had done during the act of Tristram's conception; she had asked her husband: had he not forgotten to wind up the clock in the parlour? And according to the logic of a theory that made a human being's fate the object of momentary moods caused by the merging of liquids within the father's body, poor Tristram's fate had been spoiled by one stupid question.

When did the (di)stress of postcolonial theory begin? It began, I think, long before people started to declare that colonialism had ended: i.e., before the very moment that the formerly colonized regions became *formally* independent. Therefore we first have to state that the theories and concepts on 'postcoloniality' are not very clearly defined. The formal level of political independence is obviously not convincing enough to base the 'post-' on. Talking about terms and concepts, we find that the ambivalence of 'postcolonial' is not the only vagueness theorists find hard to deal with. Concepts of culture have not always been considered to be processes rather than static entities, particularly in European contexts. Reading cultural theory, including that from postcolonial societies, one may find that concepts of culture are still too closely linked to the idea of a nation-state. The distinction between nation and culture, nation and state needs to be emphasized in theoretical assumptions, unless we accept that political unities as organizational entities are equated with dynamic and constantly changing processes of cultural semanticization. The incongruency of nation, state, and culture can nowhere be better realized than on the African continent, where the political borderlines are a most problematic relic of colonial times, drawn in total disregard of traditional economic and ethnic structures.

Even in the history of Europe there is sufficient evidence that philosophers (those of the Enlightenment, for instance, like Herder, Kant, and Vico; Homi Bhabha also mentioned Fichte in his statement) clearly warned their readership not to regard cultures as homogeneous static systems. Kant even thought it quite silly to mix up nation-states with cultures, which have always been open processes. This basic ambivalence has never been accepted as something completely normal in history. What was aimed at in historiography as well as cultural theory was the ideal type of arrested cultural semantics in which changes are exceptional occurrences. The 'normal' drifting of semantics, however, has been hard to grasp in theoretical concepts. If we accept this drifting, we also have to see that syncretic cultures are (or cultural syncretism is) what we should consider to be normal, granted that we are willing to accept this subjective category of normalcy at all. Many people speak of 'hybrid' cultures when they speak about culturally syncretic societies. I hesitate to employ this term, first because it arouses the suspicion that old organicist and racist ideologies might simply be transported, secondly because it emphasizes what other people have called "the spaces in-between." The latter concept may imply that there are two or more 'normal' homogeneous cultural systems and that there is a kind of mixture between them that depends on them. The spaces in-between, however, have emancipated themselves and consider themselves as something completely different from the former self-appointed master discourses.

Besides, when Europeans brought their culture to a clash with other cultures, what they actually delivered was not *the* European culture, but a certain historical manifestation which was transient in itself. It is quite obvious that the oppressed non-European cultures also represented historical *interim results* of ongoing processes. That is to say, it is hard to define a point zero in the investigation into the development of cultures.

Universalist approaches to cultural theory often attempt to define such a point of departure, for instance in academic work, and therefore are likely to disregard the dynamic qualities of cultural difference. Maybe theory also might progress by applying some sort of pluralistic structural analysis which is based on regionally differing and transient intercultural contexts.

This, of course, requires a very sophisticated 'management' of regionally different interculturalism(s). When I use the term 'interculturalism,' I think in terms of cultural syncretism. Interculturalism for me is not derived from the communication of cultural systems as separate entities, so I don't think

we can conceive of cultures as being homogeneous and clearly separate entities. There is always some kind of communication between cultures, and there is always a 'communicative motor' of culture change in the interplay of cultural systems, if we understand them as the aforementioned processes.

When we deal with cultural systems that are pluralistic, multicultural, transcultural, syncretic cultures, whatever you like, we also need some pluralistic theoretical approaches which are nourished by many discourses or vocabularies, as one might say. People in the formerly colonized regions possess as great a variety of vocabularies as other cultures; they actually personify and represent this variety in specific sets of cultural media.

What might a pluralistic kind of theory look like? I think we need some sort of creative, selective appropriation from what is given in terms of methodological prerequisites. We need a rehabilitation of eclecticism and syncretism as useful tools in academic work, especially in a European context. In addition, basic concepts such as re-writing need to be revised, because many of these concepts seem to act on a tit-for-tat basis, implying that re-writing meant to write again what European 'classics' had already put down and maybe to improve them on certain ideological levels. What postcolonial authors actually seem to be doing is to make use of what is there in terms of cultural resources: i.e., global cultural sources. They use Homer, they use Shakespeare et al. in independent creative acts, just as Homer and Shakespeare also used to appropriate what they considered to be useful in their own sense.

If we want to overcome the distress of postcolonial theory, such phenomena have to be considered as normal in order to obtain a structural basis for more flexible and to a certain extent de-ideologized theoretical work. Theoretical concepts of postcoloniality still suffer too much from the arrested discourses and cultural semantics of an old world-order stemming from the nineteenth century.

Innocence Lost

The Speaking Subject and Postcolonial Theory

MONIKA REIF-HÜLSER

The advent of postcolonial literatures has provoked the loss of political and social 'innocence' in theory – an innocence which post-structuralists have consistently maintained and still favour. This is how one could, very briefly indeed, paraphrase Gayatri Spivak's position in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?": "Some of the most radical criticism coming out of the West today is the result of an interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject."[1]

I am interested in the question of, first whether and if so, second what postcolonial debates can contribute to a theory of interpretation as a theory of culture, or the other way round – a theory of culture as a theory of interpretation. The concept of interpretation entails the question of *epistème*, the question of power and responsibility in connection with authority and the authoritative voice of an author or a critic. I would like to discuss two cultural critics who – each in her own way – treat the question of responsibility: Gayatri Spivak and Julia Kristeva. Spivak writes in the line of Derrida and Marxist cultural criticism, whereas Kristeva follows Freud and the French poststructuralist movement.

One can feel in Spivak's above-mentioned essay the vehement claim that critics should reflect their historical positions and ideological framings which govern their analyses and critical statements. What she attacks most is the matter-of-fact constitution of an analytical object – say, 'the worker's struggle' or 'Maoism' – which in no way reveals the political and economic premisses of the critic. Taking up Edward Said's thesis in his book

1 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams & Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia UP, 1994): 66–112; here 66.

Orientalism,[2] Spivak wants to show that 'the West' still takes itself to be the centre of the civilized world, 'colonizing' non-Western cultures through new ways of oppression: models of thought, for instance, which rule critical discourse throughout Western academia. With the same theoretical approach as Said in *Orientalism* and in *Culture and Imperialism*,[3] Spivak lays bare the intricate ways in which critics take their own subject-position as a point of departure for the formulation of their cultural criticism, without reflecting on the latent prejudices they had acquired in their own process of socialization – personal and academic. This is what Spivak pins down as "Subject of the West" and "West as Subject."

Julia Kristeva, although a poststructuralist, is concerned with the same problem[4]. Only since Freud, according to Kristeva, have we been able to raise the question not of the origin of meanings but of the process of their production. The issue of signification in literature implies the possibility of denotation and, in consequence, the question of the "sayable and the unsayable." What can a literary text say? What devices can cultures use to bring their latent 'unsaid' into manifest re-presentation? Literary texts are the paradigmatic space where such transpositions or displacements occur.

What is important, writes Gayatri Spivak, is what a text – and this refers to literary texts as well as to cultural, theoretical, critical texts – does not say. It is the silence, the 'empty spaces,' the void centre – that represent the challenge to re-presentation. Kristeva would join in – perhaps – with the 'suppressed,' the excentric, the taboo. The theoretically exciting question would be: how to corner this 'unsayable'?

Spivak in her essay plays with various notions of 're-presentation' and shows the ideological impact of different translations of the term. In this respect, the question includes the problem of representation, self-representation and representing others; the politicization of deconstruction; postcolonialism, and the politics of multi-culturalism. What is important also is the issue of pedagogical responsibility.[5]

2 Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978).

3 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993; London: Vintage, 1994).

4 See *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell 1986), and Julia Kristeva, *Étrangers à nous-même* (Paris: Fayard, 1988).

5 On this problem, see also Gayatri Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (London: Routledge, 1990).

I think one of the achievements of 'postcolonial theory' – which is not a very satisfactory term – is that it tackles the question of political responsibility in academic discourses. Here I would refer to Terry Eagleton's fascinating book on the history of ideology.[6] After the collapse of the Eastern states, which served as the Other of the Western world, a new political realm seems to be developing for the location of the concept of ideology: ideology as a new thinking-through of subject, culture, civilization, nation-state. As Edward Said maintains in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, the re-reading of literary and cultural history – and I would add: the re-writing of canons – would open up the possibility of formulating, translating, the 'unsayable' in Spivak's understanding. It demands not only a re-thinking of historical readings of texts but also reflection on the subject-position of the reader *and* the critic. There may be quite a few imperialistic attitudes in reading and teaching postcolonial literature, even though the overt intention of this reading might be characterized as critical. There is a link here to Kristeva's notion of the 'Stranger' – the Other inside and outside the Self.

An example of such a re-reading and re-writing of literary history would be the interrelationships between Charlotte Brontë's nineteenth-century novel *Jane Eyre* and Jean Rhys's twentieth-century novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*. One could trace the 'unsayable' within Charlotte Brontë's world as a kind of *leitmotiv* in Rhys's novel. One could hear the voice of a woman who – according to Spivak – has no voice of her own to tell her story. Rhys tries to give it back to the female protagonist, who lost her voice through the process of displacement from the West Indies to England under the spell of an English husband. Both novels deal with the question of imperialism as a historical–economic–political phenomenon *and* a cultural discourse in the sense of Michel Foucault. Once the critical reading of both novels concentrates on the dialogue between the two cultures, a triangular process of signification unfolds itself – revolving around the cultural 'unsayable.'

The fact that political systems again and again try to silence their authors proves, I think, the explosive power that lies hidden in cultural discourse.

6 Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

A Mysterious Marriage

Notions of Identity, or Counter-Discursive Beginnings?

PETRA SCHWARZER

In Europe, the history of the formation of nation-states is old. The narratives of their origins are old. The "nation as narration"[1] is old. The emergence of modern African nation-states is a comparatively new phenomenon. The narratives of these nations are new. The narrations that create nations are new and have more utopian views. In this context the following question might be of interest: do the narratives of the nation encode an advanced state of scepticism about the ideology of nationhood? Do counter-discourses interfere in the master-narrative of national identity?

The poem that I shall now be reciting was written by the former freedom-fighter Freedom T.V. Nyamubaya from Zimbabwe, who had her *Poems [written] During and After the National Liberation of Zimbabwe*[2] published in 1986. I think it serves as an example of the thesis of the nation as narration and the inclusion of a counter-discourse in the dominant national discourse. The poem is entitled "A Mysterious Marriage":

> Once upon a time / there was a boy and girl / forced to leave their home / by armed robbers. / The boy was Independence, / the girl was Freedom. / While fighting back, they got married. / After the big war they went back home. / Everybody prepared for the wedding. / Drinks and food abounded, / even the disabled felt able. / The whole village gathered waiting / Freedom and Independence / were more popular than Jesus. / Independence came / But Freedom wasn't there. / An old woman saw Freedom's shadow passing. / Walking through the crowd, Freedom to the gate. / All the same, they celebrated for Independence. / Independence is now a senior bachelor / Some people still talk about him / Many others take no notice / A lot still say it was a fake marriage. / You can't be a husband without a wife. / Fruitless and barren Independence staggers to old age, / Since his shadow, Freedom hasn't come. (13)

1 See Homi K. Bhabha. "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990): 291–322.

2 Freedom T.V. Nyamubaya, *On The Road Again: Poems During and After the National Liberation of Zimbabwe* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1986).

The central motif of the narrative of the nation is the promise of freedom and independence. The poet regards the two as separate: the boy, Independence, denotes the male principle, while the girl represents the notions of freedom and equality upheld by the liberation movement. From the very beginning independence is imagined as the general principle; freedom can only be realized as an individual principle. Contrary to the grand national narrative, freedom does not follow independence, freedom is not identical with independence. The two unite during the armed struggle and get married. After the war, back home, their marriage has to be sealed properly by way of the traditional ceremony. The promise of unity between Freedom and Independence becomes a new collective utopia ("even the disabled felt able") that is "more popular than Jesus." But the wedding fails completely. Independence enthrones himself, has the wedding party celebrate him, and refuses to realize that Freedom is becoming an elusive shadow. An old woman is the only witness to Freedom's disappearance, to her total inscription in Independence's dominance. This leaves the newly created: i.e., independent nation permanently incomplete: "You can't be a husband without a wife." It degenerates into the male principle, which is deficient and therefore remains barren and without a vision for the future; or, to stay with the metaphors, Independence degenerates into a ludicrous, confirmed bachelor, into a caricature. The poem ends on a pessimistic note. Freedom's shadow has got lost in the masses, where she finds no voice to raise in protest to resist her disarticulation as the dominated Other.

Considering the actual inability of Zimbabwean women to be visible when it comes to matters of state, I think what this poem suggests is that the freedom of women becomes the yardstick for freedom itself. Gender relations become the symbol for the future of the nation. The hope lies in the fact that the principle of complementarity will find application throughout society. The poet holds on to this hope, despite the never-ending lamentations about disillusionment in the Eighties. And in thematizing the politics of marginalization, Freedom Nyamubaya gives voice to individual as well as collective utopias, thereby resisting the narration of national identity.

Visions Without Presence

Imagination and the Collective Unconscious in the Poetics of Wilson Harris and Édouard Glissant

UWE SCHÄFER

I would like to start my talk from a personal diasporic experience. About two years ago I had the privilege to work for a band of New York klezmer musicians on a European tour. During that tour they experienced a profound silence, especially in Germany, and the title of their first professional album therefore bears the title *Shvaygn = Toyt*, which is Yiddish for "silence equals death." I am convinced that these two words, silence and death, are relevant in our present context, and would like to first talk about silence.

At present it seems to me that there is depressingly little belief in the West in the simple possibility that things might proceed otherwise. Where does this lack of faith, this maybe temporary blindness, come from? How can it be overcome? In other words, how can we learn to express our collective desires? Are there experiences to draw on, especially social models that may help to reconstruct an idea of community that goes beyond models based on the nuclear family and its twin brother, the nation-state? Is our interest in postcolonial literatures the expression of a common desire to re-create the way we'd like it to be? These are a few questions that surfaced after I had read the invitation for this symposium. I would like to speculate briefly on the origins of what I have called the symptom, then proceed to what I think is a strong link between what I announced in the title, Wilson Harris and Édouard Glissant's poetics, and provide some loose ends on the relevance of their ideas in the context of the questions I have just mentioned.

Since its beginnings, Europe has been a binary, schizophrenic project. There is a clash between interdependence, nationality and ethnicity. In the Europe of 1994, the language of the political is subordinated to that of the economic. The political silence on the mediation between interdependence and ethnicity forecloses any post-national national community in the new

Europe. Nevertheless, I think a blocked situation is always one of great intensity and one that bears a lot of potential for the creation of alternative worlds. But how can these be unearthed? How can collective desires be voiced? How do postcolonial literatures help to (re)gain creativity, imagination, and a sense of community? I think that they enable us to re-live, to share, experiences by appealing to our imagination. Plunging into scholarly abstractions, witty comments, and theoretical discourse, one easily forgets that in the past during colonization people actually suffered and died, that they have been violated, raped and murdered, that there has been genocide and that there is genocide taking place, that there are people who are dying at this very moment as a consequence of an ongoing project of colonization. The worst, in my view, is to remain silent on these deaths: *Shvaygn = Toyt*; silence equals death. And I regard our interest in postcolonial theory as a faint attempt to remember, to re-live at least in part, the horrors of genocide, which is anything but fading, not only in the past, but also in the present: Just a couple of weeks ago, six people drowned while they tried to cross the Oder, the river that marks the eastern border of Germany. And these people are just the tip of the iceberg, for we usually do not learn about those who die before they even get this far. Instead, we are fed with presences: remakes of deaths, pictures of anonymous, silent bodies reduced to data that pervade our everyday lives, obliterating the real catastrophe. There is simply too much presence directed towards the consuming individual.

Two writers from the Caribbean, Wilson Harris of Guyana and Édouard Glissant of Martinique, have made the collective unconscious an important part of their writing in order to enable us to become aware of our collective desires, to give us a chance to see hidden bridges and arches between parallel worlds, relations that are not present: i.e., fetishized and turned into commodities. Both writers have been described as "difficult to understand" by Western scholars. I think such remarks reveal a hidden desire for simplification. But is it not rather presumptuous to claim that texts should be easily accessible? Or academic papers? Can there *be* any creative access to the chaotic history and suffering, the hell of uncertainty and alienation, the hidden frustration, that has characterized colonial experiences other than stammering and loose ends, instead of neat plots and clear goals? Can we re-live history by analysis? I doubt it.

Wilson Harris of Guyana sees his poetics as a contribution to parallel futures of a "creative and re-creative balance between diverse cultures." Édouard Glissant of Martinique speaks of a "poetics of relation." Glissant

sketches his poetics of relation, or, rather, his poetics of relations, of a non-universalist diversity, of hidden creative non-transparencies, which hope-fully will always escape analytical thought, and can never be fully understood and neatly tucked away on library shelves. Harris states that fiction is seldom gauged by its potential to resist exploitation/alienation. Maybe this is one of the gravest deficiencies of academic discourse.

Harris and Glissant employ a vast set of parallel narrative time-frames in order to produce textual continua that allow the simultaneous staging of a multiplicity of different space- and time-levels without subsuming them under a universalist, unifying presence, and which may help to create other times and different spaces for a postcolonial European identity.

Which creative and re-created balance between diverse cultures might be established in Germany? How can we open up a space for collective desires from the Turkish–German experiences, the Italian–, Greek–, Spanish–, Portuguese–German experiences, the Black–German experiences, the Serbian–, Bosnian–, Croatian–German experiences? I think we are called upon to acknowledge the constraints of our academic niche and realize that 'postcolonial' literatures and 'New English Literatures' are in danger of becoming another label on our library shelves, another commodity of consumerist culture, if we are not ready to relate these experiences to those of our own immigrant and diasporic experiences.

Stephen Greenblatt's Concept of Symbolic Exchange

ULLA HASELSTEIN

I must state at the outset that I will not be talking about the postcolonial but, rather, about the pre-colonial, albeit under postcolonial auspices, depending on the vantage-point, as I will argue. Let me start with what could be called the primal scene of colonialism.[1] In his recent book *Marvelous Possessions*, Stephen Greenblatt quotes and comments on a certain passage from Columbus's journal which describes the very first exchanges with the Caribs. Red caps and green glass beads, pieces of crockery and other trifles were given to them; in return, the Caribs gave "whatever they possess." Taking up an argument of Tzvetan Todorov, who had pointed out the sense of superiority in Columbus's rendering of these events,[2] Greenblatt looks at similar reports on first-contact situations by Cartier and Frobisher. All these texts show that the European explorers always interpreted the exchange as an unequal one, to their advantage, and that they found the reason for their success in the naivety, generosity and innocence of the 'savages.' In this way, the Europeans neglected the relativity of material value in these exchange situations in order to highlight and read cultural difference. Greenblatt writes:

1 On the notion of the primal scene, see Sigmund Freud, "From the History of a Childhood Neurosis (1918)," *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. John Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1953–74), vol. XVII. However, it is only the epistemological notion of fantasy as a formative structure of perception that I want to use here.

2 Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America* (1982; New York: Harper & Row, 1992): 38–39, and Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991): ch. 4 (cf. his comment on Todorov's reading, 99); further quotations from Greenblatt are in the text.

> Where they might then have imagined mutual giftgiving or, alternatively, a mutually satisfactory economic transaction, the Europeans instead tended to imagine an exchange of empty signs, of alluring counterfeits for overwhelming abundance. (110)

Of course, many colonial sources are concerned with the fact that it was only a matter of time until native interpreters, "intitiated into the European language and system of exchange" (108), began to realize that their people were robbed, as Greenblatt is well aware. But while postcolonial theory searches the colonial texts for a (mis)representation of the practices of resistance or subversion engendered by such a realization, Greenblatt (like Todorov) reads them as overdetermined symptoms of Renaissance culture and aims at demonstrating how various discourses – on politics and art, for example – reinforced each other, creating structures of feeling – to use Raymond Williams's phrase – that regulated dealings with the Other.

Obviously, economic interests – especially future economic interests – were involved in those first scenes of exchange and their textual representation, in spite of Columbus's effort to forbid his sailors to make a swap. But Greenblatt stresses something else (and I think he does this convincingly) when he argues that the exchange with the natives was interpreted by applying a historically specific knowledge of Renaissance culture: the exchange is interpreted in terms of the symbolic exchange of artistic representation. If a European audience at, say, a theatre performance are aware of what they are doing – they are buying empty signs because of the promise of entertainment and pleasure that they hold out – the 'savages' are found to be unable to perceive the difference between empty and full signs, between illusion and reality. The scene of exchange on the beach is not interpreted as a mutually satisfactory transaction but as a successful fraud, because it is inscribed into a double articulation of a spectacle. In this spectacle, the Europeans first conceive of themselves as actors on the stage, and the 'savages' assume the role of the audience – unwittingly, trapped by the appearance of things. This in turn makes it possible for the Europeans to put themselves in the position of both the authors and the addressees of a performance of cultural superiority and to write the 'savages' out of the script altogether. To put it in psychoanalytic terms: the natives are turned into a mirror for the Europeans, who recognize themselves as idols in the eyes of the Other. The sense of self-conscious role-playing created by the theatricality of power in European societies thus feeds into the collective phantasma of imperialism.

While the natives that the European explorers and conquerors encountered certainly never played the part accorded to them by the European script, I do find Greenblatt's reading of the colonial text convincing, since it stresses theatricality and performativity as semiotic practices organizing perception and cognition. His model thus allows for later epistemological transformations of the colonial primal scene into anthropological concepts of cultural difference. But European cultural critique can also be traced back to the colonial script. For regrets about the betrayal and the fraud committed against the natives are expressed in many texts about the exchanges on the beach; Todorov shows that traces of it can be detected in Columbus's journal, where it is transformed into protectionist behaviour. Again Greenblatt:

> Europeans [...] congratulate themselves for their greater perspicacity, but at the same time their accounts of the unequal exchanges frequently imply a sense of bad faith, a sense - reflected in the very term 'trifle' - that they are taking advantage of native innocence. (110)

Greenblatt's reading of the colonial enterprise – and he of course elaborates on it in the course of his book – gives an account of the modes of cultural contact laid out by Horkheimer and Adorno in their *Dialectics of Enlightenment*. Greenblatt contends that the colonial discourses of power must be recognized as variants of essentially modern discourses. In a famous article, he demonstrates how the scientific critique of religion as a social practice of masking power can be used effectively to manage colonial subjects and inquire into cultural difference.[3] In this way, Greenblatt's argument remains compatible with postcolonial theory: while he certainly addresses the issue of colonialism from the perspective of the 'centre,' he supports the postcolonial description of cultures as rugged spaces of intercultural contact, engendering competitive and antagonistic strategies of miming and mimicking that in turn produce overdetermined texts. However, as his reading of colonialism lacks an emphatic identification with the postcolonial subject position, he has to address the moral and political issues of postcoloniality in a different way. This is all the more urgent as he implicitly reads the scene of a barter on the beach as the historical *a priori* for the European production of knowledge about the Other, which makes the scene haunt Greenblatt's own text.

3 See Stephen Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets," in *Shakespearean Negotiations* (New York: Oxford UP, 1988): ch. 2.

Here I'd like to return once more to Greenblatt's comment. I repeat my first quotation from *Marvelous Possessions*:

> Where they might then have imagined mutual gift-giving or, alternatively, a mutually satisfactory economic transaction, the Europeans instead tended to imagine an exchange of empty signs, of alluring counterfeits for overwhelming abundance.

