A Concise Companion to

POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

Edited by Shirley Chew and David Richards

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Postcolonial Literature

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Introduction

Shirley Chew

This volume of essays provides an innovative multi-disciplinary approach to postcolonial literature. Unlike other current guides to postcolonialism, which are chiefly concerned with the theoretical formulations of postcolonial discourse, it seeks to investigate and explain ideas, issues, and practices from ten fields and disciplines that have made significant impact upon the literatures and cultures of countries which became independent nation-states in and after 1947. The essays explore in depth the ways in which their respective areas – for example, cartography, anthropology, translation studies, feminism – have shaped and problematized the period's key concerns, such as 'race', culture, and identity; literary and cultural translations; and the politics of resistance. They draw attention to fresh developments in the areas; and discuss a wide range of postcolonial authors and their representations of the contemporary world. The *Companion* is an indispensable guide for literary students, specialists from other disciplines, and general readers seeking an authoritative and accessible overview of the intellectual contexts of postcolonialism.

*

'Postcolonial' is both a historical and an epistemological category, and the following brief reference to *Heart of Darkness* is indicative of a historicist reading as well as a reading according to postcolonialism's central concerns. In the waiting-room of the Belgian company which

was sending him to the Congo, Marlow noticed 'a large shining map, marked with all the colours of a rainbow'. Despite the many colours, there was no mistaking the presence of a 'vast amount of red' and this, to the narrator, was 'good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there' (Conrad 2008 [1899]: 110). With that verbal interpretation of the visual image, storytelling and cartography are conjoined in Marlow's narrative to produce a particular idea of the British empire – extensive, unified, and permanent. His pride was no doubt a sign of the times, given that between February and June 1899 when *Heart of Darkness* was being serialized, Britain's possessions overseas amounted to a quarter of the globe and many of these were recent acquisitions made in the face of keen competition from other European nations.

To attempt a postcolonial reading of Marlow's map is to note its function as 'the graphic arm of colonial enterprise' (Howard, Chapter 7: 148); in other words, as one of the myths of power which, like *Pax Britannica*, the civilizing mission, and the white man's burden, served to justify colonization. With its 'vast amount of red', the map visualized the empire as a homogenous entity, not the loose collection it actually was of diverse peoples and cultures, spanning different geographies and centuries; and with being pin-pointed as the location where 'real work', hence order, could be expected, it masked the pernicious concomitants and effects of colonial rule, among them territorial and economic exploitation, psychological repression, and epistemic violence.

Resistance to colonial domination took the form of widespread physical conflicts during the decolonizing period from the end of the First World War onwards. While that was the case, it should also be borne in mind that the empire was never altogether free from outbreaks of violence in one form or another, examples being slave revolts, Maori wars, and, as variously described, the Indian Mutiny of 1857 or India's First War of Independence. In cultural and symbolic terms, resistance was a struggle for agency in the representation process, that is, for the power among different colonized peoples to reinvent themselves as the subjects of their own stories and histories. With that in mind, the critical work in these essays on postcolonial writing, both the imaginative and the discursive, is underpinned by attentiveness to specific historical, social, and cultural contexts. As David Howard notes in his ranging discussion of new mapping techniques and technologies, and the ways they have helped to reshape 'knowledge-power dynamics in society' (Howard, Chapter 7: 11), the growth of community mapping projects in countries like Guyana means that maps are being

produced by the people themselves to chart their local and first-hand experience of the areas in which social problems, such as poverty, are concentrated (15).

'The fact of blackness', David Richards points out in his compelling investigation of discourses of (post)colonial identity, was one of the main preoccupations of Frantz Fanon – Martinican psychiatrist, political philosopher, literary critic and revolutionary – in his resistance to colonialism and its psychologically maiming effects. While Fanon advocated insurrection and civil war in Algeria as political strategies in the push for independence (Richards, Chapter 1: 13), he also channelled his intellectual passion and power into the task of forging 'an anti-colonial political rhetoric' out of his dissections of racism. In his writing, he drew on a range of disciplines – existentialism, psychoanalysis, colonial anthropology, and Negritude with special reference to the poetry of Leopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire. The force of Fanon's ideas, the intermingling of the different influences in his work, and the distinctiveness of his style meant that *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* were 'as much of an intervention in literary concerns as . . . in either psychology or liberation politics', and helped to reshape 'emerging forms of literary expression' as well as cultural criticism (14).

Of the theorists and critics indebted to Fanon's theories of colonial identity, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri C. Spivak occupy a central place in postcolonial discourse. This is due in part to their radical approaches as readers of texts, examples being Said on Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (Richards, Chapter 1: 18), Spivak on Mahasweta Devi's Bengali short story 'Breast-Giver' (24), and Bhabha on post-Enlightenment colonialist documents, such as Thomas Macaulay's 'Minute on Education' (1835) which, with its incisive analysis of colonial mimicry, makes realizable an 'in-between' space for subversion and reinvention on the part of the colonial subject.

Among creative writers, postcolonial reading of canonical literary texts is liable to go hand in hand with rewriting, the issues in question being those of 'authority and authenticity' and 'representation and self-representation' (Innes, Chapter 3: 57). Speaking to a broad and exciting selection of rewritings from Southern Africa, the Caribbean, and Australia, C.L. Innes draws attention to the dialogues that are opened up between the postcolonial writer and his or her antecedents, and the experiments with form and language which this has resulted in. Engaging with the critical problem of rewriting as reinscription, she argues for rewriting as the enactment of the writers' identity 'as

cosmopolitan participants in a variety of cultures, capable of choosing the terms in which their worlds and the relationships between them are defined' (76).