By this move, he tries to sidestep critical discourses that attack colonialism and the ideology of civilization but risk remaining inscribed in the colonial script, since they conceive of the Other only as a victim. Insisting on reciprocity and equivalence as the conceptual horizons of his own enquiry, Greenblatt stresses the moral and epistemological necessity of taking the interests of the Other into account, although they are systematically ignored and excluded by the colonial script. He thus tries to place his enquiry within the field of postcolonial studies, although his reading of the primal scene on the beach does not concern itself with the interests of the Other – which, after all, could only be presumed in these very first moments of contact – but with the reasons for and the consequences of the European conceptual violence of systematically misconstruing the structure of these exchanges. Greenblatt's concept of reciprocity and equivalence thus remains a gesture.[4]

I do not think that it is an empty gesture, for later chapters in *Marvelous Possessions* analyze the position of cultural interpreters and go-betweens that negotiate between the antagonistic interests of colonizers and colonized and invent, if not inhabit, hybrid cultural spaces. Rather, I am concerned with the idea of justice implied in Greenblatt's concept of reciprocity and equivalence. Read as a structural feature of the scene of barter on the beach that was repressed and erased by colonial discourse, reciprocity and equivalence are both defined as implications of economic exchange in a market economy and accepted as embodiments of a normative principle. Greenblatt argues from within the American liberal tradition with its "spurious egalitarianism."[5] I now want to ask whether the

4 Cf. Caroline Porter's critique, in her article "Are We Being Historical Yet?," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 87.4 (1988): 743–786.

5 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994): 245. The complete sentence runs as follows: "The process I have described as the sign of the present – *within modernity* – erases and interrogates those ethnocentric forms of cultural modernity that 'contemporize' cultural difference: it opposes both cultural pluralism with its spurious egalitarianism – different cultures in the same time, [...] – or cultural relativism – different cultural temporalities in the same 'universal' space."

legal paradigms of liberal societies clash with the ethics of singularity I understand Homi Bhabha is advocating. And I wonder, since probably there is no way of producing a hybrid of the two ethical principles, whether we can alternate between them or whether we have to decide on one of the two in our practices of reading and teaching.

Discussion

H.B.: Can you just repeat the last point again?

Ulla Haselstein: About reciprocity?

H.B.: And the singularity issue and where you think it may be incompatible.

Ulla Haselstein: What I wanted to say was that, in Greenblatt's way of interpreting this primal scene or this trauma, he really tries to account for his own position as the heir to a certain tradition of cultural critique, also of anthropological thought, that cannot be simply discarded. But he uses it in order to re-work and work through it. Still, he makes one move that seems to be different, and this is the idea that at the very moment of the first encounter where the two parties are still free – there is no global marketplace yet and no colonial power – and come together on the beach and exchange and barter, there is equivalence, since it's a free exchange. But Greenblatt says this exchange has always from the very beginning been *understood* as an unequal exchange even though it was not; and he follows his ideas through. And now he goes on to say that, instead of repeating and criticizing this inequality all the time, we at least have to create, perhaps, an empty space for the interest of the other in this exchange that is never stated, that is never accounted for, that is never dealt with in this kind of melancholy deploration. And therefore he argues that one has at least to insert the idea of reciprocity on principle, even though it can never really become true any more. I mean, we all know that this is a sort of counterfactual thinking, but nevertheless it's important and has even been taken up in certain anthropological works such as *Entangled Objects*, by Nicholas Thomas.

I think what Greenblatt does here is a very important move, but it comes from a certain tradition. Basically, it is a move towards creating justice, even belatedly, and this kind of justice follows the legal paradigm. There are two parties and the other party should also be heard and taken into account. Even if it's not possible anymore, it should be done, and it must be done in this way. I was wondering whether this legal paradigm, with two parties that have to be heard, that have to express themselves, always implies legal subjects. A legal subject always implies somebody who has an identity, somebody who acts, who is subject to a certain degree of accountability. Thus I was wondering about your position, since you criticized cosmo-pluralism so harshly. I thought that you were actually arguing for an ethics of singularity where no singular site can be generalized any more. It is such a radicalization of process, if I may quote one of the participants; that process has become so strong that there no longer seems to be anything to create stability.

H.B.: I think that I have argued against certain forms of the egalitarian basis of pluralism, and since having gone to the United States I argue more strongly still against them, because I believe that they are based on the equal playing-field theory – that, as some way to restore justice, we have to now put ourselves in this space. Now, one theoretical problem there has to do with the temporality of exchange. I think it actually doesn't deal with, or it assumes always, a kind of homogeneous temporality of exchange which I do not hold with. And it also assumes a kind of unimpeded circulation in the exchange which I also do not hold, laudable though I find the desire. Michael Walzer comes to mind – and I am going to turn to him in a minute – and Charles Taylor, both of whom I have actually opposed on this issue and written about, which will be expanded in my new book. But it seems to me that circulation as communication is assumed in some way to be consensual, and you also have to assume the temporality of the exchange.

Now, having said that, I understand also the positive aspects of acknowledging reciprocity. The problem arises when in, for instance, Charles Taylor's book on multiculturalism, which I think is germane to this issue, you always assume a reciprocity at the starting-point of the enquiry. The only way to be a good, pragmatic, communitarian liberal is to assume that all people are equal, all cultures are equal, and that this is supposed to be the redemptive, the corrective move. If you don't say that, where would you go? However, let me caution that in that very moment

there are two problems. The one problem is that you see continually in that trajectory. We *a priori* have to give this reciprocity, this equality, this egalitarianism, at the point of starting. But at the other end, at the point of judgement, we are no longer in this free space temporally, in a communicational space. What does Charles Taylor say at the end of his argument? Having conceded the free space at the start of his argument, at the end of his argument (as I have written in my piece on this problem) he says, "I'm very happy to grant equal status to cultures, of course I'd be damn stupid if I didn't. This is the first principle of our much cherished humanitarian, egalitarian principle." But he says you can't have a free-play system, because that system also has a kind of wild card in it. It can be a free-play system, so how am I going to deal with this? He says, "Well, I'll deal with it. I grant at the end" – you know, at the level of judgement, not at the level of exceeding equality – "well, the way I will deal with it is that we must give equal respect to all cultures that have fed large communities over a long period of time." You see? And that's where in this piece of mine called "Cultures In-between" I say that the equal playing-field theory, that egalitarian theory, first of all is always a double articulation. Also, there's one simple question: who came to the beach? *They* came to the beach. The desiring machine is also there, you know. Who arrived at my home and said: "Thank you very much but can I have your mother's trinkets?" So, first at the theoretical level, I think there is a problem in the double articulation.

Secondly, let us go to Walzer's new book, which I just taught in a seminar in New Orleans: *What it Means to be an American*. Exactly the same move, but in a different context. America has always been this great society of migrants, you know. As migrants, there is this reciprocity: we recognize migrants as other migrants, we live in this space. Now, introduce into that the coruscating re-memory, not just the atavistic memory of slavery, but the coruscating re-memory in the Toni Morrison sense, and immediately that reciprocity, the temporality of that reciprocity, is destroyed. There is one sentence in the entire book on what it means to be an American, where he says maybe this free theory of migration does not adequately deal with the American Indian instance and the Black American. Basta! He doesn't deal with this. And that's where I began to re-think that book.

You are quite right: the emphasis is on process and circulation; but the emphasis is on process and circulation regulated by certain specified

theories of temporal disjunction, so that time and ethics is my problem. And it is the temporality that I believe produces the subject for a new or another kind of ethics, and that subject is not radically singularized but instantiated with a view to that ethical argument. For that area of my work I would ask you just to consider what I do around what I call the space of enunciation as being the seed of the ethical. I do not believe it is radically singularized, so that there can be no meta-theory, there can be no foundational ethics. But that in no sense means that there isn't a place for choice and a place for judgement, but a judgement that recognizes the inequality of that playing-field as, indeed, do some writers. Now, that's my response to Greenblatt/ Walzer/Taylor, all the ghosts that somehow stand behind that.

Herbert Grabes: I would like to go back to that story you told us Greenblatt uses. And I have always been wondering why we unfortunately don't have a similar story written out by those who came to the beach and got the glass beads or whatever. But let's say, if we consider cultures as different value systems, maybe their story could also be of the following kind: "These people came, they were giving us things, and they thought that the things they received from us were very valuable, but of course we made much the better deal." So then, who is the referee? I mean, where would you place that person in order to say there is no equivalence, no reciprocity? And of course, you could say that, in material terms, you got so many more valuable things. But if you have a world-view where material things don't count for all that much, one might say: "Yes, well then, have this, well it's not that important for me," and others might say: "Oh, well, we exploited you, you know." The point is, who is exploiting whom, and if you really take a radical view of the equality of world-views, then where are you? Greenblatt employs that whole scenario of "In the Renaissance evil was invented"; I could give you more instances. Renaissance man invented the evil kind of strategic thinking when people started moving around the world exploiting others. Of course, there were inventions before Renaissance man, so I don't go along with Greenblatt's fiction there.

Ulla Haselstein: Well, it is a fiction, to be sure, but I think it's also important to see in what way it can be used in his work. I think it's very

obvious that he quotes from Columbus's son, but this quotation is actually framed as a narrative move that re-creates the story as the site of a primal scene of the crime that one has to return to and that one has to re-phrase. I would not so much like to accuse him of creating or of depicting Renaissance man as the one responsible for evil. I think he actually gives reasons why the productivity of discourse at this particular moment actually created the very possibility of converting symbolic capital into economic capital and vice versa. And I think this is related to the breaking-up of the unity of the signifier and the signified. You can displace the problem into a discursive constellation that then produces various effects, which then circulate within a new space and which then produce effects here and there that may actually balance each other or cancel each other out or reinforce each other, and so on. So I would not accept your view of the story as a story of how evil came into the world, but I would, rather, argue that what Greenblatt does here is to give at least the option of thinking of these others, as you said, as people with an agenda of their own. And I mentioned Nicholas Thomas's book *Entangled Objects* because he describes the gift exchange in the very region that all the anthropologists who were writing about the gift exchange were always referring to. And he went back there and he said, "No, I am not going to describe primitive culture and I am not going to describe the gift exchange as a mode of creating community and coherence and coherent societies, and so on. No, I am going to look at the kind of exchanges that actually happened between those people on those islands and the European explorers, colonizers, imperialists and so on, but not under the auspices of how bad those Europeans were behaving or how they were exploiting those poor natives." But he'd ask, rather: "What kind of strategies did those people who were living on the islands actually opt for? What kind of discourses of their own did they have to account for the kind of relations that were evolving?" I think it's important to empower the Other with an agenda of their own.

How Shall We Read South Asian–Canadian Texts?

ARUN P. MUKHERJEE

In Canada usually we get completely swamped by our neighbours, and right now we have globality itself, Canadian-style. Half-globality. Usually we have American speakers come to Toronto and they don't even remember that they are in Toronto – they keep talking about "our President," "our Mayor," and people pay them a lot to bring them over, and then they are really mad when this happens because they didn't even correct their funny little references to "our Prime Minister" or "our Premier." And, I guess, maybe instead of getting really upset about the stealing of the furies[1] – for example, multiculturalism – they believe that they were the first multiculturalists. And now of course multiculturalism has become fashionable and it seems it was also invented somewhere else, in modern Canada. So I just would prefer not to be global on what we are talking about – our little corner in Canada. I thank you again for inviting me and remembering Canada, because nations and small communities and ethnicities with roots have become kind-of out of fashion; we only talk about global trends. And yet on 30 October 1995 I knew what it means to be part of a nation and what it means to wish that your nation survives. I am talking about the referendum that night. We have really been through a very traumatic time and similar to the last two weeks of the referendum we have been almost ill, and I cannot talk a lot about that. 'Nation' is also something that post-modernists and globalizers make fun of, thinking it's a *passé* institution. And yet, when a nation is in the process of forming, you don't know what else you want; first of all, you want to preserve it. So I am here to talk about what happens in Canada and what happens in very small minority communities. I originally relayed the title of my talk over the phone from Canada, so I don't know if 'should' or 'shall' would really make much difference. But my title was trying to open up the question of appropriate theoretical

1 See Wilson Harris's address at this symposium (pp. 137ff. below).

frameworks for reading minority literatures – particularily, in this case, South Asian–Canadian literature. And I hope that my title, with that question mark, is signalling my hesitation to utilize the frameworks that are currently in use – mainly: postcolonial literature, minority discourse, and, even more recently, diaspora writing.

I'm not going to spend too much time discussing these terms; they come loaded with assumptions and they result in consequences that I am quite dissatisfied with. And here I might say that some of my graduate students are now beginning to say, when they start talking about something: "I'm not a theory person, but...." And I am not a theory person myself. There's so much of this postcolonial theory now – I was just reading *ARIEL*'s last two issues, and they made me very discontented. Last year when I was in India I found that now they've started building roads which are called bypasses – you know, you don't have to get into the city centre, you can just 'bypass' and go wherever you are going. And I wish I could bypass the whole post-colonial theory bit. I'm not really going to spend too much time on that. So the most objectionable tendency, among the three concepts that I just talked about, would be to include the global nuances – in my case, the Canadian nuances; a somewhat ironic situation, I feel, given the fact that all of the three terms mentioned have been consistently deployed to criticize what is called the universalist agendas of Western humanism.

So, what happens when these terms enter Canadian territory? We might begin with the term 'postcolonial.' In Canada at the moment, I register three kinds of postcolonialism. One is the academic category of what's called postcolonial literature, where we are teaching regional literatures – Africa, Asia (mostly India), Australia, the Caribbean. The second meaning of 'post-colonial' is now being applied to white anglophone Canadian literature, where Canadian critics read Canadian writers along postcolonial theoretical perspectives. 'Post colonial' number three refers to the critiquing of the above-mentioned phenomenon, where critics like Linda Hutcheon voice their ironies, reminding us of the countless male white colonizers of the two founding nations, the white anglophone and white francophone Canadians, who have both started talking about having been colonized, too. And Linda Hutcheon has to remind us that it is the original – aboriginal – people that are what she calls the authentic postcolonial force in Canada. Native critics and writers reject the term 'postcolonial' instead of 'aboriginal' or 'Native' because they find it insulting, eurocentric, and unnecessarily restrictive in describing the cultural ferment that is going on in the aboriginal community.

So they want to try and make a space for South Asian–Canadian writing as different from the other Canadian literatures. The term 'postcolonial' is already occupied by 'Canadian' on the one hand and 'Native' on the other, which doesn't of course mean that individual South Asian immigrant writers have not been read as postcolonial writers, and so they should be, I'm not objecting to that, given that many of them focus on the themes of colony and empire that postcolonial theory foregrounds. However, not all South Asian–Canadian writers do that, and so the term 'postcolonial' does not appear to be a perfect fit to describe the collectivity of South Asian–Canadian literature. Now, collectivity is the term that was used with remarkable frequency and confidence in Abdul JanMohamed's and David Lloyd's introduction to their collection *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*.[2] The book popularizes minority discourse and counter-discourse, two terms which right now are obviously very trendy. And, given that South Asians are a minority in Canada, the term 'minority discourse' seems promising at first. However, as I will explain later, when I find the term stretched to include all the minorities of the West as well as the entire "Third World", I wonder whether the notion of 'ethnicity' might be a more serviceable hook on which to hang literature by South Asians living in Canada.

A Meeting of Streams: *South Asian Canadian Literature*,[3] an anthology of essays that were presented at a 1983 conference on South Asian writing, is the first instance one comes across the idea of a grouping of writers defined according to their ethnicity. An earlier volume, entitled *Identifications*: *Ethnicity and the Writer in Canada*,[4] uses terms like "Canadian Hungarian Literature" or "Icelandic Canadian Literature" to describe writings by early immigrants in their mother tongues but does not categorize writing in English in terms of the ethnic origin of the writers. *Literatures of Lesser Diffusion*,[5] on the other hand, freely categorizes Canadian authors according to their ethnic/racial origin. Another phenomenon of the Nineties is the publication of anthologies like *The Geography of Voice* and *Many*

2 Abdul R. JanMohamed & David Lloyd, "Introduction: Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse: What Is to Be Done?" *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, ed. Abdul R. JanMohamed & David Lloyd (New York: Oxford UP, 1990): 1–16.

3 *A Meeting of Streams: South Asian Canadian Literature*, ed. M.G. Vassanji (Toronto: TSAR, 1985).

4 *Identifications: Ethnicity and the Writer in Canada*, ed. Jars Balan (Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1982).

5 *Literatures of Lesser Diffusion*, ed. Joseph Pivato (Edmonton, Alberta: Research Institute for Comparative Literature, 1990).

Mouthed Birds[6] whose criterion of inclusion is the writer's ethnic/racial background.

Thus, ethnicity and race have become important theoretical tools in the analysis and categorization of Canadian literature over the last decade. A theoretical apparatus, recognizable by its vocabulary, has emerged which allows us to speak of Canada's minority writers in terms of categories such as group history, group culture, racial persecution. Insofar as this vocabulary has broken the hold of Canadian literary nationalism which evaluated writers in terms of their 'Canadianness,' it has had a beneficial effect. However, the popularization of this vocabulary, or what Foucault would call a 'discursive formation,' has also lent the reception and analysis of these texts a certain pre-packaged quality.

One comes across this vocabulary in reviews of South Asian–Canadian writers' works, in journal articles, and in course-descriptions in university calendars. The following extract from a course-description entitled "Post-Colonial Literature," a second-year course being offered at a California university, provides a good example of the terminology in vogue:

> In this course we will address some of the political and theoretical issues raised by such categories of literary study as 'the post-colonial.' Much of the discussion will be grounded in our reading of fiction from the Indian Subcontinent, Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere. Other issues that will be considered will include: the place of literature in the post-colonial globe, representing the self, mimicry, hybridity, writing in the colonizer's language, the changing foci of second and third generations of post-colonial writers, immigration, subaltern studies, domestic fiction, feminist fiction, national identity, etc.

This course description neatly presses all the right buttons associated with "Post-Colonial Studies," the usual niche for South Asian–Canadian writers. A prefabricated, cookie-cutter theoretical framework not only allots writers from postcolonial countries a place, albeit a marginal one, in the curriculum but also predetermines what will be said about them. Terms such as 'mimicry,' 'hybridity,' 'writing in the colonizer's language,' 'immigration,' 'subaltern studies,' 'national identity,' are tediously familiar, and students taking such a course should find producing term papers on writers included here no more taxing than pulling a TV dinner out of the freezer and zapping it.

6 *The Geography of Voice: Canadian Literature of the South Asian Diaspora*, ed. Diane McGifford (Toronto: TSAR, 1992); *Many-Mouthed Birds: Contemporary Writing by Chinese Canadians*, ed. Bennett Lee & Jim Wong-Chu (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991).

The language may differ a bit or the names of writers may vary, but the above course description provides a good snapshot of what "Post-Colonial Literature" courses look like. Now that most North American universities have their calendars online, I got to look at some of these descriptions on the Internet. Here is a course description that was posted by a Canadian university:

> Eng 472Y
>
> Representing the Other in Post-Colonial Literature
>
> A study of post-colonial writers who give expression to the voice of the 'other": the silenced, the subaltern and the marginalized. The course considers such writers as Keri Hulme, Mudrooroo Narogin, Jack Davis, Suniti Namjoshi, Thomas King, Bessie Head, Salman Rushdie, Rajiva Wijesinha, Lewis Nkosi, Allan Sealy, Satendra Nandan and Rohinton Mistry.

The American and the Canadian course descriptions rely on the same theoretical formulae. The difference, however, is that the Canadian course includes Australian and New Zealand writers, whereas the Californian course does not. But besides that little bit of extra coverage, attributable to Canadian, Australian and New Zealand ties as Commonwealth countries, the basic premise of the two courses is remarkably similar. Both presume that writers from diverse parts of the world can be taught in one course, under the rubric of terms like 'mimicry,' 'hybridity,' 'the subaltern,' 'the marginalized,' 'the other.' Both have dispensed with categories that generally apply to the literature of Britain, the USA, and European countries: periodization, literary movements, and national or regional groupings.

The key terms mentioned above help place writers flagged as 'post-colonial' in opposition to the canonical, dead-white-male writers. To repeat a popular phrase, 'postcolonial' writers "write back to the empire." They deconstruct, parody, oppose, and mimic dominant discourses of the centre. In the case of South Asian–Canadian writers, this theoretical framework assumes that they continue to give 'voice' to the 'subaltern' – presumably the people of the countries they emigrated from – even after having come to Canada as an immigrant. The fallaciousness of this supposition is brought out very well by the following words of Harish Trivedi:

> A primary sense in which much post-colonial writing is not really writing back is that it is hardly resistant or oppositional; it is if anything only too eagerly acquiescent. Another sense in which it cannot be writing back but is rather writing within, or writing from the inside, is the immitigable physical circumstance that, in the case of numerous post-colonial writers of a whole variety of national origins

> including Indians, the act of writing is actually performed while they are ensconced in the bosom of the centre. Nor were any of the Indian post-colonial writers (unlike several eminent writers for example from Nigeria or Kenya) banished or exiled out of India on grounds of political, racial/ethnic or religious persecution; they have left out of their own free and sweet will. It is misleading therefore to speak, as is often done, of their chosen location in the coercive or oppressive terms of exile or diaspora, when what actually happened was that these writers voted with their feet – to say nothing of their heart and soul – for the many cultural and material attractions of the West.'

Trivedi's insistence that we take location of the writer into account is helpful in discussing South Asian–Canadian writing. First, is the current practice of automatically categorizing it as 'postcolonial' correct? Secondly, is it 'resistant' or 'oppositional'? Thirdly, should one use terms like 'exile' or 'diaspora' to describe this writing, as is so commonly done these days? Fourthly, can writers who have emigrated still be giving voice to the 'subaltern'?

These questions, I am afraid, seldom get asked of writers before categorizing them as postcolonial. The course descriptions I discussed above group South Asian–Canadian writers unproblematically with other 'post-colonial' writers, all taught and theorized with the help of terms like 'resistant,' 'mimicry,' 'hybridity,' 'subaltern,' 'marginal,' and so forth.

While there are many other problems with the "Post-Colonial Literature" course that crams together writers of diverse cultural and national origins, here I wish to focus on how it accommodates and processes South Asian–Canadian writing. Its pedagogical and analytical categories basically render irrelevant the South Asian–Canadian aspects of South Asian–Canadian writing. For instance, one could pose the following questions on a South Asian–Canadian text:

(a) What does it mean to be a South Asian–Canadian?
(b) Does a South Asian–Canadian writer draw on his/her ethnic origin?
(c) How are South Asian–Canadian writers received in Canada?
(d) How are South Asian–Canadian writers received in the countries of their origin?

7 Harish Trivedi, "India and Post-Colonial Discourse," in *Interrogating Post-Colonialism: Theory, Text and Context*, ed. Harish Trivedi & Meenakshi Mukherjee (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1996): 231–247; here 242.

Since South Asians are a racial minority in Canada, the 'minority discourse' theory seems promising at first. However, I begin to doubt its usefulness when I find that the term, as employed in JanMohamed's and Lloyd's *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse*, stretches to include all the minorities in the West as well as the entire 'Third World,'[8] We need to be careful that the preoccupations of minorities in North America are not projected back to the countries and cultures they trace their origins to. When JanMohamed and Lloyd claim that "minority discourse is, in the first instance, the product of damage – damage more or less systematically inflicted on cultures produced as minorities by the dominant culture,"[9] they may be quite right about the experience of racial minorities in the West, but it seems preposterous to think of all the 'Third-World' literatures as minority literatures or as "products of damage." Nor can I agree that 'resistance' and 'survival' are the major themes of these literatures and not two among many.

'Minority discourse,' I believe, is riddled with the same problems that I outlined with the "Postcolonial Literature" framework. Both theoretical approaches have global intentions, and, in their universalizing ambition, they fail to take local conditions into account. Or, rather, they universalize on the basis of their own experience. Such a state of affairs comes about because much of publishing and theorizing is concentrated in the hands of a few – the so-called celebrity academics – who set the terms of discourse for others.

At a conference entitled "Interrogating Post-Colonialism" held in Shimla, India, in October 1994, many speakers expressed concern about the hegemonic sweep of academic theorizing originating in "the First World academy," equating it with "a second wave of recolonization."[10] Meenakshi Mukherjee's comments on "our professional compulsion to speak the same language and adopt the same frame of discourse that people from our discipline are doing all over the world, in order to belong to an international community," point out the pressures of globalization in the academic arena.[11] Her warning against "making the specific configuration of

8 Abdul R. JanMohamed & David Lloyd, "Introduction: Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse," 6.
9 "Introduction: Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse," 4.
10 Harish Trivedi, "India and Post-Colonial Discourse," 244.
11 Meenakshi Mukherjee, "Interrogating Post-Colonialism," in *Interrogating Post-Colonialism: Theory, Text and Contextm,* ed. Harish Trivedi & Meenakshi Mukherjee (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1996): 3–11, here 9.

circumstances in particular regions subservient to a global paradigm"[12] underlines the obverse effects of this globalization.

It is no easy task to stay clear of globally propagated theories that emerge from the centres of dominance. The similarity between the two course-descriptions from Canada and the USA, and the similarity of their discourse to that employed by numerous monographs and journal articles, demonstrates the power of 'global paradigms.' They make it impossible to ask the kind of questions that I asked above. These are questions that relate to the effect of being an immigrant writer in Canada: more specifically, being a South Asian–Canadian writer. I would now like to explore those issues.

The South Asian–Canadian community is, like all other Canadian communities except the aboriginal peoples, a community born out of immigration. Like other minority Canadian groups, it was and is the target of state and societal racism. Denied entry into Canada until the Sixties because of Canada's racist immigration policies, South Asians began to enter Canada in significant numbers only after the passage of non-racist immigration laws in 1967. Despite being fairly 'new,' South Asian–Canadians have been prolific in their literary output, most certainly because, unlike many other immigrant groups, they arrived in Canada equipped with an English education.

As has been pointed out by many commentators, 'South Asian' is a bureaucratic term. Covering people who came to Canada from India, Pakistan, Bangla Desh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan (of late, Afganistan has been added to the list): i.e., the geographic region known as the Indian subcontinent, and people from East Africa and the Caribbean who trace their ancestry to the Indian subcontinent, this umbrella term might be said to produce a unitary community that is not actually there. Generally, people socialize in their own ethnic communities – Gujarati or Punjabi; Tamils from Sri Lanka, Sikhs from Bengal. Or they congregate as religious groups in temples, gurudwaras, mosques, and churches, where there's a little more mixing. Indians and Pakistanis also celebrate their respective independence days by hoisting their flags at the Toronto City Hall, a celebration which does not, of course, appeal equally to all given the appellation 'South Asian.'

12 Meenakshi Mukherjee, "Interrogating Post-Colonialism," 7.

And yet, it cannot be denied that a South Asian–Canadian identity has emerged. It can be encountered in the Little India district of Toronto, patronizing 'Indian' grocery, ready-made garments, and jewellery stores, 'Indian' movie theatres and restaurants, 'Indian' TV programmes, and subscribing to newspapers such as *India Abroad* and *India Journal*. And 'India' has become the dominant term here, even though the community comes from several different nations. However, despite these common patterns of consumption, as well as intermarriages where a 'girl' in South Africa may be married off to a 'boy' in Delhi (the marriage arranged in Canada), those described as South Asians may often reject the hyphenation altogether or choose another hyphenation. Neil Bissoondath, for example, wishes to be known as a Canadian writer and not a hyphenated Canadian one such as 'South Asian–Canadian' or 'Indo-Caribbean.'

If we needed material proof of South Asian–Canadian identity and South Asian–Canadian literature, several anthologies have already appeared and several are in the pipeline. Scholarly articles and MA and PhD theses are also in evidence. Thus there is now definitely an object of knowledge called South Asian–Canadian literature that is being interpreted and debated. To the extent that South Asian–Canadian writers share certain commonalities such as culture, memory and a repertoire of linguistic signs, they can be seen as producers of an entity called South Asian–Canadian literature that lends itself to analysis.

Here it is interesting to take a backward glance in order to see how the self-evident terms of today came into being. In 1981, I was hired to help Dr Suwanda Sugunasiri on what, I suppose, was a multicultural boondoggle or programme, under the auspices of the Canadian Secretary of State, to identify and write on East Indian–Canadian writers. Two years earlier, in 1979, the Secretary of State had invited proposals from researchers "to undertake a study of the writers and writings of any one of the groups (Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Indian, Pakistani, etc.)," and the study issued under Dr Sugunasiri's directorship was one report among several produced in Canada on Canada's ethnic minority literatures.[13] The 1981 Canadian census counted 'Indo-Pakistanis'; the term 'South Asian' had not yet come into existence, although by the time we finished the report some

13 Suwanda H.J. Sugunasiri, "The Literature of Canadians of South Asian Origin: An Overview," in *The Search for Meaning: The Literature of Canadians of South Asian Origin*, ed. Suwanda H.J. Sugunasiri (Ottawa: Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, 1988): 5–25, here 5.

years later, it had. My job was to scour through Canadian journals and magazines for Indian-sounding names, marking the texts thus identified for the bibliography and then producing an analysis of South Asian poets. I therefore had the task of producing a South Asian nexus when it didn't exist. Those were the days before ethnic studies, before postcolonial studies, before identity politics in Canada – the poet then, in the Canada of 1981, wrote as an individual about universal themes. In my report I quoted comparatively from Canadian reviews of Caribbean writers, who, the critics felt, seemed to demonstrate well how deep and texturalized their criticism was of their condition. Though less versatile and sure in its treatment, these reviews argued, the poetry of East Indian–Canadians shared similar recurrent dualisms, especially light/dark image patterns, and a concern with the ephemeral and trivial, with writers who, monstrously closed in upon themselves, seek escape or transcendence. I reacted strongly to this kind of intellectual approach and went on to point out that many South Asian–Canadian poets, with the exception of Michael Ondaatje, wrote anti-colonial, anti-racist poetry. And I was using the term 'anti-colonial': I wasn't using 'postcolonial,' as I was reading it fifteen years prior. I investigated these poets' filiated networks and suggested that they were writing not out of the dominant Judaeo-Christian British tradition, but in the tradition of Pablo Neruda, Wilson Harris, Martin Carter and other Third-World writers.

I re-read my report recently and found that while I meant to find certain common strategies, certain common affiliations, and certain common themes in these writers, I did not go on to propose a South Asian identity. For me, their commonalities had emerged because they shared a certain past, their origins in the Indian subcontinent. And yet they remain discrete because that origin had different temporalities in the case of Indo-Caribbean poets when compared to those recently arrived from the Indian subcontinent. Nor was I oblivious to the very marked ideological differences between the writers. There were fiery radicals at the one end of the spectrum; less strident yet politically engaged writers somewhere in-between; and art-for-art's-sakers at the other end. I was glad to see, when I read this report again, that I did not go on to produce a monolithic theory on the basis of my analysis. I called them anti-colonial, not postcolonial. I did not go on to talk about the theoretical Third-Worldist studies of Fredric Jameson or the theory of minority discourse of Lloyd and JanMohamed. I did not indulge in such theoretical exercises, as I was already aware of the fact that these poets were

writing as individuals and not as members of the self-identified community of a collectivity.

However, the term 'South Asian' had obviously acquired enough cachet by the winter of 1982 for it to be used in the title of the first issue of the *Toronto South Asian Review*. The first editorial, published in the summer 1982 issue, is important in view of the fact that the editor, M.G. Vassanji, played a major role in the development of South Asian–Canadian literature in his triple role as editor, theorist, and writer. The passage quoted below outlines his vision of the journal's mission:

> *The Toronto South Asian Review* seeks to make accessible to a wider audience literature that traces some part of its inheritance and meaning in the culture, traditions and history of the Indian subcontint. It is a North American journal and will of necessity reflect perspectives developed at least partly here.[...] It is not intended in these pages to set standards for what reflects South Asian sensibilities and what does not. Nor is it intended for this journal to present a static reflection of the life lived in any particular part of the world at any given time period. People of South Asian origin are found in all corners of the world, speak a large number of languages and English dialects, and possess traits from many other cultures. Many have passed through two or three continents within a few generations and have witnessed enormous historical changes. This diversity in backgrounds and experiences will naturally be reflected in a dynamic and vital way in the contents of this journal.[14]

It is fascinating that the editorial does not refer to Canada at all. It attributes a transnational identity to South Asians, and an examination of the journal's contents shows that it has been publishing the writings of South Asians from many countries. Although the editorial refrains from positing an essentialized South Asian sensibility, it does project, albeit very tentatively, a certain shared history, on the basis of which people can share a platform.

It is ironic that a journal which was a prime mover in the development of South Asian–Canadian literature should now have excised the term 'South Asian' from its title. It changed its name in summer 1993 to the *Toronto Review of Contemporary Writing Abroad*. The eight-page editorial in the spring 1993 issue of the journal muses about South Asian identity and South Asian–Canadian literature and asks the following question: "Is there a South Asian Canadian literature – in terms of a contained, self-referential evolving body of work?" It goes on to answer this question in pessimistic terms:

> I have never sensed any passion behind that label 'South Asian' – no political front, not even a loosely defined conscious aesthetic, or the probing for one: it seemed to

14 M.G. Vassanji, "Editorial," *Toronto South Asian Review* 1.2 (Summer 1982): 1.

> be simply a very convenient and the least discomfiting unbrella to fit under. No controversies, no eloquent voices raised, as happened in the black or Afro-communities. No real anger, but certainly resentment. Docility? Perhaps 'South Asians' feel close enough to the mainstream to feel that goal achievable – and so everyone for himself, scrambling to get out of the hole and into the sun of recognition.[15]

Vassanji's diagnosis of South Asian writers' attitudes provides an important corrective to the tendency in contemporary literary theory to assume that all minority writers write resistance literature and speak of the collective. Certainly, South Asian–Canadian writers do not see themselves as members of a self-identified community, something that happened in the case of Chinese–Canadian and Japanese–Canadian writers when they got together in 1978 to produce an anthology called *Inalienable Rice*.[16] The "Introduction" to this anthology foregrounds the collective voice of the Chinese– and Japanese–Canadian literary community and the ethno-political agenda of their project. The writers of these two communities continue to speak collectively and to each other through their newsletter, called *Rice Paper*.

One result of this close relationship among the writers of this group is the presence in their writing of certain common tropes and themes.[17] Given that they maintain such close personal and professional contact, 'minority discourse' theory might be quite profitably utilized to study them. However, since South Asian–Canadian writers do not participate in such a community, I do not believe that their work displays a shared agenda or a collective consciousness.

It is highly paradoxical that, despite the anti-universalist stance taken by contemporary theorists, their unquestioning categorization of racial minority writers in the West and of all writers in the Third World as 'marginal,' 'subaltern,' 'postcolonial,' and/or 'resistant' ends up producing a new universalism. It seems to me that the application of terms such as 'minority discourse,' 'postcolonial writing,' 'diaspora writing' (also 'South Asian diaspora'), 'exile' has provided critics with prefabricated enclosures to put away racial-minority writing after having once taken note of it in the shape

15 M.G. Vassanji, "Editorial," *Toronto South Asian Review* 11.3 (Spring 1993): 1–8, here 6.

16 *Inalienable Rice: A Chinese & Japanese Canadian Anthology*, ed. Garrick Chu et al. (Vancouver: Intermedia, 1979).

17 See Lien Chao, "Beyond Silence: Chinese Canadian Literature in English," PhD dissertation (North York, Ontario: York University, 1995).

of a laudatory review. After that, the theory mill can begin churning and spewing out more categories, more trendy phrases such as 'hybridity,' 'difference,' 'marginalization,' 'métissage.' The problem is that the pronouncements of these theorists, produced in the specific circumstances of the USA, speak in a universalist vocabulary, never acknowledging their location in a place or time. The following passages from Homi Bhabha provide a good example of this locationless, timeless style:

> [T]he demography of the new internationalism is the history of post-colonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasant and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees. [...] What is striking about the 'new' internationalism is that the move from the specific to the general, from the material to the metaphoric, is not a smooth passage of transition and transcendence. The 'middle passage' of contemporary culture, as with slavery itself, is a process of displacement and disjunction that does not totalize experience. Increasingly, 'national' cultures are being produced from the perspective of disenfranchised minorities. [...] Where once, the transmission of national traditions was the major theme of a world literature, perhaps we can now suggest that transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees – these border and frontier conditions – may be the terrain of world literature.[18]

The ideas expressed in these passages about the special insights of the 'migrant,' who is also described as postcolonial, hybrid, marginal, minority, and refugee, thus collapsing a diverse range of experiences and life situations, can also be found in the work of other well-known critics such as Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd, Edward Said, and Françoise Lionnet. They all valorize the deterritorialized, border-crossing sensibility as the possessor of a special kind of truth.

Aijaz Ahmad has suggested that such formulations erase "the difference between documents produced within the non-Western countries and those others which were produced by the immigrants at metropolitan locations. With the passage of time, the writings of immigrants were to become greatly privileged and were declared, in some extreme but also very influential formulations, to be the only *authentic* documents of resistance in our time."[19] It is these formulations which are expressed pedagogically in the course-descriptions I quoted above, where immigrant writers like Rohinton

18 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994): 5–6, 12.

19 Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992): 91 (Ahmad's emphasis).

Mistry are grouped with aboriginal and Third-World writers and are said to be giving voice to the silenced, the subaltern and the marginalized.

It is well worth remembering that South Asian–Canadian writers are not 'political and economic refugees.' Or 'exiles.' Or 'peasants.' M.G. Vassanji came to North America to study at MIT. Himani Bannerji came to the University of Toronto as a graduate student. Rohinton Mistry worked at a bank before coming to Canada. They are economic migrants, but their situation should not be equated with that of refugees. Nor do all of them write about marginalization and resistance. Himani Bannerji's work definitely *is* about resisting racism, but not that of Vassanji or Mistry. Vassanji writes about the various migrations of his fictionalized Shamsi community and Mistry about the middle-class Parsis of Bombay. (True, Mistry's new novel, *A Fine Balance*, portrays the marginalized poor of India, but I would not like to think of it as 'giving voice to' the marginalized as contemporary theory claims for 'postcolonial' and 'minority' writers. Also, I don't think that the novel portrays 'resistance'; rather, its tone seems to suggest that the poor accept their lot fatalistically.)

Although major literary and cultural critics have valorized immigrant writing, Canadian reviewers and critics do not seem to know what to do with novels like *The Gunny Sack*, *The Book of Secrets*, *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*. Although Vassanji's *The Book of Secrets* and Mistry's *A Fine Balance* have been honoured by the bestowal of the prestigious Giller prize, their lack of 'Canadian content' is noticed. An interview with Mistry by the *Toronto Star*'s book critic, Philip Marchand, is headlined, "Mistry Writes Home." Marchand reports that "many Canadian readers [...] feel there is something vaguely wrong with Mistry not writing about the country he has lived in for twenty years."[20] The question of 'Canadian content' is often raised about the work of immigrant writers from racial minorities. As Vassanji complains, there is a perception "that a writer matures when he begins to talk of his 'Canadian experience' [...]."[21]

In his ambitious study *Post-National Arguments*, Frank Davey attributes only a footnote to Nino Ricci, M.G. Vassanji, and Rohinton Mistry, claiming that they did not meet his criteria. Here is how he defines his selection process:

20 Philip Marchand, interview with Rohinton Mistry, "Mistry Writes Home," *Toronto Star* (December 3, 1995): F1.

21 M.G. Vassanji, "Introduction" to *A Meeting of Streams: South Asian Canadian Literature*, ed. Vassanji (Toronto: TSAR, 1985): 1–6, here 3.

> I have chosen the specific texts of the study, not with the aim of representing any 'best' books, or even best-selling books, but of representing instead books that have been important to particular Canadian audiences and have offered some portrayal of Canada as a semiotic field.

Although, to my mind, these criteria can easily accommodate Ricci, Vassanji and Mistry, Davey's appended footnote explains why the above-mentioned writers are not discussed:

> This criterion excludes from direct examination some recent novels of Canadian ethnic communities which are of considerable importance, such as Nino Ricci's *Lives of the Saints*, Moyez Vassanji's *The Gunny Sack*, and Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*, novels which contain few if any significations of Canada or of Canadian polity. Their lack of such significations, however, itself has political implications which contribute to the general suggestions of this study.[22]

If one of the foremost Canadian critics does not know how to make sense of these novels in the Canadian context, it would be futile to expect anything from those who review for newspapers and journals. The usual procedure is to give a plot summary of sorts, comment on things such as characterization and narrative pace, then end on an encouraging note. 'Canadian' writers, by contrast, are attributed with the power of giving voice to Canadian experience.

But what I want to ask is, what is the meaning of South Asian–Canadian books about 'home,' if I may appropriate Philip Marchand's terminology for a moment? If they do not mean anything to readers like Frank Davey, then who are they written for? For readers in India?

Given the fact that Penguin India has published Indian editions of M.G. Vassanji, Rohinton Mistry, and Arnold Itwaru, it would be very interesting to do a comparative analysis of reader responses to these texts in Canada and India. As I have already suggested, the (white) Canadian response has been to see these texts as immigrants writing 'home.' In Vassanji's opinion, when a writer is categorized as 'immigrant,' he or she "may seem irrelevant to the ongoing dialectic."[23] Not surprisingly, one of the most frequent words I have come across in reviews of South Asian–Canadian books is the word 'exotic."

As to the Indian response, the papers that I heard read at the tenth International Canadian Studies conference in Goa, India, spoke of South

22 Frank Davey, *Post-National Arguments: The Politics of the Anglophone-Canadian Novel since 1967* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993): 7.

23 M. G. Vassanji, "Introduction," 3.

Asian–Canadian writing as "immigrant sensibility," "caught between two worlds," "nostalgic" about India and unable to "become" fully Canadian. This pathologizing of the immigrant, then, is done both by Indian and Canadian readers. Immigrant writing, it seems, is always about longing for homes lost, about the pain of transportation, about adjustment and not about the "ongoing dialectic" of a society.

There is something very smug about this kind of response. I see it as a denial of the possibility that a book by an 'immigrant' may also have some relevance to readers in India. It seems that 'the immigrant experience' is relevant to no one except 'the immigrant.' Such a response seems highly inadequate to me in the contemporary world when fifteen million Indian citizens (the number who hold Indian passports) live abroad and impact on the lives of those who live in India by sending money home. But that is only one aspect of their impact. It is time for Indian critics to consider the possibility that South Asian–Canadian writing may have something valuable to say about Indian life (life as lived in India certainly, if not the life of Indians living abroad).

It is worth noticing that neither the Indian nor the Canadian critics use vocabulary that accords a special insight to 'diasporic' or 'exilic' writing, the kind of language one comes across at the high peaks of critical theory.

There is a certain Canadian (white) response that reads Rohinton Mistry's books as evidence of India's backwardness. Philip Marchand of the *Toronto Star* was not the only critic who found Bombay "repulsive": "The local colour frequently turns repulsive. The Bombay of this novel is a city where sewers are in disrepair, where street food vendors practise doubtful hygiene, and where the wall of Gustad's apartment building [...] is used as a public toilet. The most disgusting, and macabre, imagery involves the Tower of Silence, where Parsis expose the bodies of their dead to the vultures, according to traditional practice."[24] Phoebe–Lou Adams of the *Atlantic* had a similar response: "Mr. Mistry's novel [...] includes such acid comments on Indian politics, metropolitan services, sanitation, and the corruption of Indira Gandhi's government that one can readily see why the author now lives in Toronto."[25]

While such responses show that many readers in the West read the book as evidence of India's 'horrors,' Indian readers (and many South Asian–

24 Philip Marchand, review of *Such a Long Journey*, *Toronto Star* (May 4, 1991): K12.

25 Phoebe–Lou Adams, review of *Such A Long Journey*, *Atlantic Monthly* 267.5 (May, 1991): 124.

Canadian readers) were critical of the book for its obsessive descriptions of Bombay's garbage. A visiting professor from India, when asked to respond to *Such a Long Journey*, which was in the news then, having just been nominated for the Booker Prize, replied, "Ah, such a long book," and went on to talk about the book's tendency to step down to the gutter. She asked the expatriate writers to explore the beauties of India rather than wallow in the filth. She wanted, she said, a balanced portrayal. Such diametrically opposed responses to the book should give pause to critics who claim that the 'migrant' offers "unique insights."[26] These responses show the power of preconceptions and the readers' tendency to accommodate texts to their own ideological frameworks.

Totally opposed to the responses discussed earlier is that of a South Asian–Canadian women's group whose anger at my review, which had been critical of the book's sexist portrayals of women, was reported to me by a friend who was present at the gathering. These women were angry because I had betrayed the community by being negative about one of 'our' writers. The tension between Indo-Caribbean and African–Caribbean communities around V.S. Naipaul and Neil Bissoondath is a similar case in point. Quite often, the disputants haven't even read the writer in question. However, I am not suggesting that one should not have an opinion before having read the book. What I am pointing out is the phenomenon where the writer becomes either an icon of community pride or a target of community anger.

The second-generation South Asian–Canadians have another interesting response to South Asian–Canadian writers. A South Asian student of mine is the president of the Rohinton Mistry fan club. He says that the book is important for him because it is located in Bombay, the city of his parents. This response rings a bell with me because I, too, have felt enthralled by books set in Lahore, the city I have never visited because of Partition but the city that was the home of my parents and grandparents. Young South Asian readers will, then, respond to South Asian–Canadian literature in a much more intense way than other Canadians, who may find it "confusing" because "it is such a long journey from that world to our own."[27]

Similar to this student's perspective on Mistry is that of some South Asian students who love reading South Asian–Canadian writing because of

26 Françoise Lionnet, *Post-Colonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity* (Ithaca NY: Cornell UP, 1995): 6.

27 James McEnteer, review of *Such a Long Journey*, *Calgary Herald* (September 7, 1991): D15.

its representation of South Asian lives as normal. They have suggested to me that finding characters with names like their own in literary texts takes away the pain they have felt because of the way their names were distorted and made fun of by teachers and other authority figures. I suppose entering the world of a South Asian–Canadian book is experienced by these youngsters as some kind of affirmation.

For an immigrant from India like myself, the value of South Asian–Canadian writing lies in learning about the historic migrations of South Asians during colonial times. Although I spent the first twenty-five years of my life in various academic settings in India, I had never been made aware of the indentured workers who went to the Caribbean, Mauritius, Fiji and Africa. Reading the works of Indo-Caribbean writers like Cyril Dabydeen and Arnold Itwaru and Asian–African writer M.G. Vassanji has filled huge gaps in my knowledge of the world. Now that Penguin India has brought out Indian editions of some of these writers' works, Indian readers will have access to a narrative that has been almost forgotten in contemporary India.

It is evident that South Asian–Canadian texts evoke multiple responses in Canada and in other parts of the world, responses which call into question theoretical models such as Fredric Jameson's national allegory, postcolonialists' 'empire writes back,' and minority discourse theorists' 'collective subjectivity.'[28] The 'resistance' to an antagonist, sometimes defined as 'the colonizer' and sometimes 'the West,' that all these frameworks rely on in their analysis is far too sweeping and simplistic to serve as an interpretative aid. It has no room, for example, for Vassanji's Indian Africans, who loved the sound of Big Ben, or Rohinton Mistry's Parsis, who are still not reconciled to British departure from India. Such revelations, comic as they are, put a crimp in the heroic narratives of Herculean struggles of resistance.

The reality is that the South Asian–Canadian community does not have a monolithic perspective, nor do its writers. And so, while some writers do have a strong political agenda (Himani Bannerji and Krisantha Siri Bhaggiyadatta, for example), others like Neil Bissoondath think literature is apolitical. In his *Selling Illusions*, Bissoondath berates anti-racist and

28 Abdul R. JanMohamed & David Lloyd, "Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse," 9.

feminist struggles as reverse racism and reverse sexism. As regards literature, he wishes it to speak only of individuals and not of politics:

> Those who seek to subordinate art, its functions and its freedoms to sexual, racial or religious politics seek nothing less than to impose their own ideological visions on the imaginative expressions of others. [...] Literary characters must be true only to themselves and their circumstances. They owe allegiance to neither the writer nor the social group to which they belong. They are, if they truly live, individuals with their own psychology and their own biography, no more and no less representative or symbolic of a group than any live, breathing human being.[29]

Bissoondath's view that literature should be above politics and about individuals is, alas, not unique among South Asian–Canadian writers. A recent collection of Urdu stories in translation excludes all Marxist Urdu writers because they failed to explore "what lay beyond the immediate socio-economic reality." Only a few "independent" writers, according to the editor, "elected to chronicle the events of the elusive and shimmering realms of the individual consciousness."[30]

Given such a diversity of ideological perspectives among South Asian–Canadian writers, I do not see how a 'collective consciousness' can be ascribed to them, the criterion so important for minority discourse theorists. Nor can I agree that 'marginalization' and 'resistance' are the main themes of 'all' South Asian–Canadian writers. Insofar as South Asian–Canadian writers trace their origins to the Indian subcontinent, their work, if studied together, may yield certain recurring themes and patterns. What I am resisting here is the tendency in contemporary critical theory to categorize these writers *a priori* as resistant postcolonials, as subalterns and marginals. The fact remains that South Asians are a people divided along class, caste, religious, ideological, and national lines, and though we seem to communicate with each other without problems in the grocery stores of Little India on Gerrard Street, we don't seem to do so anywhere else. To suggest, then, that our writers speak in one voice, the voice of 'resistance,' or represent the 'collective,' is to distort the facts.

It is quite ironic that such claims on behalf of 'postcolonial' and 'minority' writers go unexamined in the era of deconstruction. As readers, we must learn to be as vigilant of the truth claims of these writers' texts as we must of those by 'dead white males.' Unfortunately, terms like

29 Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (Toronto: Penguin, 1994): 170.

30 Muhammad Umar Memon, introduction to *Domains of Fear and Desire: Urdu Stories*, ed. Memon (Toronto: TSAR, 1992): vi.

'postcoloniality,' 'marginality,' 'subalternity,' and 'resistance' make it impossible to talk about things such as ideology, mediation, and conditions of production and dissemination. These are important questions, and productive lines of inquiry would open up if we asked these questions while reading South Asian–Canadian texts.

Globality, Labour, Space: *Zettel*

GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK

I don't follow through the definition of narrative very causally. So I would want you to think about how different narratives are implied, if narrative is indeed what I say it is. And I have a very simple minded definition that I would want you to think about when considering the different pasts, presents and futures that are implied in the different positions I'm going to be talking about. For some of us, there are two radical givens, two data out of which we proceed: time and death. Why space is not here we can talk about later. In spite of the pro-lifers, we do not anticipate our own birth. There is an unanticipated role and irreducible gift of temporality, timing, or temporaneity that allows us to make sense of life and death by constructing past, present, future. This is to think narrative simply. But I believe this simple thinking of narrative can take on board the most complex narrative speculation, and in that hope I begin.

Casting my net rather more broadly, I would venture to say also that one characteristic of being is surely to resist the possibility that we cannot articulate ourselves as adequate narratives. Should we learn to love both the good characters and the evil characters in a novel? This is a desire to constitute ourselves as a kind of subject who can have the capacity to judge the good and the bad and love and hate accordingly. Now, the fact is that it may not be possible in life to constitute ourselves as adequate narrators. Time is without end, and the world is large, so I do not think this a perfectly adequate constitution of myself as a judging narrator, choosing to love and hate; this we want to resist, because we want to act. So if we say that one characteristic of being is surely to resist the possibility that we cannot articulate ourselves as adequate narrators, and if in the end time and death are the two givens, then there's another reason why we cannot articulate

ourselves. It is this resistance that gives the subject its dynamic outlines and its position for itself and others. The subject at any given moment of computation is a crossroads of many narratives or efforts to narrate, long and short, far-reaching, mysterious, in dream and in waking.

In the classic situation of eurocentric economic migration, the worker coming looking for economic justice under capitalism. These efforts to narrate, these resistances to the irreducible, non-constitutive ability of a narrator, swing between identity and the political, identity and the economic, identity and the cultural. Where the lines keeping these thematics separate is forever uncertain. How can I invoke long narratives blithely, when Jean-François Lyotard is supposed to have told us some years ago that they are no longer okay? In my understanding, he actually suggested that in the postmodern condition, in a fully telematic society like the one we have, the narrative models by which legitimation is secured mean that one conforms all the time; he is actually describing an epic fashion-scenario; non-teleological, not moving towards an end and innovative. Although Lyotard was not writing with national reference to Canada as a power in the international theatre, about which he says little or nothing, he is read as having adjudicated the renunciation or abjuration of great narratives for the entire globe. It may indeed be true that the postmodern form is or was as Lyotard says it is or was. Is the postmodern the name of a history lesson, a changeless condition which began in the Seventies? Lyotard's 'developed world' is legitimizing the exploitation of the South in the name of the great narrative of Development with a capital D, which is a promise of modernization into a fully telematic condition. Why must we assume Lyotard was right? And he has had such an influence, both for people who think postmodernism sucks and for people who think postmodernism is wonderful.

I would like to describe the aporia between eurocentric economic multiculturalism and globality, relating to Arjun Appadurai's piece[1] in which he mis-

1 Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Public Culture* 2.2 (Spring 1990): 1–24.

takes capital for money and therefore allows a certain kind of continuity in the post-nationalist world, where the whole world ends up in the First World and Armenians and Azanians sit together in Los Angeles. In claiming that money is not capital, he believes that his five theoretical dimensions can remain equal in weight in his thinking. We need perhaps to consult an apocalyptic nineteenth-century text – the chapters on the three subjects of capital: money, production, commodity – to look again at the still relevant and scathing irony with which Marx excoriates the bourgeois need to exclude capital as money. In our time, when capitalism is being quoted as democracy, multiculturalism must remember that laughter, echoing as the wall comes down.

Aijaz Ahmad[2] talks about the fact that female labour power in globality has been socialized in two different ways. It's not just "has been" – two different ways should be considered. One is, of course, the labouring body, in the old-fashioned sense. The other is labour power, where, in spite of all the arguments, one goes even further, so that reproduction itself begins to enter the spectrality of body as writing inside. I can't sit here and play with my own appendix; on the other hand, it is mine, it is not my doctor's, though the doctor may be able to see it if it hurts. But there is this paradox that, as I am sitting here, the body is performing an incredible theatre inside, with all of the scriptings, and if little cells just decide to divide irresponsibly, then my death has probably started; but I don't know it. There is nothing that I can do to access it; there are some wicked clues – menstrual cramps; you feel; you listen; your headaches; this and that – but nonetheless inside there is something that is inaccessible.So now, when DNA is being patented – as you well know, DNA is so popular, tribes are being patented. So that is property, right? So in this kind of a situation, when we say that directively the part is being socialized, we are not just talking about some kind of motherhood-fulfilment-type feminism. We are looking at the fact that, in terms of this situation now (which is why I say post-modernization of exploitation), we need to re-address Marx's idea that labour power is the only commodity with a double character – that all other commodities were things, but labour

2 Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992).

power as a commodity was both private and rational. And therefore this idea of Marx's, in these circuits of capital, was that it was therefore possible to take labour power as a commodity and turn capital around away from capitalism to socialism. Now, we know that when you plan this through the authority of reason it doesn't work, because if it did work then we would not see. What this vision requires is a responsibility-based ethics. But Marx was the organic intellectual of industrial capitalism. It was not possible to include this in a rights-based ethics.

Today, socialization of labour power has gone into not just the labouring body of post-Fordist international capital, but is also inserting itself into reproductive processes, into DNA as property. In the socialization of productivity, the product in some ways is children. You cannot use the Marxian idea of divided labour power as commodity to bring economic or social justice, or to remedy social indistributions. And therefore we need a new social kind of thinking. We must possess our own bellies. Now, that's a very good idea when we are having a political fight, but if you're trying to think globally, then you have to think about some kind of new social method, where one can't just quickly say: "Hey, what do you think?" This requires collective thinking of many years because of what is against us. The next step, however, is space. Space as land. Now, labour power as commodity produces value, renews itself; this is one of the reasons why it can be a weapon. All of this commodities-pietism – you know, the critique of reification, etc – does not understand Marx here. That is romantic anti-capitalism. This idea of using labour power as commodity cannot work with the earth as commodity, because it does not reproduce itself. One must think of space as – excuse the word, which is hard but not that hard – wholly other. That's not some kind of theoretical bullshit. If we tend at all, as eurocentric, ecological activism quite often does, toward a logical approach, we have no awareness when and if we've run out of resources. People don't think beyond their noses, they run out of resources, and sustainable development has been a hoax now, for many years.

But there is this other thing, which is the responsibility-based ethics that one is trying to learn. In that situation, what one learns is the earth as wholly other and as an exhalation of theology, not individual transcendence. The earth as wholly other – if you want another expression (which is also the same kind of expression, rather than the alternative 'wholly other'), then., not: I will 'become' in death, when temporality is no longer possible, but: I will 'become at one with *Natur*.' This notion of becoming as involving ecology, as it were – this is not mystical. This is literally true. And so, from this point of view, space is not for me a given. Temporality is a gift within which I temporize. Now, one can of course go way back again. Kant's forms of intuition, space and time – that's not what I'am talking about, but who knows, maybe the old guy had a clue; and maybe I am commenting on the intuitive ideal. There's no way of knowing. That's why we don't think that space can 'be,' and that's why Marx in fact did not write much about the transformation of land into capital (he really referred to it, but he didn't talk about it much); and that transformation is what's happening in the devastation by technology of diversity. And there you cannot have the classical Marxist solution, because earth is not a given, and earth, unlike labour power as a commodity, does not produce itself in that way. It is not inexhaustible, it does not produce value, and therefore it does not have the gift of temporality so that it can temporize the past, present and future. This is why I said that the givens are time and death. At some time the resources are gone, but then there is born a consciousness that lets you know this if you die, but as it does it renews the gift of time to where it is in the house of *Natur*, in the givenness of space. Yet space is not a given for us. It's because we have thought so – in the short-lived 'civilizations' which think of civilization as the ability to use a life-support system – that we have made this mistake.

Of Boloms, Mirrors and Monkeymen
What's Real and What's Not in Robert Antoni's *Divina Trace*[1]

RHONDA COBHAM

SEEING IN DE PAGE you own monkey face ee–eeing, quick out you dreamsleep walcott! *You*: Tara potto? *She*: you monkey-mummy? Macaca sinica dis literary cacashit!

(Robert Antoni, *Divina Trace*)

...for her history is long and will (not) always bleed on other people's edges: shards, shreds, broken tools, cast off political clothing, spittle of monkey parsing...

(Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *Mother Poem*)

Reading Robert Antoni's *Divina Trace*,[2] with its self-indulgent mirror page and irritatingly unfamiliar stylized representation of Trinidadian speech, began as an exasperating and tedious exercise for me. I had come to expect of the anglophone Caribbean novel – especially as written by Trinidadian authors – a certain understated literalness in its rendition of Caribbean speech and a meticulous social realism in its plot. Antoni's novel challenged these expectations, forcing me to confront the ease with which, as critics, we read past various formal and thematic departures within the anglophone Caribbean canon – the kinds of over-reading that make possible such seemingly intuitive dichotomies as 'Sisyphus versus El Dorado' – that allow us to overlook the moments when the imaginary spills into the symbolic discourse of Caribbean works seemingly grounded in realism. When he refuses to contain these magical irruptions in *Divina Trace* or to restrict them to the margins of the text, Antoni elicits discomfort and unease. We feel that his novel is inauthentic

1 This article first appeared in *Annals of Scholarship* 2.1–2 (1996), 117–130.

2 Robert Antoni, *Divina Trace* (Woodstock NY: Overlook Press, 1992). In the following discussion, page references to this edition are in the text.

because it cannot be made to conform to established literary conventions. Yet at the same time we experience his narrative as distressing and uncanny. It reminds us of something on the tips of our tongues for which we have no language. Something about the novel does not ring true. Something about it is subversively familiar.

This essay argues that Antoni's subversion of the text of social realism foregrounds an immanent strain of magical realism in the anglophone Caribbean literary tradition. It speculates about why this strain has gone unacknowledged by critics and writers and why it is Antoni, a white West Indian, who forces us to confront it. To make my case, I will discuss first the symbols used to represent the imaginary in Caribbean literary discourse and how these differ from those commonly assumed to dominate Western literary discourse. From here, we can begin to understand the constraints such boundaries exert on anglophone Caribbean literary production and the ways in which Antoni's narrative attempts to challenge them.

The process of Caribbean creole language formation provides a unique model for thinking about the linguistic basis of imaginary identifications in the symbolic order.[3] Caribbean creoles differ from modern European languages in that we can trace their quite recent origins back to a specific, historically documented social trauma – the mass transfer of millions of Africans and Asians from the Old World to the New. Creole languages result from journeys that produced powerlessness, alienation, and desire for a stable subjectivity. The process matches that described in Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic paradigms, which see language as due to the speaking subject's differentiation from the mother and insertion into the law of the father. More graphically than in Lacan's work, however, the Caribbean

3 My use of Lacan's definitions of 'symbolic' and 'imaginary' draws on Jane Gallop (*Reading Lacan* [Ithaca NY/London: Cornell UP, 1985]) and on Mitchell's and Rose's Introductions to Lacan & the École Freudienne (*Feminine Sexuality*, ed. Juliet Mitchell & Jacqueline Rose, tr. Jacqueline Rose [New York: W.W. Norton, 1985]). Lacan's own definitions of his terms in *Écrits* tend to be characteristically more evasive, not to say slippery. Rather than seeing the imaginary identifications of the mirror stage as a phase one leaves behind on entering the symbolic order, he names them "the rootstock of secondary identifications" in the symbolic order. His figure gives us a symbolic order wrested from but also enclosed by the imaginary. So entry into the symbolic order does not erase the imaginary. It merely allows the speaking subject the opportunity to recognize the images through which it apprehends the world *as* imaginary; to see the frame and surface of the mirror as well as the mirror image. See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, tr. Alan Sheridan (New York/London: W.W. Norton, 1977): passim.

speaking subject is constituted through racialized metaphors of power. Here the continuum of desire runs two ways. One goes back through time to a hypothetical moment before the trauma of separation that created creole languages, when the integrity of pre-New-World communities is seen to have been intact, and there was no need for the speaking subject to communicate with an order beyond its own. The other goes forward, to the speaking subject's ultimate silencing by incorporation in the dominant European language, in relation to which its operation is dependent but also subversive.

Such relationships are not merely an aspect of a Caribbean collective memory. They are embedded in creole grammars as securely (or not!) as the phallus of Lacan's paradigm. When a speaker of Jamaican Creole, for instance, uses what is in English the object form of the first-person pronoun, 'me,' in the sentence "me love im" to indicate his/her subject position, the utterance does not just articulate grammatical relations. It encodes two histories: the oppression by which the white subject 'I' imposed on the Creole subject 'me' the permanent signification of Object and the resistance of 'me' to that objectification.[4] For Caribbean men and women, the symbols that best represent the yearnings encoded in language are racialized metaphors of social power rather than the gendered metaphors of the Lacanian paradigm: power to destroy the oppressor by subverting his language, but also power to become the oppressor, to occupy that position of stability and rhetorical control which no oppressor, of course, has ever quite achieved but which every oppressed has reified and desired.

The dominant metaphors of Western literary discourse remain nevertheless useful to help us imagine the consequences of these distinctions for anglophone Caribbean literary discourse. The very symbols employed by both are often interchangeable. When Kamau Brathwaite writes of 'missile' cultures versus 'capsule' cultures, for example, he is using images associated with womb and phallus to make a racial or cultural distinction in hierarchies of power and attitudes toward power not unlike the dichotomies Hélène Cixous constructs when she represents femininity as the dark continent against a masculinist Enlightenment West.[5] And just as French

4 Rhonda Cobham, "Colin Ferguson, Me and I: Anatomy of a Creole Psychosis," *Transition* 67 (5.3, Fall 1995): 16–21.

5 [Edward] Kamau Brathwaite, "Metaphors of Underdevelopment: A Poem for Hernan Cortez," *New England Review and Breadloaf Quarterly* 7.4 (Summer 1985): 453–476, and "Caribbean Culture: Two Paradigms," in *Missile and Capsule*, ed. Jürgen Martini (Bremen: U of Bremen, 1983): 9–54; Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," tr. Keith & Paula Cohen, in *New French Feminisms*, ed. Elaine Marks & Isabelle de Courtivron (Brighton: Harvester, 1980): 245–264.

feminists have argued for feminine *jouissance* as the site of a repressed imaginary in Western literary discourse, I would argue that the vitality and magic of the Creole oral tradition – excess of 'the folk' – is often the locus of a social imaginary that escapes representation in anglophone Caribbean literary discourse.

Of course, these two sets of symbols do not always match up along such neat parallels. Once we add race to the psychoanalytic paradigm, the meaning of gender shifts. Black women's voices often are represented as silenced over and against a black masculinist discourse in anglophone Caribbean writing, in much the same way as the feminine may be silenced in Western literary discourse. But black women also turn up in Caribbean texts as enforcers of white authority, those in the hierarchy with most immediate access, like Hernan Cortés' Malinche, to the white master. The equivalent of the oedipal crisis in many such texts, for instance, is the violent struggle for dominance between the civilizing *mother* and her children, male and female, rather than the conflict between father and son. The struggles over physical and narrative control between G– and his mother in George Lamming's *In The Castle of My Skin*, Joe Martin and Ma Lambie in Samuel Selvon's *A Brighter Sun*, Tee and Aunty in Merle Hodge's *Crick Crack Monkey*, or even between mothers and daughters in Sistren's *Lionheart* stories, are associated with the same tropes and outcomes Derek Walcott uses to present Makak's confrontation with the white goddess of his racial fantasies in *Dream on Monkey Mountain*.[6] The salient line of demarcation is always between the person perceived as having greater access to social power, encoded as whiteness rather than maleness, and the person who is trying to contest, appropriate or accommodate that power.

Sometimes all the positions on the power continuum cohere in a single figure. From the perspective of the son in Brathwaite's *Mother Poem*, for instance, the black mother is the power who forces him to submit to the Western word, pushing him on toward "the sound of schoolbells / squares:

6 George Lamming, *In The Castle of My Skin* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1953); Samuel Selvon, *A Brighter Sun* (Port of Spain: Longman, 1952); Merle Hodge, *Crick Crack Monkey* (London: Heinemann, 1981); Sistren, with Honor Ford Smith, *Lionheart Gal* (London: Women's Press, 1986); Derek Walcott, "Dream on Monkey Mountain" in Derek Walcott, *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970).

triangles: hookey hockey matches / desks: gas chambers...,"[7] as well as the ambivalent orifice which must imbibe but can also contain that word:

but

me muh
me muh
mud
me mudda

brek

de word
she eat it like cheese
like curl'd milk
like yellow bread.[8]

However, the mother also embodies the force of the folk tradition contesting that word. Through her magical hissings and guttural ejaculations in the poem "Angel/Engine,"[9] the power of the oral tradition begins to obtain access to the text.

So the symbols for blackness and whiteness in the Caribbean text, like that of the gendered body in the Western text, scarcely concern the racial characteristics of actual bodies. They massively concern representation of bodies as sites where power is contested, balance between what can be expressed in language and what remains outside the text, tension between what can be used to subvert the symbolic order of Western literary discourse and what may end up subverting the Creole-speaking *writer*. The double symbolic burden affects the ways in which anglophone Caribbean narratives seek to manipulate and contain the imaginary. The act of writing performs the desire of the Caribbean speaking subject to enter into the discourse of power – to name himself and his social context, and to contest the domination of discursive space by 'whiteness.' But the linguistic conventions the writer enters are always already framed in the role ascribed to whiteness/text and blackness/orality in the Caribbean imaginary. The writer may manipulate but never completely occlude them without the risk of becoming inchoate. It is as if, as long as 'whiteness' equals mastery, power, rationality, and control of language, so 'blackness' must be synonymous with the

7 Kamau Brathwaite, *Mother Poem* (London: Oxford UP, 1977): 24.
8 Brathwaite, *Mother Poem*, 59.
9 *Mother Poem*, 97–103.

unconscious, so the folk, the magical, and magic/the folk must be hidden as a truth beyond realism. Claude McKay enacts this predicament in *Banana Bottom*[10] when he pours scorn on the representatives of white power – keepers of the word – constantly arranging for their positions to be undermined and subverted by the folk culture. But when folk culture sweeps into his text literally to bear away his heroine, Bita, and impose its own crazy magic on her body, the narrative stops short. Bita is pulled out of the violent dance as swiftly as she enters it, and she is pulled out by Jubban – a black man, a man of the people, but a man in this text who seems never to speak.

The act of composing a Caribbean narrative thus becomes one of asserting control over language, control that may be reinforced but also undermined by the excess of the oral folk culture – never quite contained by the language of the text. One of the strategies used by anglophone Caribbean writers to harness this excess is the trope of the trance. By introducing a figure in trance, the writer allows 'the folk' or 'the African past' to speak without compromising the coherence of his story. In this way, the text can appropriate the magical prelapsarian unity with which it invests the folk culture, but only to the extent that the magic functions in the service of the goals the narrative has established. The action in Dennis Scott's drama, *An Echo in the Bone*,[11] for instance, is organized around a series of trances facilitating a descent into the text's prehistory, re-shaping the relation between the protagonist, Sonson, and his slave past. The voices introduced in this way speak through the magical properties associated with the folk, but they do so in the service of socially realistic goals. Like a patient emerging from a successful course of therapy, the protagonist recuperates an understanding of his origins in the folk into the play's language. Once he returns to his everyday world with these fresh insights, the spirits can be laid to rest. Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* uses a similar strategy when Pa goes back in trance to a time before slavery – the "time beyond language." Here, it does not really matter whether Pa's dream is the result of indigestion or of telepathic communication with his ancestors. The story is not concerned with what happens to those voices after they have passed through Pa's unconscious. Our understanding of 'real' events is qualified, even contradicted, by his hysterical utterances; but the text preserves the conventional distinction between what is and is not real by allowing us

10 Claude McKay, *Banana Bottom* (1928; New York: Harper & Row, 1961).
11 Dennis Scott, "An Echo in the Bone," in *Plays for Today*, ed. Errol Hill (Harlow: Longman, 1985).

access to this imaginary only through the body of a 'real' character. The dreams and visions and rituals remain peripheral to the action. They give metaphors for a social process but, the process once established, they fade away like so much unnecessary scaffolding, so many echoes in the bone.

As with folk culture, so too with folk language. Creole speakers in anglophone Caribbean texts are often sources of wisdom, the people who voice truths profounder than they may be aware of. But though the convention is that the ideolect furthest away from the standard is the one that represents 'truth,' the one closest to the standard is invested with *narrative* authority – the voice of reality with power to *name* truth. In poetry, Creole is used in monologues clearly assigned to representatives of the folk – mothers, calypsonians, sailors, canecutters, and the like. Only recently has it appeared, unmarked, as the language of (mostly middle-class) writers, though in everyday speech most Caribbean people, whatever their class, function on a language continuum that includes Creole. And even in poems that display the whole range, the point where they register a shift away from Standard still signifies a moment of heightened intimacy and self-revelation: vision of prophecy rather than voice of everyday life. A wonderful example occurs in Lorna Goodison's poem "Upon a Quarter Million," where the logo "Levi" printed on the shoes worn by a young dread becomes more than an inscription of white authority – as in mass culture's commodification of desire through firms like Levi Strauss, Inc., or the biblical authority of the patronym, or even the naming power of the cultural authority, Claude Lévi-Strauss. Instead, "Levi" is claimed as a Creole word that registers the dread's defiant subjectivity:

> For sometimes it would suit a one
> to write him name upon himself.
> In case Babylon stop you
> and fraid claim your tongue
> in which case you could just
> look down and remind you eye
> and say "Yes oppressor
> I name is Levi."[12]

To name himself, the speaker must reach into the magical space of Rastafarian genealogy, represented by silence, and incorporate the word "Levi" into discourse as the other half of "I and I," the double first person of

12 Lorna Goodison, "Upon a Quarter Million," in Lorna Goodison, *Selected Poems* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1992): 92.

Dread Talk that appropriates and disables the subject 'I' of Standard English. Thus the last line of the poem can be heard as "I name is – leave I," which bears a symbolic valency quite distinct from that of the white authority "Levi" 'originally' inscribed on the speaker's shoe. The creolized sign does not erase the signification of "Levi" in the dominant discourse but, appropriating its authority, it lets the dread (and the reader/poet) announce his textual inscription – re-mind his eye/I – even as it risks making the speaker's subjectivity wholly invisible to his non-Creole-speaking interlocutor, "Babylon."

I do not mean that every Caribbean text using magical elements does so to invoke an uplifting or empowering folk tradition. Indeed, a whole genre of Caribbean writing, embracing authors as racially diverse as V.S. Naipaul, Orlando Patterson, and H.G. de Lisser, uses the folk tradition's magic to depict descent into chaos and social anomie.[13] Still, *how* their texts structure a dichotomy between the symbolic and the imaginary stays consistent. So does the extent to which they use a specific description of oral folk tradition to enable its selective recuperation into the text on terms that destabilize but do not (cannot?) erase assumptions about the significance of the relation between Creole and Standard English that the writer brings to the text.

All this makes perfect sense if we keep in mind that language *is* the symbolic order, and that every anglophone Caribbean text draws on both Standard and Creole language codes. The oral folk culture is fully able to produce a discourse of its own, yet it has become a convention of Caribbean *literary* culture to encode aspects of that folk language and culture as imaginary excess, beyond the discourse of the text. Texts being texts, however, they are bound to participate fully in the symbolic order constituted by all the language codes on which they draw, whatever their authors imagine. So this excess often irrupts into texts despite authors' attempts at control, deforming structure, diverting narrative line, and generally acting out in hysterical utterances that the reader is free to dismiss as having nothing to do with a central discourse of social realism. All kinds of moments occur in anglophone Caribbean writing, from Edgar Mittelholzer through Wilson Harris to Erna Brodber, where this blurring of boundaries is acknowledged. Even authors who exert a tighter control over what their

13 On this, see esp. Kamau Brathwaite, "Metaphors of Underdevelopment: A Poem for Hernan Cortez," *New England Review and Breadloaf Quarterly* 7.4 (Summer 1985): 453–476, and Gordon Rohlehr, "The Shape of That Hurt," in Rohlehr, *The Shape of That Hurt and Other Essays* (Port of Spain: Longman, 1992): passim.

texts define as imaginary excess are not immune to its irruption. At one point in *Season of Adventure*, for instance, Lamming inexplicably abandons what many have read as his celebration of the restorative influence of the folk on his protagonist Fola, to name his uneasy relation with his folk hero, Powell, in an "Author's Note":

> Until the age of ten Powell and I had lived together, equal in the affection of two mothers. Powell had made my dreams; and I had lived his passions. Identical in years, and stage by stage, Powell and I were taught in the same primary school.
>
> And then the division came. I got a public scholarship which started my migration into another world, a world whose roots were the same, but whose style of living was entirely different from what my childhood knew. It had earned me a privilege which now shut Powell and the whole *tonelle* out of my future. I had lived as near to Powell as my skin to the hand it darkens. And yet! ... Instinctively I attached myself to that new privilege; and in spite of all my effort, I am not free of its embrace even to this day.
>
> I believe deep in my bones that the mad impulse which drove Powell to his criminal defeat was largely my doing. I will not have this explained away by talk about environment; nor can I allow my own moral infirmity to be transferred to a foreign conscience, labelled imperialist. I shall go beyond my grave in the knowledge that I am responsible for what happened to my brother.[14]

Here the author's use of the past tense presents Powell as a superseded though essential symbol of imaginary excess ("Powell had made my dreams") and the source of the unconscious drives which propel his narrative ("I had lived his passions"). But whereas in Goodison's poem the 'I' inside "Levi" can be heard as empowering the speaking subject, the Powell inside Lamming poses a threat to the author's subjectivity – to the extent that the Lamming inside *Powell* must drive him to defeat. (As they say in the movies: "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I'm going to have to kill you!") Caribbean readers cannot fail to recognize the ambivalences to which Lamming is confessing in their own experience of their relation to the folk culture and oral tradition. They know that its roots go beyond the nostalgia and survivor's guilt to which Lamming ascribes it here, or the need for an act of reconciliation that Fola achieves but 'the author' does not. For the problem must also lie with Powell. As any Anansi story demonstrates, the heroes of the Caribbean folk culture – like those of any culture – can be as ruthless toward the friends of the folk as toward their enemies – or even toward the folk themselves. To deny this would be to deny Powell's agency

14 George Lamming, *Season of Adventure* (London: Allison & Busby, 1979): 331–332.

completely, to colonize him in Lamming's consciousness.[15] Within the social-realist conventions of this novel, it is hard not to read 'the author's' parenthetical confession as a moment of textual incoherence, a stylistic break without much narrative preparation. If we wish to read Lamming as indicating that Powell threatens to escape the role assigned to 'the folk' in 'the author's' imaginary, and that this above all is behind his criminal defeat, we must undercut with 'the author' the system of meaning that would prefer us to celebrate without ambiguity Fola's reification of the folk.

Yet, in general, it is the strategy of assigning an imaginary folk to the realm of the unconscious, and then recuperating and reifying selected aspects of what they represent as 'truth' to support a narrative of social realism, that creates discontinuity between that strain in Latin American literature termed 'magical realism' and the social realism of anglophone Caribbean writing. In magical-realist texts, folk culture and its magical beliefs are not invested with a predictable moral authority countering the master discourse's spurious claims to domination. In Alejo Carpentier and Gabriel García Márquez, the spirits lie. They contradict themselves, they forget, they sell out, they rescue, they betray. Occasionally they help reveal truths, but your guess is as good as mine as to what these so-called truths are worth. These spirits and the oral traditions producing them belong to the symbolic realm of actual social discourse. There is nothing mysterious or incontrovertible about them. Frequently they are embodied in the texts as tangible individuals or objects that can communicate directly with other characters, with or without the intervening medium of trance or religious ceremony. Their magic is continuous with the social reality of the humans in whose worlds they move, and equally flawed or unreliable.

15 Rohlehr takes Lamming to task for implying that the Caribbean novelist was responsible for having recuperated the folk into the Caribbean consciousness. He discusses the political events that preceded the literary flowering of the Fifties and concludes: "it was not simply the isolated efforts of the novelists which in Lamming's words 'restored the West Indian peasant to his true and original status of personality,' but rather the efforts of the West Indian people as a whole which provided a dynamic powerful enough to charge the writers of the fifties"; Gordon Rohlehr, "Literature and the Folk," in Rohlehr, *My Strangled City and Other Essays* (Port of Spain: Longman, 1992): 55. I go a step further and suggest it is merely another form of hubris to believe the middle class has been the most salient force in bringing about the post-national failure of such efforts, although they certainly have contributed to that failure. The lower class's aspirations may also have fractured and changed. One has no cause to think the folk any more homogeneous a group than other strata of Caribbean society.

By contrast, in anglophone Caribbean writing the ancestors rarely seem to lie. Anansi and Legba may trick, but their tricks are mere hurdles in the quest for an attainable truth, capable of representation in the frame of a socially realistic novel. Both narrative conventions operate in Judith Ortiz Cofer's hybrid novel *The Line of the Sun*.[16] In the tale's first half, set in Puerto Rico, magic is everywhere, even shaping responses and expectations of characters who distance themselves from its formal aspects. In the second half, set in New Jersey, specific religious rituals contain the magic. It threatens her narrator – as it did 'the author' in *Season of Adventure* – because of its association with unregulated desire and because it is capable of revealing a 'truth' about her identity that she cannot acknowledge in her new American context.

Anglophone Caribbean writers are not always able to dismiss the magical realists' notion that oral tradition may be deceptive, biased, undependable or, worse yet, uncommitted to a social project of cultural or racial liberation, but they frequently elide its implications. Folk culture and the ancestors are constituted as the repressed memories the author must retrieve and define in order to make his mark in the dominant discourse. But unconscious drives by definition constitute the symbolic order. It does not necessarily follow from defining aspects of 'the folk' as imaginary excess that their magic will function either to validate the struggle of the oppressed or to shore up the collective ego of an emergent literate caste. When an aspect of the unconscious is appropriated in a text, it does not reduce the infinite realm of the unconscious or limit its potential meanings. A time will never come when revelation will have 'used up' all mystery. Such movement defines the trajectory of desire but is also desire's never-achieved goal. Like the desire of the speaking subject for reunification with the mother in Lacan's paradigm, the fulfilment of the author's desire for reunification with the folk would mean nothing less than the end of narrative – the end of language, return to the womb, perfection of death.

I read *Divina Trace* as an attempt to represent this narrative instability – this always already futile attempt to integrate all of oral folk culture into a stable, literary discourse. Although the novel's Sisyphean task can never be

16 Judith Ortiz Cofer, *The Line of the Sun* (Athens /London: U of Georgia P, 1989).

achieved, its dogged retrieval of successive layers of oral tradition/folk culture/magic works to destabilize more familiar modes of anglophone Caribbean narrative closure. Here is no socially realistic narrative defied by magical aspects of the oral tradition and forced either to integrate them as revealed truth or to reject their challenge to reality as spurious. Instead, we are given a series of conflicting stories that put each other in question, and no conclusive pronouncement on the author's part as to their claims to truth.

The novel's structure mimics the form of a Catholic rosary. Its opening five chapters correspond to the five decades of Ave Marias on a chaplet, but recited so as to omit the intervening five large beads that mark the position of the Gloria Patris and Pater Nosters on the signifying chain. Each cycle of the rosary ends at a short dependent series of beads on which three Ave Marias are enclosed by two Gloria Patris, and at whose end usually hangs a crucifix. In the opening five-chapter section, "Frogchild on the Day of Corpus Christi," we are offered five competing analyses of who Magdalena was, what her strange death meant, and what her frogchild offspring represents. The stories are told to a white Creole boy called Johnny by various members of his family. Each of the five tales is associated with the feast day of Corpus Christi – the Catholic festival marking Christ's transubstantiation into the Eucharist – for which Antoni's fictional Caribbean island is named. The inhabitants of the town of St Maggy on Corpus Christi have synchronized the feast's observance with veneration of their patron saint, Magdalena Divina, whose origins are ascribed variously to European, Native American, African, and Hindu myth.[17]

The short middle sequence "A Piece of Pommerac," answering to the short series of beads attaching the crucifix to the main circle of the rosary,

17 To create the syncretic figure of Magdalena Divina, Antoni draws on the Trinidadian festivals of La Divina Pastora/Siparia Mai, a Catholic/Hindu saint, on the Trinidad Carnival, and on the Shiite Muslim festival of Hosay celebrated by Trinidad Muslims as well as the general populace. Antonio Benítez–Rojo describes a like syncretic artifact in the cult of La Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre; Benítez–Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, tr. James E. Maraniss (Durham NC/London: Duke UP, 1992): 12–22. Like Papee Vince in *Divina Trace*, he sees in the Virgen vestiges of earlier syncretizing moments in African, Native American, and European traditions it interfuses. A syncretic signifier "is not a synthesis, but rather a signifier made of differences. What happens is that, in the melting pot of societies that the world provides, syncretic processes realize themselves through an economy whose modality of exchange the signifier of *there* – of the Other – is consumed ('read') according to local codes that are already in existence; that is, codes from *here*" (*The Repeating Island*, 21).

offers three mythical re-tellings of the story. They link Magdalena to the Black Madonna worshipped by the community of St Maggy, and her frogchild to Christ. But they also re-work the Christian myth into the Hindu myth of Rama and Sita. The Pommerac section is framed by the narrator's first-person interventions, enclosing the voice of the Black Madonna/ Magdalena Divina herself. However, she in turn ascribes the middle story, which stands at the physical centre of the book, to the Hindu monkey god Hanuman, who narrates a monkey version of her story in an invented "Shackshloka" language. Hanuman's tale is bisected at its centre, where the cross on a rosary would be, by a blank silver page in which the reader is forced to confront a blurred, distorted reflection of him/herself. The first half of Hanuman's tale tells the story of the frogchild's conception and birth. Its second half, on the mirror's far side, begins the series of stories about Magdalena's transformation from a flesh-and-blood woman to a cultural icon: the walking statue of the Black Madonna venerated by the inhabitants of St Maggy.

The novel's final section, "Magdalena Divina," reverses the clockwise direction of the rosary beads' usual telling, as if the narrator, like the chupidee Sister Bernadetta (252), were mimicking a reflection of the Madonna. Now, Glorias and Paternosters are told instead of Ave Marias, since Magdalena, incarnating Maria, does not need to address herself. Travelling round the rosary in the opposite direction, each speaker of the "Magdalena" section tells his or her story in an order reversing that of its first recounting in the "Frogchild" section: the book folds in on itself like a butterfly's wings to reveal a mirroring pattern binding its constituent parts. The five stories in the "Magdalena" section recount five versions of the origins of the Black Madonna myth. This time, the narrator Johnny is not merely an old man re-living stories told him in his youth, but an old man conversing directly with his equally aged forebears. As Johnny listens to their stories, adding new details and the insights of age, he also tries to enter the narratives and change their directions; to find a place for himself, the "white boy," in the histories they elaborate.

Johnny first meets the frogchild and his story as a thirteen-year-old boy when he goes to the Domingo Cemetery at the behest of his dying Granny Myna, and unearths the obzockee bottle holding the frogchild's remains, symbol of his grandfather Barto's infidelity. Johnny takes the bottle to the Maraval Swamp, where he empties its contents into the murky black water. To his horror and ecstasy, he finds that "*he is alive. Swimming*" (25).

Throughout his adolescence Johnny is driven to seek explanations for the creature's identity and his relation to it. By the end of the first five stories, he has been told that the frogchild was the son of God; the half-human son of a devil in the guise of a Manquenk; an incarnation of Eshu the Yoruba trickster deity; an anencephalic child; the bastard of an old Indian farmer; and/or the monstrous progeny of an incestuous coupling – for Johnny's grandfather Barto may be both the father of Mother Maurina's bastard daughter Magdalena *and* one of Magdalena's lovers. By a perverse arithmetic, Johnny begins to suspect that Magdalena may be more than a not-so-distant relative: for "*...if Magdalena is he mummy then he daddy must be Papa God Heself. And if you and he is brothers then He is you daddy and she is you own true mummy too*!" (172). Even more intimately, the frogchild may be "... the other I. Not the imagined I but the I of my imagination: the imagining I" (170).

Although the incest version of the story gives Magdalena, her frogchild, and the white boy Johnny practically identical genetic ancestry, the story's successive re-tellings cannot establish beyond doubt even Magdalena's race. In keeping with the trajectories of Caribbean Creole desire, which take race rather than gender as the salient metaphor of power, each storyteller invests Magdalena with the racial characteristics of his or her imaginary Other: embodying the furthest extreme of dread and desire, power or powerlessness in relation to the speaking subject. To Granny Myna, Barto's betrayed Creole wife, she is a "black jamet" (11). To Johnny's maternal grandfather Papee Vince, the only member of the family to hail directly from England and to claim therefore an impeccable racial pedigree, she is "no different from all the little half-coolie, half-Creole, half-Warrahoon, half-so-and-so little callaloos running round in Suparee, and Grande Sangre, and Wallafield" (36). The black servant Evelina, who sees everything connected to Barto and the Domingo family as embodying evil (although/because she herself may be another bastard child of Barto's), is willing to swear by Shango that Magdalena was a white woman before she died – when the family curse turned her to a block of purpleheart wood. Most accounts take Johnny's father, Dr Domingo, for Magdalena's half-brother. They have the same father, Barto, and their mothers, Myna and Maurina, are sisters. Moreover, since he delivers and identifies the condition of Magdalena's anencephalic child and penetrates *post mortem* her imperforate vagina in the interest of science, the doctor has time to study her physiognomy. Yet, in his story, her main racial characteristics are her long flowing hair, her almost

ethereal passivity, and her irresistible sex appeal – the Gauguin fantasy of every rationalist white man who has ever lusted after a 'native' (here Native American) woman. When finally we hear from Mother Maurina, who claims to be Magdalena's mother and to have arranged her daughter's ravishment by her own former lover, the confounding of human categories is complete. Mother Maurina recalls only that at birth Magdalena seemed a furry, brown monkey so repulsive that she gave it away. The blood-drenched young woman who re-appears on the church steps thirteen years later, inflaming the impotent lust of police chief Gomez and half of St Maggy's, Mother Maurina describes as a breathtakingly beautiful Hindu goddess complete with tika, and/or a reincarnation of the Madonna.

Although the stories in the first section do not lead to any narrative certainty, they are connected by several repeated motifs, each figured into the stories in a different way. All five opening chapters end with a passage describing the boy Johnny watching the frogchild, or a version of what he represents, moving out of reach:

> Slowly, I tilted the bottle, feeling its weight slip away and the solid splash before me in the water. I wanted nothing more now than to turn quickly and run: I couldn't budge my feet. Standing there, holding the finally empty bottle, seeing myself again with my baggy navyblue school shortpants billowing around my hips, feeling my feet again in my jesusboots beneath the mud, looking down again through the dark water again, thinking, not understanding, believing: *He is alive. Swimming.* I watched his long angular legs fold, snap taut, and propel him smoothly through the water; snap, glide; snap, glide; and the frogchild disappeared into a clump of quiet mangrove banyans. (25)

This inverse ascension is invoked at the end of each chapter. Each version takes over some of the details of the one preceding and adds a few more. Johnny associates the ending of Papee Vince's tale with the figure of his grandfather disappearing through a trapdoor from the attic, the smell of old newspapers, and the cool breeze moving the tamarind tree in the backyard. Evelina's tale evokes the scent of incense, obeah and oversweet eucalyptus oil, the musty odor of rotting leaves in the Domingo family graveyard, and the memory of the new washykong canvas shoes that the terrified boy leaves behind when he runs barefoot from the cemetery pursuing the sanctuary of Evelina's retreating form. At the end of Dr Domingo's story, the photograph of the anencephalic child of the medical texts merges into Johnny's memory of the frogchild swimming away from him on the first Corpus Christi morning. Johnny's meeting with Mother Maurina is framed by the white surplice round her head, tolling churchbells,

the deceptive solidity of the architecture of church and square, and the encasement of his feet in grandfather Barto's hardback shoes and of his body in the heavy clothes of one about to migrate.

None of the details reduces the infinite reach of the black swamp waters that stretch out on the boy's every side, constantly engulfing what little sense he can make of his family's past. But as the images pile up, they create a continuity of memories that reinforce the web of associations and beliefs – the "host of conflicting, material, social, political, ideological and sexual,"[18] and *racial* factors that constitute Johnny's identity as a speaking subject. By the end of the fifth version, the ninety-year-old narrator can thus begin to claim all the varied consciousnesses invested in the contradictory stories to be versions of himself at different stages in his development:

> Five o'clock: still, now, again. With the first light of dawn filtering into the square as I stood sinking deep into the mud of my grandfather's old hardbacks. Standing there sweating in my new suit with my new clip-on bowtie biting at my throat, watching Mother Maurina disappearing slowly into the darkness of that narrow corridor leading out of the vestibule, feeling my feet numb and unyielding again in the mud of my new washykongs in my old jesusboots, hearing the water on the rocks and the breeze blowing cool across my wet skin in the leaves of the old tamarind tree in my own backyard, smelling the stale odours of stagnant incense and musty newspapers and too-sweet eucalyptus and smoldering still water, standing here holding the finally empty bottle, seeing myself again with my baggy navyblue school shortpants billowing around my hips, a young boy alone at the edge of this vast swamp stretching out black as far as the horizon, an oldman tired looking down again through dark water again, thinking, not understanding, believing: *He is alive. Swimming.* As I watch his long angular legs fold, snap taut, and propel him smoothly through the water; snap, glide; snap, glide; and the frogchild disappears into the clump of quiet mangrove banyans. (164–165)

The stories do not add up to one truth, but they help substantiate the existence of this unique being, a watching, sweating, standing, sinking, seeing, feeling, thinking, *believing* 'I' that has watched all five storytellers and five versions of the frogchild/himself slip away into the uncharted waters of the unconscious.

The five opening stories establish several other important motifs whose variants will mark the narrative's progress: the image of the Warrahoon Indians rowing the Domingo family property to Corpus Christi from the South American mainland to the rhythm of their signature chant "Na-me-na-na-ha"; the uncomfortably narrow proportions of the Warrahoon Windsor chair they transport, where Johnny sits as he tells the story – its dark,

18 Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London/New York: Methuen, 1985): 10.

polished purpleheart surface so similar to the wood from which one version of the statue of the Black Madonna is hewn; the photograph of the anencephalic child; the visits to the town square between church and convent that generations of Domingo men find themselves inexplicably making at odd hours of the night; the jesusboots, washykongs, and hardback shoes they keep leaving outside houses and churches, in graveyards and swamps; fragments of calypsos and Catholic litanies; Trinidad Creole words – "obzockee," "tout baghai," "viekievie" – repeated in and out of season until they intone a mantra as familiar and impenetrable as that of the Warrahoon Indians. All these seemingly inconsequential details become the material pointers around which the more overtly mythic and linguistically obscure passages in the middle "Pommerac" section are crafted.

The reader's immersion in myth, magic, and the oral tradition in "A Piece of Pommerac" is announced in the title's allusion to the ritual call and response with which Anansi stories in the south-eastern Caribbean open and close:

> Storyteller: "Krick Krack!"
> Listeners: Monkey break he back on a rotten pommerac.

In the Anansi story context, the call and response have the symbolic function of parentheses, marking the break between reality and fantasy by which the story's imaginary world cordons itself off from the reality of the world in which it is told. It corresponds to the break for which I have argued between the social realism dominating symbolic discourse in anglophone Caribbean writing and the truth-claims by which the folk culture, relegated to a space beyond language, is recuperated and reified as myth. But in *Divina Trace*, it is hard to know on which side of the parentheses we are to locate the real. The example of the Warrahoon rowers is a case in point. In one of the stories of the Pommerac section, Rama/Barto and his henchmen set off to rescue Sita/ Magdalena from the monster Ravanna/Gomez, who has abducted her to the ends of the earth. Rowing to the same chant of "Na-me-na-na-ha" as the Warrahoons, they soon realize their pirogue will never make it to the ends of the world. So they return to negotiate with the ocean god, who allows them to erect a bridge across the Caribbean Sea – incidentally creating the Caribbean archipelago. Our first impulse on recognizing the now familiar chant is to assume that the storyteller has inserted a realistic detail of Domingo family history into a fantastic myth of great spiritual truth but little literal substance: until we stop to consider that it would have been about as impossible for those Warrahoon rowers to

balance the Windsor chair and desk in a pirogue over the treacherous currents dividing the South American mainland from the Caribbean islands as for Rama and his monkey warriors to get to the ends of the world by a similar method of transportation.

The reader's longing for certainties mimics and reproduces the narrator's own anxieties about what is real and what not. Every now and then in the first chapters, Johnny fastens on a literal detail to anchor himself in relation to the bizarre stories he is being told. Each time the literal detail proves more evanescent than the incredible tale itself. During Mother Maurina's retelling of the story, for example, Johnny notices that the wide bow of her nun's surplice, on which he has focused throughout her odd revelations of incest and orgies, has turned into a pair of wings. Rather than doubting her existence or veracity, the narrator becomes sure that "those two wings belonged legitimately to the real world together with all Mother Maurina's ranting and raving and exantaying in a way in which I did not" (164). He has experienced how Maurina can make time stop, ordering history to a coherence in her tale which he can never hope to achieve in his own. The illusion of coherence makes her a narrator at this point in the novel more real than he. The one bit of the story he has witnessed – the frogchild swimming away through the swamp – is never corroborated by any other source. In fact, since Johnny intones the Warrahoon chant of "Na-me-na-na-ha" as he treks from cemetery to swamp, the reader has every reason to suspect that it is one more impossible journey. But the narrator comes to realize that to question this story would be tantamount to questioning his own socially encoded reality. All this is to say that there is no simple distinction between a real and an unreal; between the mythic pommerac heart of the narrative and the various internally consistent but mutually incompatible attempts at order by which it is enclosed.

The effect of all this indeterminacy of meaning is that, as we near the book's physical centre, the text's meaning is progressively distorted by refraction through the imaginary lens of an ever-widening collective circle. In the process it becomes more and more psychotic, until, at the point where we are confronted by our own distorted anencephalic images in the mirror page – where we become at once bolom (unborn) and monkeymen (inauthentic), the narrative no longer pretends authority. As it says, it has disintegrated into "literary cacashit." The terms "bolom" and "monkeymen" are offered here as possible readings of the exchange that follows the mirror page, cited in the epigraph which opens my essay:

You: Tara potto?
She: you monkeymummy?

The reader (*You*) takes Hanuman's subject position and asks the reflection: "Tara potto?", that is, "Am I seeing/becoming Tara's child?" The mirror and/or reflected image (*She*) is set up as the eye in relation to which the text constitutes itself (and *therefore* the lost mother? the absent phallus? blackness? Whiteness?). *She* asks in return of the eye/I by which *she* is contemplated: "you monkeymummy?": i.e, "does that make me/am I becoming the mother of you, and if so which of us is the monkey/mimic and which the mother/man reflected in which mirror?" The circularity of this exchange, like that of the rosary, is infinite. It is as if, by abandoning language and confronting us with our distorted image, the novel gives up on any notion of a viable symbolic discourse and presents us with desire's death, its final turning in on itself, return to a world before language. As Johnny puts it near the start of the Pommerac section:

> I know the only way to find that frogchild still hiding somewhere alive in the labyrinth of those innumerable mangrove banyans, is to turn around and surrender myself unconditionally to this primal power – to surrender myself up to this monkey of my imagination and let him speak, even in his own impenetrable monkey-language – to turn around and go back to the beginning once more. Back to the beginning of the beginning again and beyond the beginning. Now that I must spend the rest of my life trying to understand how it could have been possible, how I could have seen it. Now I am afraid, because I know that ultimately I must fail. I have realized too soon that no matter how far I go back, explanation will still be impossible. I have realized too soon that failure is the point of all this. That failure is the meaning of all this confusion. (172)

Something about the passage rings false. Something about it is subversively familiar. Yes, it takes us back to Antoinette on the parapets of Thornfield Hall in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* crying "Tia" and jumping and waking as she tries to re-connect to a black Creole tradition she can enter only as a "white cockroach."[19] Yes, we are back with the explorer Donne and his crew at the top of the waterfall in Wilson Harris's *Palace of the Peacock*, glimpsing in the hour of their deaths an impossible/inevitable consummation of their relationship with the folk.[20] But we also are back with 'the author' in *Season of Adventure*, confessing like the penitent at the mourning bench the impossibility of his fantasy of reconciliation with an imaginary folk culture that paradoxically remains, like the Powell of his

19 Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (London: André Deutsch, 1966).
20 Wilson Harris, *Palace of the Peacock* (London: Faber & Faber, 1960).

childhood, as near as the skin that darkens his hand.[21] And yes, we are back with the 'I' who must search for his authentic self in the mirror of language encoded in the word "Levi" inscribed in his shoe. And what do these prior enunciations of failure say of all such backward glances and returns of the repressed around which the Caribbean novel of social realism structures its therapeutic recuperation of the folk? the lost Africa? the mother culture?

This, then, is the burden of Hanuman's Shackshloka tale. How to build a cultural artifact from a hopelessly hybrid imaginary, whose incestuous dyads and mutually excluding pre-histories will probably never be fully resolved? How to tell beads on a signifying chain that we know in advance will fail to deliver a coherent, bounded text? Hanuman displaces the narrator Johnny of the earlier versions of the story. As a monkey, he can mimic but not invent, and to reconstruct the story he has to rely on fragments learned by rote. His predicament, like that of the Caribbean writer – any writer – is that he must create and sustain a narrative. To do so, he must try to draw on resources deemed inaccessible to conscious thought. But that imaginary excess is always no more and no less than the debris that the text constantly sloughs off in its attempts to define its limits in the symbolic order. Floating beyond the controlling bonds of discourse, at the centre of the pommerac heart of the narrative, where motion in any direction along desire's continuum is possible, this sloughed-off flotsam contains all meanings and none. It can sabotage all readings which proceed and succeed it, reverse the valencies of all hierarchical orders. Recuperated into language, it may subvert or empower. Both reader and writer can/must use it to constitute the reality of the text. But like the mirror page, it yields no blueprints for the job save those we recognize because we brought them with us. As Johnny says of his obzockee glass bottle:

> [It] was all that connected me to reality now, all that assured me I had seen what I had seen and that I was alive within the confines of this dream of my life, this dream of my dream which did not even belong to me, this empty glassbottle to be filled again with nothing less than reality itself. (171)

Johnny later smashes the bottle. But Hanuman's first tactic is to attempt to fill it with all the flotsam of Johnny's imagination. He creates his Shackshloka language by drawing eclectically on all that murky green "cacajao" swallowed up by the black swamp waters in which Johnny watches the 'I' of his imagination, 'the imagining I,' disappear. Doing so, Hanuman codifies in its most extreme form a strategy of simultaneous retrieval and defamiliariza-

21 George Lamming, *Season of Adventure* (London: Allison & Busby, 1979).

tion used by Antoni throughout his narrative. One of my repeated frustrations in reading *Divina Trace* was that it both decontextualized and returned to me aspects of Trinidadian culture I usually take for granted. As I first strove to read the novel, I was always put to sleep by the first few pages, with their constant references to "Maraval swamp" and "cemetery" – the two places between which Johnny carries the bottle with the frogchild. One of Trinidad's largest burial grounds is in fact built on a swamp, while Maraval lies far inland in the foothills of the Northern Range. So although I associated "Maraval" with the interior, and "cemetery" with the swamp, the text kept superimposing their locations. The subliminal exchanges stopped me from following a linear narrative that took the frogchild from the Domingo (Maraval) Cemetery to the Maraval (Cemetery) Swamp, or from distinguishing between the unconscious and death for which they stand at this point in the story. My mind would race involuntarily between signifiers until I fell asleep exhausted. Finally I had to skip most of the first chapter to get ahead with reading the book.

Another disorienting sign in that first chapter was the word "obzockee" – probably one of the most clichéd of words in Trinidad Creole speech. It is one of the first words most Trinidadians will offer a non-Creole speaker (with "mamaguy" and possibly "bazodee") if asked for an example of a 'real' Creole word.[22] But few would slip into using "obzockee" – as opposed to "mamaguy" – outside the intimate context of a Creole-speaking community. It is more a child's word than an adult's – an adjective one associates with being gouged in the ribs by the oversized handbags of large adults in church pews and back seats of cars; or having one's lopsided hair ribbons, botched homemade kites, and knobby knees derided by heartless peers. Children say "obzockee," or Creole raconteurs like Paul Keens–Douglas, or people mimicking foreigners trying – and failing – to sound like Trinidadians. But I would be hard-pressed, even in the work of Samuel Selvon, to find a novelistic use of the word before this.[23] When "obzockee"

22 I owe this information to the lexicographer Lise Winer, who probably knows more Creole words than most Trinidadians. She found them constantly using these particular words to test her expertise. This constancy implies that Trinidad Creole speakers see these words as both familiar *and* exotic – marking an intercultural threshold between Creole and other language communities. See Lise Winer, *Trinidad and Tobago* (Varieties of English Around the World; Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1993): passim.

23 Winer corroborates my hunch. The earliest literary usage she has found is in a performance piece by Keens–Douglas called "She say ah Pizza is ah Social Bake." In the monologue it marks a characteristically interstitial cultural space: "Allyu only eatin' ah set ah junkfood like dem social bakes dey does call Pizza, an' allyu still want to find out why allyu gettin' fat an' obzoky"; in Keens–Douglas, *Lal Shop: Short Stories and Dialect Poetry* (Port of Spain: Kensdee Productions, 1984): 87.

hits the Trinidad Creole speaker in the very first sentence of Antoni's text ("The bottle was big and obzockee"), all those uncomfortable childhood associations flood back – with unease as to whether its prominence on the page is meant to signal a parodic tone or a certain gaucheness or inauthenticity on the author's part: is he undermining his narrator, his reader, or himself? By eliciting both recognition and uncertainty, the word leaves the Trinidadian reader feeling – well – obzockee!

The constant manipulation of the non-textual associations a Trinidad Creole speaker brings to certain words and contexts is central to the way in which Antoni destabilizes our sense of the distinction between what is and is not real.[24] In the Shackshloka passages of the Pommerac section especially, the manipulation is intensified. Unlike conventions for representing Jamaican Creole in literature, the convention for rendering Trinidad Creole speech, from Selvon through Naipaul to Anthony and Lovelace, has been to understate. Trinidad Creole is indicated less by 'distorting' the spellings of Standard English than by the way in which its phrasing and grammatical structures force a certain rhythm of intonation on a Creole-speaking reader. Its irresistible cadences seduce the reader into mentally displacing Standard pronunciations with Creole pronunciations and even with different Creole words. Caribbean Creole speakers go through this internal process of displacement and substitution all the time, even, at times, when they read aloud from Standard texts. But Hanuman's Shackshloka language skips to the end of the transliteration process, defamiliarizing the written text even further by contracting groups of Standard words into one Creole lexeme and leaving out altogether the stages through which a Creole speaker would work to get from the Standard written word to the Creole mental text.

24 This disorientation is exacerbated in Antoni's readings from the novel. Another Trinidadian described to me his sense of shock, distrust, envy, and admiration as he listened to the – on first appearance – completely white American Antoni shift into straight Creole to deliver with exact timing and nuance the novel's version of a Trinidadian urban myth about a doctor who looks up his patient's anus to find himself staring into an eyeball. It was as if my informant, who remembered telling and being told this story as a child growing up in Trinidad, was meeting in Antoni a mirror of himself as obscure and impossible as the imagining eye/I the doctor encounters when he looks into his patient's anus.

Standard 'you carried her' becomes "you a carry her," "you a carry she," and finally surfaces as "uakari she" in Shackshloka (208). In the passage below, all kinds of fragments and flotsam from the shared memory of Trinidad Creole speakers – what Brathwaite calls in my second epigraph "shards, shreds, broken tools, cast off political clothing, spittle of monkey parsing" – are pulled together. The first paragraph retails the message Queen Tara/Magdalena (whom Hanuman has surprised in what looks to him like an orgy) sends to assure King Sugriva/Barto that he need fear nothing from the impotent Bali/Gomez's attack on her chastity. The second paragraph describes Sugriva's dejected response to the message:

> But Queen Tara she unconfuffle, slow-bonneting she nundress, chelleanvoice she you caresses, one-two fa decent of man: "Callimico, schoolboy Hanu, soft-spectacle langurer, ceboidea of female passion? woman lovelust pithecoid? Allday at you writingdesk, lefthandinyoupans, who ga publish dis monksense? garillaorgy! *Francoisi Review*? Squirrelhome now you Sugriva—geldas two in palmtree—spiderback to you raja, gib he lemur secret fa me: simian Bali, he weewee toetee not fit fa chimpanzee!"
>
> Uakari den Rishymuka, pigtaile macacaque tween you legs, *alouaita alouatta jeanbaptistelamaracka aloutta!* Sugriva, you now slow-loris, Tara message so nycticebus, both you monkeyhood she pongo proper, both you papio hamadryas good! Sad Sugriva he gray-graylangur – campbelli lowei now he last peg – maurus macaca he fus-fuscata, like he mourning dem 40 pekings drown in Japanese Pearlharbour! "Wanderloo," he now sololoquize. "Tutupia, ono toque? Twoolly tisnoble tabear teasing stones of orangutudinous fortune? Thomasi? Presbytis obscura? Aye, rub de rub!" (199–200)

Contractions of Creole sequences, fragments of the children's song "Alouette," familiar Creole ways of describing masturbation and impotence, not-so-familiar ways of describing impressive male equipment ("geldas two in a palm tree!"), snippets from wartime calypsos, doubting Thomas, inevitable Dickens or Shakespeare, even Antoni's personal vocabulary of primates and academic reference are all called into service. Some of the neologisms, "nycticebus" and "sololoquize," follow the extemporizing rules of Pierrot Grenade and Midnight Robber masqueraders of Trinidad Carnival.[25] Puns, like "(n)undress" and "de(s)cent," common in Dread Talk,

25 Al Creighton, "Commoner and King: Linguistic Performers in the Dialogue of the Dispossessed," in *West Indian Literature and Its Social Context: Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Conference on West Indian Literature,* ed. Mark A. McWatt (Cave Hill: Dept. of English, U.W.I., 1985): 55–68.

superimpose opposite notions of chastity and promiscuity.[26] The juxtaposition of "teasing stones" and "Twoolly tisnoble" conflates literary allusion with the proverbial "sticks and stones may break my bones but *words* can never hurt me." Occasionally I am completely stumped ("Tutupaia"?), but the cadences of the language remain uncannily familiar, rendering meaning even when what's written on the page only makes "monksense."

For all its reliance on speech cadences, Hanuman's Shackshloka delivery is not simply oral performance. We cannot *hear* the puns "de(s)cent" and "(n)undress" until we *see* them in their effects on the syntax of the sentences in which they appear. The reading of "decent" as "descent" is achieved visually and in retrospect by its Darwinian connection to the genitive 'of man.' If "nundress" is a noun, the preceding "she" is the Creole possessive pronoun and "bonneting" is a verb. If "undress" is a verb, "she" is the sentence's subject and "slow bonneting" is an adverbial phrase. The two readings of the sentence – "slowly bonneting her nundress" and "slowly bonneting, she undresses" – would be spoken with quite different intonations. Later in Hanuman's story, the language of the text is represented as carving rather than speaking. His choice of a visual metaphor signals a break with orality all the more decisive because, like "I/Levi," it is constituted in the tension between the signifying properties of sound and the representational valencies of the written word. At the same time, when Hanuman tries to manipulate his sculpture, as if it were merely a blank slate awaiting his sculptor's Thor-hammer, the statue talks back to him in Creole and runs away. Through this repetition and displacement, orality is situated in a syncretic relationship with writing rather than as its subsidiary or polar opposite.

The passage cited above is from the first half of Hanuman's Shackshloka story, the final recounting of the conception, birth, and death of Magdalena's child. In the second half, beginning just beyond the mirror page, Hanuman takes up Antoni's challenge to make something from all the conflicting nothings. First Hanuman, newly emergent from the mirror stage, with only a sketch smeared fresh in cacajao to guide him, undertakes to construct a statue of the lost Tara at Sugriva's command. He precipitates the inevitable oedipal confrontation with Sugriva when he signs himself into language by chiselling his name between the breasts of the statue of the desired mother in

26 Velma Pollard, *Dread Talk: The Language of Rastafari* (Kingston, Jamaica: Canoe Press, 1994): 19ff.

the place where an image of Tara's lost child should be. Like "I/Levi," his signing into language wrests possession of the word/cultural artifact from the father, simultaneously erasing his prior claim as the son to the breast of the mother which the 'real' Tara in (n)undress had offered to him when he found her in Bali's harem.[27] It comes as no surprise, therefore, that when Hanuman tries to lay claim to his creation by raping it with his sculptor's Thor-hammer, it runs from him, as the frogchild of Johnny's imagination swims away in other versions of the story, leaving him with only the mocking refrain *"Krick-krack, monkey break he back, all fa piece of pommerac!"* (212).

Hanuman's failure to control the artifact he feared he could not fashion, his insatiable need to be authenticated by the black boulderstone representation of the mother he has constructed – to occupy the subject positions of father, lover, and son – drives the narrative in the Magdalena Divina section of the novel. His is the first of a series of abortive attempts by each of the storytellers and the narrator himself to control the wider social meanings they ascribe to the myth of the walking Black Madonna statue. These last five chapters are shaped by the narrator's desire to make a viable cultural artifact, as well as his need to imagine a community into which he can insert himself as speaking subject. In the first five stories, Johnny as a child, albeit a *white* child, is exempted from the various categories of race and gender he encounters. As such, he enjoys the ambiguous innocence of the white child-narrator of the Uncle Remus stories.[28] Protected in this

27 I note that by now, in the successive re-tellings of Magdalena/Sita/Tara's story, sexuality has partly occluded race as the currency driving the narrative's economy of desire – what Hanuman calls "any excuse fa freud you fête" (201). In the Sita and Tara versions of the tale, Sita/Tara's unregulated desire – the fact that her spouse doubts her chastity and his paternity – produces both her physical exclusion and her mythical recuperation into the community. By contrast, in the more creolized versions, Magdalena is excluded by racial signifiers – the black jamet, the white woman, the brown monkey, etc. – and she is recuperated and reified as the black boulderstone, the White Lady, the Black Madonna, the white dress, the black Hindu goddess Kali, all of whom are connected and differentiated by racial signifiers. The shift in what Judith Butler might call the "bodies that matter" (Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* [New York: Routledge, 1993]: 181ff.) begins in Mother Maurina's first story, where she conflates *Revelations* and the *Ramayana* and drifts from a concern with racial categories to an obsession with sexual distinctions.

28 I owe the Uncle Remus comparison to Judalyn Ryan, who challenges my inclusion of *Divina Trace* in a Caribbean canon by arguing that the figure of the innocent white child-narrator is a familiar rhetorical device by which white writers appropriate/mimic black culture without acknowledging their ambivalent, even hostile, relation to it. In the Uncle Remus tales, the intimacy the white child claims with blackness through the honorific "Uncle" is not meant to acknowledge that the black storyteller may indeed have been the white child's father's brother. Thinking about this marker of repressed consanguinity helped me understand how the second half of Antoni's novel tries to grapple with just this issue: both through the broader themes my essay takes on and in the details of the various sub-plots (e.g., in the debate about whether or not Evelina should be buried in the Domingo cemetery because she is Barto's daughter or because she is Barto's servant, in the confused motivation behind Johnny's decision to kill Barto after he realizes that Evelina's mother, Barto's slave, may actually have loved him, etc.). I am not convinced that Antoni lays all the ghosts. I would be disappointed if he did or could. But this text is certainly willing to confront what Toni Morrison in *Tar Baby* calls the "foul innocence" of white amnesia.

utopian space where "all real or fantasized possibilities of *jouissance* take refuge,"[29] he is free to identify with all competing tellers and tales. But once the text gets past its own mirror stage and begins to organize itself so as to produce social meaning, Johnny's status as a white narrator creates diverse problems, obstacles, and historical ruptures. These complicate and sap his efforts to claim access to a Caribbean imaginary or write himself into a symbolic discourse that locates whiteness as an infinitely unattainable point on desire's epistemological horizon. What 'I' can overlook as he sees himself mirrored in the word "Levi" inscribed in his shoes, and Lamming seeks to contain by finessing his uneasy relations with Powell through the essential bonds of race, Johnny must confront – and, with him, every Creole-speaking subject who has chosen to move along the trajectory of desire to incorporation into the discursive realm of writing/whiteness. To claim his space in the Caribbean literary tradition, Johnny must break out of the continuum between the equally illusory poles of 'black' truth and 'white' authority in Caribbean literary discourse. Yet any attempt to stabilize a new relationship through art risks ending with the statue running away and the monkey breaking his back.

As the Magdalena stories unfold, each of the tellers whom Johnny has called into being, and whose wildest instantiations we are asked by/with Johnny to accept as more 'real' than the narrator himself, turn out to be as precariously inserted into the narrative as Johnny. All have deceived Johnny and/or themselves in the course of their stories. Even the incontrovertibility

29 Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia UP, 1986): 187–213, here 202.

of their deaths is put in question by their continued literal presence in conversation with Johnny. Moreover, the frontiers between their ego and Johnny's are dangerously dispersed. It becomes difficult to discern whether Mother Maurina's Joycean fantasies of ravishment by Barto (231–234) are a form of voyeuristic identification with Magdalena's seduction and penetration, a premonition or memory of her rape and death at the hands of the black prime minister and his five cabinet members during Corpus Christi celebrations, or a screen for *Johnny's* homosexual fantasies of penetration by the frogchild in the swamp. Similarly, the details of Johnny's adult life and marriage become indistinguishable from those of his father. Both seem to marry the same woman because of their affection for her father. Both are haunted and exposed as frauds by the frogchild who escapes the pages of their medical texts.

The literal disintegration of the myth of Magdalena itself is the central anxiety of this section of the narrative. In successive stories, she shrinks from a black boulderstone lodged in a tree that appears miraculously to the chupidee Sister Bernadetta, to a religious icon hewn from purpleheart wood, to a fetish constructed from sticks and papier-mâché, to an oversized doll Granny Myna's uncle made for her as a child, and finally to none other than the 'real' Magdalena, who may never have died, merely borrowing the clothes of the venerated statue for diversion when she walks to her trysts with Barto on the banks of the swamp. And the frogchild – whom everyone from Granny Myna on insists is buried in the Domingo cemetery, and whom Johnny *really* knows he has released into the Maraval swamp? The frogchild, it turns out, was cooked by Granny Myna in one of her inspired callaloos and eaten, like the body of Christ, by the entire community of St Maggy's on the feast of Corpus Christi, decades before Johnny was even born.

As Johnny's narrative sources and icons dissolve, so too do his utopian dreams of Caribbean unity and final reconciliation of all history's hurts. Each time he reaches a version of Caribbean culture and community that can include him *and* be manipulated by him, he must face its limitations in the real world. His reverie on a shared Caribbean identity, manifested in the "reflex encoded in our unconscious" that hard-wires the way all Caribbean people suck an orange, is rudely interrupted by a stone hurled at him, the white intruder, by transplanted black Caribbean children playing on the streets of an American city (248). His consequent cynicism in the next story that the Caribbean is, after all, only whatever America chooses

to make it, is undermined by his encounter with a Jamaican street hustler, who acknowledges him as a fellow-Caribbean by their shared orange-sucking ritual but dumps worthless stolen trinkets on him anyway, as if he were just another gullible white American on an endless quest for the exotic. Evelina, like generations of real and proxy black mothers before her, invests Johnny with the privileged authority of mediator between America and the Caribbean, since "if dere is anybody could explain all dis confusion to dose yankees, dat dey can understand who we is and where we come from dat we can scarce even understand weself, it could only be you" (313). Yet Johnny gets no further on this mission than his own impotent rage against the burden of whiteness, using a glass bottle to smash to a bloody pulp the skull of the first old man he sees whom he imagines may be his white grandfather Barto.

And yet these failures of meaning, which Johnny anticipates from the moment he starts his impossible journey, do not imply a failure of vision in the tale that Antoni constructs. Johnny can no more exercise control over the content of his psyche or the legacy of his history than his narrative can avoid the inevitability of closure. Yet he can and does try to exert some control over their *form*. This is what re-telling the Domingo saga through varied myths and multiple perspectives finally offers. Johnny's story gains coherence from its insertion into the multiple paradigms offered by Christian, African, Native American, and Hindu myths. There is even a somewhat awkwardly choreographed juxtaposition of the chapters in the Magdalena Divina section that offers psychoanalytical metaphors for successive stages of human development to let us read them: the mirroring tropes in Mother Maurina's descriptions of the visions of the chupidee Sister Bernadetta; anal obsessions of Dr Domingo's medical histories; oral ones of Evelina's memories of the frogchild being nursed by Rosie, the cow; Johnny's oedipal confrontations with his white grandfathers, Barto and Papee Vince; and his gradual incorporation into his father's role. The syncretic architecture of all the readings prepares us to accept movement toward some kind of re-articulated role or cultural process rather than stable identity. We come to trust that the novel will follow its own correct path toward silence.

Perhaps Johnny's greatest formal challenge is how to contain the over-determined authority of whiteness in Papee Vince's story. Papee Vince is Barto's alter ego – studious, gentle Prospero, buried in his books, father of the invisible Miranda-figure whom both Johnny and his father seem finally to marry. His connection to that other Prospero, the macho Barto/Brito who

rapes Sycorax and fathers Caliban/Magdalena/Evelina/Gomez/the frogchild and/or Johnny, is not immediately clear, although it is he who tells Barto's side of the story and insists, decades after the events, that Barto is still alive.[30] Papee Vince claims never to have laid eyes on Magdalena, her frogchild, or the statue through which she is revered. Yet he can elucidate her origins from as far back as the Moorish invasion of Spain right up to her conception in the fetid imagination of Mother Maurina. It is he who points out that Magdalena *must* die in all versions of the story, especially that of her grieving mother, if she is to be canonized. His insight into the nature of history and function of myth is an impressive performance. He can explain the cause of every major economic shift and agricultural disaster in the Caribbean. He draws from the region's racial and cultural cacophony a pattern that rationalizes retrospectively the timing by which all these strands combine in the veneration of Magdalena.

Antoni lets an old condensed-milk tin of congealed sputum left behind by Papee Vince stand for this white grandfather, reminding us that his words are just one more form of waste sloughed off by the stories from which Johnny must fashion his version of the tale. Still, it takes a supreme effort of will not to invest with final authority Papee Vince's pronouncements in reply to Johnny's inquiry about why no Caribbean stories stood on his childhood bookshelves:

> I suppose nobody ever found the time to write out those [stories] neither. Much less the need. Because why the ass would anybody in they right mind want to read out a story dead, that they could hear in a hundred different *living* versions – each one better than the one before – on any streetcorner or porchstoop they happen to stumble. Then again, I suppose you have to know youself pretty good before you can write out any storybooks, and that is something we are only now beginning to learn. Because son, I will give you another biological–historical truth. Another one that those historians always seem to forget when it comes to understanding this Caribbean: son, you never truly grow up until the death of you second parent. Whether that death is natural, psychological, or the result of bloody murder. Only *then* can you come to know youself. And in fact, we only just finish matriciding we mummy-England the other day. (368)

30 Barto's status as racial/phallic signifier is purely symbolic: Myna, Maurina, and Magdalena, are all raped by the quack Warrahoon doctor Brito Salizar and the male Warrahoon community as part of a puberty ritual, establishing the entire community as father of any children produced by these women. Thus all the children Barto is thought to have fathered – save, ironically, the black Evelina – may be offspring of the Warrahoon community. And Barto is to Brito as the earthly incarnation of divinity, Rama, is to heavenly Shiva in the Pommerac section of the novel.

We have heard this speech before in many Caribbean texts. So, Nellie's refrain in Erna Brodber's *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home* – "Massa Nega, beg you mine yourself. Mi smell you dinner but mi no want none"[31] – warns that the Caribbean speaking subject's fatalistic attachment to meanings assigned to her experiences by her ancestors, both black and white, must be relinquished if she is to achieve a fully integrated psyche. But its Hegelian assumptions about history and progress and closure and self-recognition take on many unexpected nuances when Antoni puts them on a white speaker's lips. Here is a speaker who from one perspective *represents* England telling us that we will not be grown until we have killed both our awe of him *and* our reification of the oral tradition. The question is: will/can/should he be the one to pronounce us alive/mature once we have killed him? Antoni finesses the answer by depicting the narrator as several years older than the grandfather with whom he converses, while the novel's entire structure cautions us to view Papee Vince's narrative authority as no more or less than that of any other storyteller. As Papee Vince reminds Johnny, he can give his version of the story back only as life gave it to him "the way the story asks itself to be told.... Because of course, in the end, as with any other tale told of man or monkeys since the beginning of time, you can only tell your own story. You can only hear your own story too" (342). But all these qualifications will not prevent the reader of a *text* from investing the lucid positivism of Papee Vince's narrative with the discursive authority we long for through the reading of the other garbled oral histories. It is the old "Levi/I" conundrum in reverse. Does the authority of Papee Vince's insight establish his discursive status as white, or does the biological 'fact' of his whiteness imbue his words with authority?

Papee Vince's insights enunciate *a* truth, but the author must struggle for balance between letting this voice into his narrative and allowing it to drown out the others. When, in closing, Papee Vince reveals Granny Myna's Warrahoon ancestry, which even she did not know, and points to her blind faith in Magdalena's divinity in spite of her jealousy as the betrayed wife as the touchstone for reliability, it is hard to break the habit of letting the narrative authority of whiteness assign to its Other the reified valency of 'truth.' Granny Myna's closing tale, by exposing her implication in all the deceptions with which others surround her, lets her slip fleetingly off her pedestal like the walking Black Madonna statue. She has to confound all the

31 Erna Brodber, *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home* (London/Port of Spain: New Beacon, 1980): 12.

meanings which have contained her – even if it means cooking and eating Magdalena's frogchild, all the while insisting and believing that he lies buried in the cemetery.

Antoni's struggle to counteract the narrative authority of whiteness in Papee Vince's tale calls into question the elusive catholicity to which his larger narrative aspires. The form of his novel forces the Caribbean reader to acknowledge just how much our attachment to certain imaginary configurations of blackness and whiteness remains a significant factor in our symbolic order. Antoni undermines this order by allowing the racial and cultural images in each story to contradict the discourse of the stories that precede and follow it. Yet why, one wonders, in a narrative that seems to aim at exhaustive representation, are the only East Indian voices those of the 'mythical' pommerac section? Can the white boy Johnny, given cultural assumptions readers bring to this narrative, stand in effectively for the traditionally black male speaking subject – just because his cultural mothers Evelina and Magdalena and his biological grandmother Myna are neither wholly black nor white? And if this displacement is possible, even needed, whose essential identity is erased in our heads? The inauthentic but present white boy's? or his absent and equally inauthentic black male Other – the imagining I, the I of his imagination? Johnny demurs that his narrative must of necessity end in failure, yet Antoni's book exists, as tangible and obscure and elusive as any of the cultural artifacts whose fashioning it retails. The problem is, that every time we challenge the truth claims of one of Antoni's strategies, whether for its overdetermined logic, its exploitation of the folk, its inability to contain the imaginary, its arbitrary privileging of certain racial lines of descent rather than others, or its selective incorporation of different cultural myths, we are forced to confront the equally arbitrary choices through which each of us constructs our own racially buttressed claims to discursive authority.

As Johnny nears death in Granny Myna's closing story, he has been divested of all his illusions, given back all his histories and none. We have no way of knowing if Evelina's mother loved Barto or hated him; whether Barto is alive or Johnny has killed him; if Magdalena or her frogchild ever existed; whether Granny Myna is of Spanish or Warrahoon descent; if any of the theories and empirical data Papee Vince recounts with such assurance have a reality beyond his books. The reader must accept that nothing further in the way of evidence about Johnny could establish the connection between his reflection on the world and his knowledge of what he will (in fact) do or

what he does in fact believe.[32] All that remains is Evelina's sardine tin, holding the elusive frogchild's navel string and the rosary beads that constitute the symbolic currency of exchange with which generations of Domingo women, from Granny Myna to Evelina to Magdalena, mark their difference and displace and incorporate each other. At the end of his story Johnny is neither its maker nor its protagonist. Instead, the mirror page lets each of us append his/her signature cross to the signifying chain of stories along the rosary, transforming repetition to narrative, belief to artifact.

I suppose in the end I do not want to claim for Antoni the unique distinction of breaking the anglophone pattern of trying to contain and/or reify the folk. The only thing that differentiates his method here from that of all other anglophone Caribbean writers who have used similar strategies of displacement and recuperation to incorporate and erase the essentialized folk in whose name they speak is his insistence on acknowledging the whiteness with which this paradoxical relationship to the folk invests the writer in a Creole symbolic order, whatever the genetic or cultural specificity of his ancestry. Many anglophone Caribbean texts employ similar strategies, or worry about the fact that these processes are going on in their work. The Anansi stories with which Erna Brodber frames *Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home* acknowledge and question the educated Creole-speaking subject's need to re-invent a version of the folk tradition as an unfailing source of revelation: her inability either to come to terms with its loss or to accept its mutability. Readers constantly misremember Brathwaite's *Arrivants* trilogy as a journey into the unconscious/ Africa in which recovered Africa is automatically and inevitably reliable and authenticating – as if the poem did not close with an invocation of "some-/thing torn//and new."[33] Lamming's oeuvre would gain immeasurably if we could abandon our need

32 This formulation derives from Richard Moran ("The Undoing of Self-Knowledge," unpublished seminar paper, 1993). He draws on Wittgenstein's remarks on Moore's Paradox—"It's raining outside and I don't believe it" – echoed in Granny Myna's insistence that the frogchild she has cooked and eaten is also buried in the cemetery. Moran uses Moore's paradox to examine "Sartre's view of the person as being of a divided nature, divided between what he calls the self-as-facticity and the self-as-transcendence" (1), a way of thinking about identity that informs Antoni's narrative on several occasions.

33 [Edward] Kamau Brathwaite, *The Arrivants* (London: Oxford UP, 1973): 270.

to read him as a writer of social realism – or even of historical allegory, with its built-in parallel tracks separating reality and myth.[34] Antoni's novel helps us re-imagine such possible readings of other anglophone texts. It foregrounds the distinction, familiar from Wilson Harris's novels, between Benítez-Rojo's 'syncretic signifiers,' composed of differences, and synthetic signifiers, made from differences' resolution.[35] It highlights the tension between what can be represented in the anglophone Caribbean text and what remains unspeakable, if not unspoken, between its lines.

Divina Trace also invokes a Caribbean canon in relation to which it asks to be read. Its interminably repetitive patterns paradoxically challenge and codify a set of generic conventions in anglophone Caribbean literature that have become as commonplace as the trope of romance in European literature. For if it is the first involuntary loss of Mother Africa that ushers the Creole-speaking subject into language, it is the second voluntary abandonment of the oral tradition to wrest from the white father the literary prerogative of naming that catapults him/her into text. This paradigm of double loss permeates anglophone Caribbean literature. It can be seen at its most protean in Walcott's fable, *Ti-Jean and His Brothers*,[36] where the double loss of his mother – first through his migration and then through her death – finally forces Ti-Jean to abandon Creole and sing the deepest sorrows of the folk in perfect Standard English, reducing the planter/devil to tears and inspiring in the unborn bolom an insatiable desire to experience the travails of existence. It is in the boy G–'s double farewell to the land in *In the Castle of My Skin*, first when he is pushed into school by his mother and then when he chooses to leave her for Trinidad. Only when he reaches this juncture does he distance his mother as the cuckoo-making bearer of culture.

34 Paradoxically, both Brathwaite and Lamming may have invited such misprisions: Brathwaite, by his historian's insistence, in passages like the epigraph to this essay from *Mother Poem*, that there *can* be such a thing as a Caribbean history – or any other for that matter – that "will *not* always bleed on other people's edges"; Lamming, by the immense fear of chaos that grips his narratives whenever they near the crater lip of representational incoherence. It leads to what Wilson Harris calls "the restrictive consolidation" of realism informing Lamming's decision to set a character like Shepard in *Of Age and Innocence* in "the role of the great rebel – in the way everyone else appeared to see him rather than in the way he innocently may have seen himself"; Wilson Harris, *Tradition, The Writer and Society: Critical Essays* (London/Port of Spain: New Beacon, 1967): 38, 39.

35 See fn 16 above.

36 Derek Walcott, "Ti-Jean and His Brothers," in *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970).

Only through this splitting of the subject does the anonymous G– of the story become the narrating 'I' of the text's closing movements. But Naipaul does it, too, in the double exile of his protagonist in *The Mimic Men* that enables the evasive ambivalent authority of Ralph Kripalsingh.[37] And Lovelace's Aldrick must lose his dreams and his freedom before his dragon can finally dance.[38] Most Caribbean narratives embed this double loss once, perhaps twice, in their narratives. Antoni's double rosary of narratives, folded into each other like butterfly wings, describe this pattern seven times – perhaps eight, if we see the incestuous dyad of the blank mirror page as a pre-text in its own right. The insistent repetition forces the embedded frame into full view, challenging us to recognize its creative possibilities even as we question that nostalgia and pattern of inevitable loss we think we know as well as the 'I' in Levi; as the way we suck an orange; as the skin knows the hand it darkens.

Finally, *Divina Trace* marks a new resurgence of the white Creole voice in the anglophone Caribbean discursive space – a voice that signifies both privilege, because of its association with whiteness, and vulnerability, because of its minority status. For writers like Ian McDonald, Lawrence Scott, and Robert Antoni, and the new wave of white Creole producers of visual and performance art in Trinidad, the prospect of access to an aesthetic tradition that acknowledges their paradoxical relation to the folk must of necessity complicate simple dualisms and oppositional constructs. Antoni's text reveals itself as Caribbean because of the way it constructs the symbolic through racialized rather than – or as well as – gendered images of power and powerlessness. But its securest place in the cultural continuum lies in the interstices between anglophone Caribbean and Latin American narrative traditions. By filling real and illusory chasms dividing the cultures and races that people the region with the accumulated flotsam sloughed off by his history, Antoni brings new islands of meaning to the surface.

Perhaps the best metaphor for his achievement is the transport of the Windsor Warrahoon chair from the Latin American mainland to the Caribbean setting of his mythical Corpus Christi. The chair, into which Johnny must squeeze himself because it is built to fit the bamsee of a Warrahoon Indian rather than a white man's, and whose translation from the South American mainland to the islands seems too inconceivable to be adapted even to a monkey myth where anything can be real, speaks to the

37 V.S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Men* (London: André Deutsch, 1967).

38 Earl Lovelace, *The Dragon Can't Dance* (London: André Deutsch, 1979).

possibilities of magic in our literary culture. This magic names no essential truths, but on just that account lets us re-work relations between Caribbean people over impassable racial divides and contradictory historical memories. It lets us reconstruct, in however obzockee a fashion, the stories of our past so that they fit, however provisionally, the futures we want to make.

Apprenticeship to the Furies

Wilson Harris

It seems to me that there's neglect and marginalization of the humanities in Europe; and, indeed, in many parts of the world. It is a tragedy. This has to do with the political establishment, that obviously is seeking all sorts of short-cuts in order to do this and to do that. When I say 'the humanities,' I mean the classical humanities, the modern humanities, the innovative humanities. The psyche remains, and when the humanities are negated the psyche will operate elsewhere in theatres of violence; and this, you know, has been an extremely violent century.

I have been haunted since I was a child, I must say, by the genesis of the imagination. Realize its source, its unfathomable origins. These matters pre-occupied me as a child in the games that I played, though I would not have expressed it like that. It seems to me that the genesis of the imagination is unfinished, and that all models which we can perceive as absolute are partial and susceptible to cross-culturality. The ancient Maya believed that the past and the future are blended. This concept, I understand, has bewildered scholars and thinkers, though I would tend to think that in chaos mathematics there's a tendency to come into some sort of dialogue with this concept of the blending of the past and the future, within what the chaos mathematicians call an open universe. The question of the future in the future, the future that is arriving, and the future in the past seems to me a fascinating matter, because if one were to have a sliding scale, and if one were to go back, say, fifty years into the past, then that past becomes the future for what lies behind it. And if one goes further back still, that particular horizon in time becomes a future for what lies behind it; and so on and so forth. You could have this sliding backwards into the futures that lie in the past, and without some comprehension of this, it seems to me, the future in the future will become more and more bewildering and devastating and terrifying. There needs to be an intimate and profound comprehension of the past if we are to meet the challenges of the future.

I have the sensation as I write sometimes of acute depression, because there are times when I wish to destroy everything. Partly because of the text that I am actually writing – if one calls it a text; it's a living thing for me; as one writes that, one is aware of hidden texts that lurk within what one writes. One is aware of untranslatable texts, texts that one will never be able to translate. The latter, however, it seems to me – the untranslatable texts – are important, because they are a kind of goad, a ceaseless goad that pushes one on and on to find some way of relating to the untranslatable. And because of this interrelationship – actual texts, hidden texts, untranslatable texts – all models are partial, in that they are susceptible to this enigma of hidden texts and untranslatable texts. They are therefore susceptible to a series of unfinished cross-culturalities. We have a tendency, of course, to reinforce these models and to make them into absolutes. It seems to me that there are texts which come prior to what we call beginnings – that when you say, "this the beginning of something," there is a text behind that, whether hidden or untranslatable. And if we say, "here is the end," there is a text beyond that, which we need to cope with in some degree.

There is a curious humour, it seems to me – a curious comedy – in whatever force drives one to write, because as an imaginative writer I find myself doing things intuitively. These things spring out of the long labour of work, which has its ecstatic side and also, as I said before, its depressive side, because one has a 'scarecrow eye' which looks at what one has done during the day and says "Destroy it all, destroy it all"; and then the next morning, when one looks at it again, one is glad one hasn't done so. One may revise it, but one is glad one hasn't destroyed it. So this is where that humour comes into play, because one has to laugh at oneself.

And the other thing, of course, is that one is doing things which one comes abreast of later, so that I find that my latest novel, *Jonestown*, which is to be published next year, has suddenly alerted me to something which existed in the very first published novel that I wrote, *Palace of the Peacock*,[1] in which I see intimations now running through the whole body of writing I have done within the past forty years. These 'intimations' are rooted in synchronicities and associations which seem more lucid than any intellectualization of the process. Indeed, no intellectualization (however useful) can replace the strange humour or comedy in the life of creative work itself, which seems to arise from depths for which there is no absolute formula. An uncanny lucidity prevails which we may come abreast of much later with

1 Wilson Harris, *Palace of the Peacock* (London: Faber & Faber, 1960).

hindsight in scanning the peculiar *evolutionary* scale of a body of work across many years. Each work brings another variable into play, planted, it seems, by another hand in oneself.

What I would like to do is to read a short epigraph, which comes somewhere in the middle of *Jonestown*. And it is written by Francisco Bone. Now, Francisco Bone, in the archetypal fiction, is one of the survivors of the Jonestown disaster, of which you may know. It was a self-inflicted holocaust in the forests of Guyana, in 1978, when Jim Jones, the American charismatic leader, was given a lease of land by the government of Guyana and established a new settlement; and eventually, for various reasons which I won't go into, these people decided to take their own lives. In my fiction, Jim Jones becomes Jonah Jones; he has his right-hand man, or right-hand angel, a peasant from the savannahs, who eventually went to the United States and was educated there, and his left-hand man as well – Francisco Bone; and it is Bone who survives and who is riddled by great torment because he feels that perhaps he could have done something to have averted this holocaust. He was unable to do anything. And he suffers from amnesia – loss of memory and so on – as he gropes to write a book. He wanders for seven years and eventually arrives in New Amsterdam, on the coast, and that is where he writes his Dream-book.

> I am apprenticed to the Furies, apprenticed to Dread. How does one learn the complex arts and inter-related mysteries of the Furies across the ages yet see them in oneself and begin to turn them around by stages of incredible game into all-inclusive Love?[2]

"All-inclusive Love" – I'll come back to that, because to speak of love in this context must arouse some dread within oneself. There is another passage which relates to this – a matter which I shall read, which will help me when I look back at *Palace*; there are other fictions I could look at as well but obviously we haven't the time to do so. Now, this passage has to do with Francisco Bone, who, in the context of the Mayan enigma of time, returns to the past. He returns to his childhood. He has in fact lost two fingers; they were shot away in Jonestown. He is numb. Even though he has suffered that blow, he doesn't feel the loss, and it takes him some time to come abreast of the pain which is secreted in himself. When he returns to Albuoystown as a child, no-one sees that two fingers are missing except his school-teacher, Mr Mageye, who is a peculiar kind of jester.

2 Wilson Harris, *Jonestown* (London/Boston MA: Faber & Faber, 1996): 141. Further page references are in the text.

So he returns to the future; everything seems the same, yet nothing is the same – for example, his body is not the same. I don't want to go into all of that. I simply want to read this passage, which takes up the issue of his return, because it has a bearing on what I want to say.

> The ship took me back to my childhood in Albuoystown.
>
> I sailed on the convertible claw of the sun as if I rode futuristic energy on the back of a Tiger.
>
> A Tiger that could turn and rend me limb from limb in a storm but was harnessed in this instance into Virgin space within a mathematic possessed of the life of fractions to diminish the power of overwhelming seas in the sweep of time, black seas, uncharted regions from which the voices of nature goddesses broke into the human ear. (27–28)

When I speak here of fractions I am actually investing here, in a peculiar way, in partiality. The fractions become partiality. The fractions, therefore, are not reinforced into absolutes, so they have the power to diminish the raging storm on one hand, but they also have the power to suggest that there is some prospect of wholeness into which one could move. If one reinforced the partial into an absolute, one could frame oneself absolutely, it seems. So the fractions are used here almost in the sense of chaos mathematics. Chaos mathematics speak of ideal numbers, but I have broken those numbers into fractions in order to get home this matter of partiality and its consequences. So the fractions here help to break, to diminish, the power of overwhelming seas. The fear mirrored a passage in the womb of space. The fear became a receptacle, a cavern, a curious vaginal receptacle, instilled in the birth of consciousness to absorb and convert the music of the sirens into guardian lighthouses Bone *sees* and *hears*.

You may find that rather peculiar – that the ear is a vaginal receptacle into which the music penetrates. But you may remember that Odysseus was chained to the mast of his ship. The mast of the ship was a kind of phallic mast, and he was chained to that, and he could hear the voices of the sirens. This filled him with dread. His crew, of course, had sealed their ears against the voices of the sirens. But one is suggesting that that in itself implies a phallic position which one associates sometimes with mastery, with conquest, whereas one is suggesting that there is a mutuality between the genders, between the sirens and the male persona, the male presence, when the male secretes the vaginal receptacle in the organ of the fear. The male then absorbs the music of the dread sirens by incorporating a vaginal counterpoint in himself. And I would suggest that this is a kind of latent space. I would suggest that this counterpoint breaks the tyranny of conquest

or rape. There is a mutuality, then, between the sirens and the listening person that breaks the incorrigible phallic mast by bringing about a different kind of tenderness, a different kind of apprehension of love; and the male figure of conquest then seems to acquire a synchronous counterpoint with the female fury; I shall come back to that later. And the music penetrates. The music remains terrifying, but it alters the dread imperative which the crew, the Odyssean crew, incorporates into itself. The passage goes on:

> Through the Sirens and the nature goddesses, and their linkage with the Virgin, consciousness hears itself in layered counterpointed rhythms as never before, consciousness sees itself, questions itself as never before. (28)

You may wonder what I mean by the Virgin. I am thinking of the Virgin archetype. The Virgin archetype, for me, suggests an intercourse with reality that is shorn of violence. So that I would imagine that the birth of Christ has this latent space in it: that Christ – that is my vision anyway – was the representation of intercourse with reality shorn of violence. That is almost incomprehensible to human logic. But we can move towards it by stages. You may not arrive totally, but you can move towards it by stages. And that is how I use the notion of Virgin space, the Virgin archetype.

One other passage which bears on this: "The Virgin is a blessed fury." Now, the blessed fury is one of the stages in which one begins to move to the Virgin archetype. The blessed fury is quite different from the Furies as they have been presented to us in the classical tradition. I shall come to that in a moment.

> Does the regeneration of oneself and one's civilization, one's uncertain age, lie through new translated rhythms well-nigh unbearable counterpoint to complacent symmetry?
>
> The Virgin is a blessed fury when she secretes her involuntary and pagan Shadow-music in the bone of Mankind and in the torso and sculpture of mothers of humanity upon every battlefield. (40)

We know that, in Rwanda for example, women's disfigured bodies marked the scale of conflict; the same happened in Bosnia: mothers of humanity upon every battlefield. "Name death in yourself." *Name death in yourself* is one of the messages of the blessed fury; but I shall come back to that a little later. A terrifying commandment that breaks all commandments one associates with privilege and conquest. "Virgin sirens! Bone flute in the cradle of mankind." The bone flute is a Carib flute; the bone flute has to do with the Caribs, who, as you know, ate a morsel from the enemy and then fashioned a flute from the bone under the flesh, and in this way they hoped to digest the

secrets of the enemy. Now, I have involved myself in the bone flute in an attempt to turn it around, and to suggest that one has to consume the furies in oneself, the biases and horrors in oneself. So:

> Virgin sirens! Bone flute in the cradle of mankind.
> How strange.
> Regeneration through Virgin sirens.
> How strange to entertain the regeneration of oneself through the furies one has long feared. (40)

This matter of the furies one has long feared – I do not have to remind you that classical tradition speaks of the Furies not only as dread sirens, but as three terrible winged goddesses with serpents in their hair; for example, Electo, Megaera and Tisophone, who pursue and punish doers of unavenged crimes. It is interesting to note also that Ehrenzweig, in his book *The Hidden Order of Art*,[3] makes the point that Freud recognized the many disguises of the death goddess; like Graves, he recognized that she is a triple goddess represented by three women. It is important to note Freud's investment in the death-goddess, and to note that the Furies were or appeared to be in the female gender. These terrifying Furies who seek revenge are presented as goddesses, death-goddesses out to punish doers of unavenged crimes.

It is interesting to note that in modern cinema we seem to have a peculiar return of these death goddesses. I do not know if you have seen the film *Play "Misty" for Me*! It is a well-known American film in which Clint Eastwood, I think, takes the role of the pursued. The woman who pursues him – I mean, in the most terrifying and dreadful way – reminds me somewhat of the Furies. Also, in the film *Fatal Attraction*, there's an attempt to present the female as ruthless and aggressive and sustaining the motive of revenge. Recently I saw *Black Widow*, which is based on an event that actually occurred in the United States, in which a woman was raped by her father as a child and innately disfigured; she poisons her father with arsenic. Then she poisons her first husband, then she poisons her lover, and then she poisons her second husband; it is not until then that it occurs to the authorities to look back and trace the crimes of revenge committed across the years. The bodies were buried and not cremated.

I must make this as clear as I can: that the parallel in mass-media cinema which one draws with these women and the classical Furies may be misleading, in my judgement. For the ancient Furies, though ostensibly female in gender, are not *individuals* (– this is a point I sought to make last night in

3 Anton Ehrenzweig, *The Hidden Order of Art* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1967).

my conversation with Professor Spivak). I pointed out last night one has to contend at times with character as a vessel, not as an individual. And when one does that, one is not really involved in the conventional novelistic structure. One is involved in something quite different. You are involved in a vessel of psyche sustaining spectralities, concretions, apparitions; that vessel is able then to move in an archetypal way to suggest certain stages in which the human person is susceptible to multi-faceted insights and transformations.

One of the things about archetypes, in my view, is that they never arrive whole in human affairs; they always arrive in a broken way. So if one moves to the whole archetype, one goes by stages. A broken archetype has profound creative activity in it. It has terrifying activity in it. And the activity can serve to do different things. So that the vessel of the furies has its roots in the animal kingdom – these women with serpents in their hair. Which is not far removed from, say, Quetzalcoatl, who is the male god. *Quetzal* means, as you know, "bird," and *coatl* is the snake or serpent. So Quetzalcoatl has its origins in this conjunction of bird and serpent. So the vessel has its roots in the cosmos, in the earth itself. For some obscure reason these vessels become perverse, and when they become perverse they construct themselves into a prison house. The latent space within the vessel is suppressed or diminished; there is no expansion of resources through and beyond the frame of the vessel. So it becomes perverse, it becomes a fury. And when it becomes a fury it seems to have no function other than to seek revenge.

Various cultures, then, which have their spectralities – their numinosities, their apparitions, their concretions – in a vessel may be aware of injuries they have suffered. The culture then builds a pattern of revenge-seeking within itself. Kanaima, in Guyana, is such a pattern, though Kanaima is a male figure. When I travelled in the interior of Guyana as a surveyor I came upon Macusis who were in fearful dread of Kanaima. Kanaima had taken away their maidens, young women and also men, because of some wrong that that tribe had done. The people of the tribe tended to be ignorant of the crimes they and their antecedents had committed. Kanaima is that kind of male-gendered fury which is marked obscurely by the stigma of the abused female. He is rooted in a predatory unconscious womb in intercourse with death. (Let us note that the collective or universal unconscious is multi-faceted and that it sustains a self-confessional, self-judgmental *divergence* from predatory instinct: this needs

to be shared by victim and victor if the language of the imagination – through variable strategy – is to transform itself into a new genius of community.)

So we have this difficulty which is rooted in a predatory unconscious which, in remaining 'pure' and 'formal', becomes increasingly addicted to eruption in the subconscious/conscious mind as a function of revenge.

This, in my judgement, throws some light on the role of the death goddess as set forth by Freud and Ehrenzweig. You see, I hope, why I diverge from their absolute formulation. I have ceaselessly done so within the changing contours and depth-resources in the entire body of my fiction through *The Guyana Quartet* and succeeding works up to *Jonestown*.

There is an incredible humour in the muses. One is blindfolded, so to speak, even as one comes abreast of the mystery of truth: *undogmatic* truth steeped in revolving uncertainties within the unfinished genesis of the imagination. So it is I am inclined to laugh with the muses and at myself when I look back at the role of the three women in *Palace of the Peacock*: Mariella has been abused by Donne. She metamorphoses into an aged/mysteriously young Arawak woman whom Donne and his crew seize, and towards the end of the journey she is seen as a blessed fury dressed only in her falling hair (falling but ceaselessly rooted in the cosmos, an Arawak/Christian cosmos and quantum reality; one is three in the factorization of the archetype of the blessed fury, a medium of transformation – the function of revenge).

This progression sustains a divergence from the predatory unconscious. The revenge potential or terror-making faculty is there but the trials of the imagination in the fiction begin to release a transformative and redemptive capacity into which the elements are orchestrated. In such music or rhythm, 'hair' and 'dress' achieve a measure of concordance with – for instance – a great waterfall or lip of an abyss.

The waterfall ceases to be a piece of furniture to be manipulated in the landscape/riverscape/skyscape. The crew are aware of great peril but their Eye and Ear are addressed by a forgotten facet of the hidden unconscious which they share with the Arawak women.

The waterfall imbues them with the rhythms of a living map on which they are precariously sustained within broken yet archetypal memory of voyages across twelve thousand years, from the Behring Straits along the hazardous watersheds and valleys in North America into Central and South America.

The issue of divergence from the predatory unconscious is crucial, I feel, within the language of the imagination. There are variables in the unconscious – variable alignments between death and dream, between birth and love, between the death-goddess and cosmic memory which transcends peril. I would like to glance at these (and also at a curious distinction between 'predator' and 'prey') within the fictions I have written.

I do so in an effort to clarify, in depth, pressures which resist purely conventional or intellectual focus.

Take the woman Butterfly in *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill*.[4] Hope *dreams* that he and Butterfly have been shot by D'eath (or Lord Death). In the dream they become extinct creatures. Butterfly becomes a creaturely *and* human vessel. They return to life in the dream. In parallel with the woman dressed in her hair in *Palace of the Peacock*, Butterfly is clothed afresh by Hope with vegetation akin to hair that floats on a river. Her lips are created anew from an elongated pebble plucked from the lip of an abyss or tremendous waterfall. Her thighs are created from the horn of deer. These profound fictionalities of nature evoke the unconscious genesis of life (the birth of all species from earth and ocean and fire). A divergence is implied from binding fashion or historical costumery. In the backward sweep of time the fiction imprints on Butterfly a memory of evolution which bears on the future...

One is charting, I would suggest, an equation between archetype and evolution. The archetype – in its activity within human and animal species – is always broken into factors. Each factor is partial. Such partiality can be reinforced into an absolute. And then it breeds polarization.

The activity of the factors of the archetype releases us from absolutely 'pure' or 'formal' assumptions. The Keatsian romantic imperative – *Beauty is Truth* – gives way to an absorption of danger signals we may disguise from ourselves as beauty. The predator is often a magnificent and beautiful creature.

I wish I possessed the ability to elaborate on this in purely intellectual and critical terms. I must fall back on my imaginative fiction, which comes to mind as I speak.

What is the distinction between 'predator' and 'prey'?

They are interlinked within the psyche of nature and yet a distinction is precariously and complexly sustained within an evolution of partialities and

4 Wilson Harris, *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill* (London/Boston MA: Faber & Faber, 1993).

factors that may be combined differently in their momentum towards absolute knowledge. Such 'absolute knowledge' is unseizable but it opens our eyes to the mystery of the self, the mystery of truth we come abreast of though blindfolded by the muses.

Francisco Bone asks for Mageye (a revenant and seer) to define the distinction between 'predator' and 'prey.' Let me read the passage from *Jonestown*:

> Mr Mageye suddenly grew grave. "I understand your pain, Francisco," he said. "But consider. Here's the crux of the net. Crux – I can hear you saying – is an odd word to associate with a fluid net. There is no ending, no closure, to the text of the *prey* in which you reside, the text of the Predator that you abhor and admire. Mind you! I am guessing in the dark. For there's a hidden text of elusive differentiations in Predator and prey that lies behind all 'beginnings' and beyond all 'endings.' That is one awkward way of putting it. But I must be honest. These hidden texts may never – I would say will never – be absolutely translated. They are wilderness music. They infuse an uncharted realm, a mysterious density, into every chart of the Word. They infuse immense curiosity and vitality as well in empowering the vulnerable prey (such as ourselves) to seek for endless translations in time of differentiations within ourselves between prey and Predator."
>
> "What am I to make of the huntsman's intervention when he threw his net and saved my life?"
>
> "Spared the life of the Predator as well! Each creature tends to prey on another."
>
> "Where then lies the difference between me and...?"
>
> Mr Mageye held up his hand. "The difference lies in prayer," Prayer? I was stunned but I understood the jest or pun.
>
> "Unspoken prayer matches hidden texts. One prays that one is free to offer one's body to another in sacramental love. One prays for such freedom."
>
> "And the Predator?"
>
> "The Predator draws blood, the blood of lust. The Predator sometimes seems invincible. The prey *knows* he is vulnerable and even when he prides himself on being unscathed in the huntsman's net his blood nourishes the sun. All this is susceptible to extremity as we saw in the late Mayan world when men's hearts were *literally* presented to the sun. Hidden texts teach us to breach such frames, such literality... The ghost of the prey is ourselves, the vulnerable prey, that we offer to the sun, is an unfathomable inspiration of grace, hidden grace in all subject creatures, that transcends frame or literality or predatory coherence or plot." (99–100)

That long passage speaks, I would think, for itself. May I, however, return to something I said earlier about re-composing or re-combining the factors in a broken archetype. It is clear that we can never seize a whole archetype but

we tend to visualize its wholeness. That visualization of wholeness may itself deceive us. Wholeness remains an untranslatable text of absolute knowledge. The factorization of wholeness therefore helps to release us from visualizations which may themselves be partial, and in releasing us gives us renewed momentum in scanning links and cross-culturalities we may have eclipsed and which hold out a re-visionary dynamic; a dynamic which bears on the multi-faceted womb of time in the past. I would say that subtle, surprising, far-sighted processes and gestations are occurring in the womb of space and time that bear on the future...

The future sometimes seems to lie as much in unsuspected premisses of evolution in future time as it resides in the enigmas of the past, past time the Imagination needs to reconnoitre afresh, re-consider in startlingly new ways which breach formal bias.

I sought to bring this into play within *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill* within the inmates of Doctor Daemon's asylum. The inmates are multi-faceted. They carry the cargo of past personalities. Monty, the Venezuelan, may don the mask of the emperor Montezuma in assessing a history of conquest which bears on the entire Americas and on Europe.

According to legend, the conquistador Cortés was mistakenly identified with the return or second coming of the god–man Quetzalcoatl. But Cortés possessed no understanding of his peculiar role at a time when the old Ptolemaic visualization of the universe was giving way to a Copernican model.

Resurrection at Sorrow Hill speculates on Giordano Bruno. Bruno had not yet been born when Cortés arrived in ancient Mexico. But his curious relevance to ancient Mexico in the sixteenth century – his quantum link with a theatre of falling stars, breaking heavens, in ancient Mexico – seems imaginatively proven to me. He was burnt at the stake in the very age which saw ancient Mexico humiliated and sacked by conquistadorial Europe and by Cortés.

Bruno perceived the fall of the Ptolemaic visualization of the universe in a laboratory or mathematical context. Montezuma and his priests perceived that implicit fall in portents and falling stars and a visionary theatre affecting the constellations. They scanned their rituals, which predicted the second coming of the vanished king Quetzalcoatl.

Bruno may have guessed at or read their anguish and expectation. Had he come instead of Cortés, a different composite epic of worlds of science and theatre might have loomed in the body of new/old civilizations encompassing pre-Columbian America and Renaissance Europe.

It would take us far afield to discuss the detail I have in mind; but let me say that one impulse in the multi-faceted vessels of personality in *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill* was to reclaim the relevance to giants of history of so-called ordinary men and women whose lives and deaths are unrecorded. Their bodies and limbs – their antecedents in the void of history – re-compose the giants Montezuma, the Buddha, Leonardo da Vinci and others, even as the flaming ash of Bruno treks the night sky of Renaissance Europe at the close of the sixteenth century because of his Copernican heresy.

The strict logic of Europe – since the Renaissance – split the age it dominated into specializations. Music was divorced from architecture, poem from painting, psyche from elemental natures. Cortés's assumption of the evolutionary mantle of Quetzalcoatl was a role the conquistadores could not play. And yet the cross-cultural components were implicitly active in Bruno's fate.

Cortés's blindness to the evolutionary mantle which Montezuma bestowed upon him is reflected in the strict, materialistic application of Darwinian logic with which the twentieth century is familiar.

A profound analysis of the theatre, it seems to me, is required in which castaways – the unrecorded victims of history – secrete themselves in giants, failed giants whose Second Comings have not yet materialized across the violent centuries. Yet those Second Comings are the numinous, luminous spirit of evolving theatre encompassing elements and species with which to re-clothe every fiery trail of the Imagination in the past within the present. The evolutionary mantle of Quetzalcoatl still bristles across the generations with new-found eyes attuned to a potential re-visualization of the components of paradise.

Let me close this address with a passage from *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill*. Judge is a castaway captain of river vessels on Sorrow Hill. History has dismembered him but his broken body – in housing river peoples – evolves into a new trunk and serpent leg. Bruno's heresy lights up the theatre. Bruno falls on his knees before the obscure South American Judge:

> He arrived before Judge all over again and fell on his knees. And this time the galactic astronomer–priest – the poet of the Copernican age – fell from the trees and knelt beside him. Bruno's pigmentation seemed black in one light (was it the light of twilight?), brown in another (was it the light of a pool of rain that had recently fallen and darkened the ground?), white-ash in another light (was it the glimmering light of the sun on the feather of a bird?), red ember of flame in another light still (was it the light of gold in ruined El Dorado?). Burnt! Burnt

> astronomer–priest. Burnt heretic. Burnt writer of an asylum book... The writer written.
>
> The fiery stake upon which Bruno had been placed by the judges of the Inquisition began to cool by degrees of a million shadows and lights across the centuries. It cooled as the Ptolemaic paradise of old splintered. It cooled into a new serpent, a new serpent-leg, a new paradisean flexibility upon which Judge stood.[5]

5 Wilson Harris, *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill*, 185–186.

Select Responses

Plenary Discussion, Giessen

Dieter Riemenschneider: As chair of this final panel, I should point out that the context of this symposium is a research project which the eminently wise government of the State of Hesse devised two years ago, called "Die Herausbildung oder Entwicklung einer Weltgesellschaft," the formation of a global society. And I do think that our symposium related, in all of its contributions, to the unspoken or implicit question of the formation of a global society, of the global society. The interesting thing about dealing with such a project or question is to look at it, on the one hand, from the perspective of difference, and on the other from the perspective of the similarity between cultures. We all know that numerous varying cultures do exist, and I would say that the recognition of the fact that so many different cultures do exist is already one definition or meaning of the term multiculturalism, which of course doesn't take into its stride the fact that it has also to do with the status of these cultures, of each culture by itself as well as of the cultures vis-à-vis each other. Many people reflect on the relationship between differing cultures – economists, sociologists, even we, whether we call each other philosophers or just theoreticians of culture, or readers of literary texts.

In that connection, I thought that the topic of the symposium is perhaps not so much New Worlds for Old as New World for Old. All the contributions, as well as our thinking generally, is about one global society which accommodates in a way the differing cultures we all know about. How did our guests intervene here? These are my responses. I thought that Arun Mukherjee looked at the question of terminology on the surface, and seemed to have come to a sort of tentative non-answer in this tension between a centrifugal movement of these cultures and the collapse of the cultures. She, rather, considered the centrifugal movement to be dominant, at least from her point of view and from what she observed in Canada.

Gayatri Spivak, I thought, felt that the collapsing movement, the getting-together of cultures under the term multiculturalism, was something to be resisted, too. Perhaps it didn't become that clear from her contribution here, but I happened to listen to her lecture on Wednesday in Frankfurt, and she spent quite some time on what we all know she has been interested in for a long time, subaltern studies. Certainly her opposition, to me, seemed to be one also of realizing the possibility – rather the danger – of a collapsing of cultures and of the 'leadership of the USA,' but the need to resist.

Rhonda Cobham's contribution, I thought, was a highly specific reference to what I would call a linguistic, narrativistic construction of reflecting a particular cultural hybridity – without going as far as to define hybridity as an easily definable parameter, especially for us who are interested in comparing different English-language literatures, texts.

And finally, Wilson Harris's contribution, looking at the archetype of the furies as an archetype: you do come across in many, many cultures, if not each and every culture we know about, thereby establishing something like a possibility of again looking at our own work, establishing a basis for comparative studies of texts coming from different cultures. At the same time, again, we can relate Wilson's interest in this particular type of archetype or figure to questions of the future of a global society, to the possibility or chance of survival.

Frank Schulze–Engler: I also wanted to start off by saying that this whole project and symposium is actually part of our larger project on the development of a world society. But I also think this really is a sort of fascinating topic to reflect on. For me, the two obvious points here are the following. On the one hand, globalization, something that we have talked about quite a bit – the fact of one world coming nearer; a universalization, one might say, of time and space. And, originally, Western modernity transplanted, or transmogrified, to other parts of the world. On the other hand, of course, the fact that there is not one competing or corresponding world culture yet. Indeed, we are faced with increasing ethnic and cultural differentiation, if not enmity, and both of these poles have to be constantly

kept in mind. This is a tension in which postcolonial theory and critical activities in our field in general operate.

I'd like, from this perspective, to look at the contributions, with just one or two questions or comments. And I'd like to begin with Gayatri Spivak, where the most important question, in retrospect, has to do with the understanding of globalization involved. It seemed quite clear that, from her perspective, globalization can more or less be equated with capitalization or the forward march of finance capital on a global scale. And it seems to me that that is not really enough – it doesn't really cover the whole dynamics that are involved in this concept and in the actuality of globalization. What is involved, for example, are very important aspects like cultural fragmentation, the breaking up of traditions, and the move into some sort of post-traditional order in many places of the world, where identities and norms have to be discursively negotiated and are no longer simply given culturally.

Globalization is much more ambivalent, it seems to me, than generally came out in Spivak's talk; and this would then be a point where we would tie in with what Arun Mukherjee said. Which of course I didn't hear, but she was kind enough to lend me her manuscript. There one would have to think about, for example, the globalization of theory, including postcolonial theory. And thinking for a moment about, say, the African context, one can then see that in the kind of situation where theory is produced more and more by drawing on other theory, particular contexts are more or less excluded from the production of the theory because they do not have the academic means of production with which to participate. This is nothing new; we can't really lay the blame on the doorstep of theories, so to speak; but this means that one has has to take into consideration the institutional location of theory, including postcolonial theory. I have, of course, myself been involved in the question of homogenization and the question of the extent to which there is a uniform response to globalization which might be categorized or theorized with the aid of items such as resistance or writing back; and it seems to me that that is a rather questionable notion. Such questions would all relate to an alternative to globalization. One type of alternative modernity, one might say, has just come to some sort of end with what has been called the end of the Bolshevik experiment. And the question is: are there any others

left? One experiment at the present time would be community or culture or, rather, communities and/or cultures. But again, the question here would be whether these are not discursive constructs in response to modernization and globalization pressures; and here one would then end up espousing the treasonable view that there are no traditionalists in traditional society. The question would then be: is there some relevance there for discussing migrant or folk cultures?

And a final remark on Wilson Harris: it seems quite obvious that what we heard today was part of a very long-standing enquiry, both theoretical and literary, going right to the roots of the "enlightenment project" and constituting an attempt to move beyond modernity; something that might restore some of the wholeness that was split up with the end of modernity. A basic problem arising here is whether a critique of this depth can really be formulated from outside modernity – or is it not itself implicated in its own conditions of existence? That is, a global post-traditional order in which any norms are discursively constituted and which is also changeable and mutable. To jump outside that context altogether is really only possible by taking a sort of tiger's leap from theory into religion. And I feel that the Wilson Harris project, if I may say so, is negotiating a very complex sort of borderline, which is in some ways bringing it closer to a religious perspective.

Herbert Grabes: There is something that has sometimes been overshadowed by the more political side of the discussion, over the past ten years or so, about postcolonialism. The difference (even the difference arising out of hybridity or whatever you choose to call it) within a postcolonial situation need not necessarily mean antagonism. Phrased differently, Arun Mukherjee suggested that we should not assume that a minority writer must be subversive or radical. Of course, he can be; very often he has enough reason to be. But there are also other writers. I sometimes compare this to the situation we have been through in Europe and the United States within theory over the past three decades. First there was modernism, then there was a violent sort of postmodernist gesture against it. Now we have arrived at the situation where you can appreciate

both modernism and postmodernism without becoming really uninterested in either. And I think it is very important, if you are talking about cultural difference without any hegemonic desires, to see that that difference does not necessarily imply antagonism.

Wilson Harris said, "When I speak to a group like this, no one ever asks a question" – well, you have triggered a question. I was trying to get together what you said about the furies and about the past and the future being blended. Where, of course, these furies as agents of revenge have definitely a devastating impact – is it not the very fact that the past and the future are blended so much that we do have them? Because one of the things about the principle of revenge is that its practitioners are of the opinion that the past is still present. If not, revenge would not be necessary. You would always be in a new time, in a new moment, in a new presence, but you have a new chance. But if you let your presence be governed too much by the past, you necessarily end up with the thought of revenge. Because we have all been victims in one way or another and everybody has the feeling of not having been dealt with in the proper way, and many people with more right than others. But you end up with this: if you think that your future must be structured by the past you end up with revenge, and the furies of revenge will then govern the future.

Wilson Harris: There is a terrifying element in this. But at the same time the tender, foetal element has not yet emerged from the womb of time; so we have these two. Now, one has neglected the past, or one has not fully understood it. As a result, the foetal element which lies in the past has been suppressed – if not obliterated, eclipsed to some degree. Therefore the future arrives to tell us that the terrifying challenges inserted into the future require us to understand what we have overlooked in the past, what we have eclipsed in the past. This becomes frightfully important in order to come abreast of the past – if we do not do this, we will then save the terrifying challenges of the future without any conception whatsoever of this tender foetal element in the womb of time that is so precious and so important. The past therefore, for me, as memory theatre, has elemental importance in that sense. Sometimes, it seems to me that to come abreast

of the past is more important than imbibing all sorts of information about the future. The technologies that we have which seem to be so remarkable are technologies that endorse the depravation of human sensitivity. If one were to throw oil and an advancing force under a medieval castle, which, of course, occurred centuries ago, instead of doing that we would now throw fire rockets. That doesn't mean that one has made any advance whatsoever. In fact, one's depravation may have been deepened, because one is relying on technology, which does deepen one's depravation. One is simply extending one's depravation into the future and using this in a manner which seems to give one power over the enemy. In that sense, the furies are very real. But the point about the past – I don't know if I've brought this over. That the future arrives with these terrifying challenges, together with the foetal, unborn element which belongs to the womb of time. The future intends the past, therefore; it mothers the past. The future makes us aware of the foetal elements in the past which can still be born, and liberates us from the straitjacket in which we find ourselves, and from our complacency about technology.

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