Not infrequently, strikingly original work has been known to come out of rewriting. An example being Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* which, indebted as it has been said to Kipling and Forster among others, is nevertheless a novel altogether distinct and new. To what extent then can translation – involving as it does the carrying across of a source text into something other – be accounted a kind of rewriting? Is the translated work bound to stay faithful to the original? As is evident from Susan Bassnett's lucid exposition, a postcolonial poetics of translation cannot be separated from the politics of translation. In her delineation of changing critical perspectives, emphasis is placed upon translation not as loss but as re-creation, (Bassnett, Chapter 4: 79); and the translator not as 'slave' but as 'playing a crucial role in the reclaiming and re-evaluating of a people's language and literature' (88). Part of the pleasure in translating a play by Shakespeare into, say, Indian languages or Yoruba or Mauritian Creole is said to lie in 'the subversive power of neutralizing the dominance of the English original' (83); and part of it, in its remaking – the same and also different – in another cultural space, another time.

The idea of nation, of subject peoples thinking of themselves 'as coherent imagined communities', impelled the anti-colonial movements of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Today not a few of the countries which subsequently became independent nations exist under oppressive nationalist regimes.[1] Inevitably, the idea of nation has undergone in the last sixty odd years constant re-examination in postcolonial literature and criticism. Drawing upon a significant range of postcolonial theorists and writers, postcolonial narratives and counter-narratives, John McLeod explores 'the vital cultural space' they open up (McLeod, Chapter 5: 98), tracing in assured fashion the evolving views in the debate, the ambivalent responses, the disillusionment, and, in some instances, the 'unshakeable faith', despite the failures, 'in the nation as an egalitarian ideal' (117).

That postcolonial notions of resistance, identity, subjectivity and difference have themselves been complicated, reshaped, and extended through the interventions of feminism is central to Nana Wilson-Tagoe's argument. Supported with close analysis of scholarly, critical, and creative literature by, among others, bell hooks, Chandra Mohanty, Chikwenye Ogunyemi, Buchi Emecheta, Ata Ama Aidoo, Alice Walker, Wilson-Tagoe's exposition of the successive stages in the making of

the discourse of feminism and womanism is clear and nuanced. It charts the impact feminism made in the 1960s and 1970s in the debates of postcolonialism; the critiques that feminism, as a 'Western inflected political discourse' (Wilson-Tagoe, Chapter 6: 121), was confronted with from African American feminist scholars, and scholars from South Asia and Africa; and the emergence of womanism as a counter-discourse to mainstream feminism with its insistence upon the specific histories, struggles, and everyday knowledge of black women and black communities. Above all, it is concerned with 'the productive interrogations and rethinking that the intersection between post-colonialism, feminism, black feminism and womanism has inspired' in writings by women (137).

Likewise it was the 'productive interrogations' that, in its turn, post-colonialism, along with Marxism and feminism, brought to bear upon anthropology in the late decades of the twentieth century which contributed to the discipline's reconstruction. Will Rea examines in knowledgeable ways, first, anthropology's 'complicity with a colonial past' (Rea, Chapter 9: 190) as well as the paradoxes and contradictions that inhered in the discipline; and second, the breach effected in anthropology's engagement with colonialism in the post-independence period through 'loss of object', that is, 'the social group bounded by a singular identity (190); the reinvigoration of historical studies as against 'the notion of the ethnographic present'; the shift of 'emphasis from the public to the domestic' (192); and 'the "reading" of the subject as a cultural text wherein the voice of the interpreter is readily apparent' (192). If anthropology has survived the crisis of recent years, this is in part due, like postcolonialism, 'to its eclectic nature, its unfailing ability to adapt to its own needs the theories and discourses of other disciplines' (199).

In their respective accounts of oral literature and performance genres in India and South Africa, Ganesh Devy and Duncan Brown argue for the vitality and significance of indigenous traditions which have been 'important features' of life 'since the development of the first human communities' in the regions (Brown, Chapter 2, part 2: 41). While Devy's main focus is the aesthetics of Adivasi oral literature within a broad account of the oral tradition from medieval to modern times, Brown is concerned with the ways in which oral forms in South Africa have adapted themselves to the changing social and political landscape. And while Devy shows a wariness towards written and print culture as forces which are liable to undermine the distinctive features and vitality of the oral, Brown sees the transposition in recent years

of oral forms to the printed page as, though problematic, part of oral literature's continuing engagement with, and input in, the modern world. Brown's intellectual commitment is with carving out a space for the 'mutual engagement' of the two disciplines of orality studies and postcolonial studies. Because postcolonial studies in South Africa have tended 'to replicate metropolitan patterns in focusing on the relatively "elite" form of the novel in English or engaging in deconstructive readings of colonial/mission discourses', it has undervalued oral and performance genres and material in African languages (7). And because postcolonial theory has, in general, adhered to the 'centre-periphery' model of the world, it is 'unable to recognize the multiple and shifting modes of articulation of the colonized prior to the stage of resistance'. The result is that the oral is relegated to the 'premodern and prehistorical, of value only as a point of origin, an influence within the written, or a kind of guarantor of authenticity/difference' (10).

In one of the several moments in this volume when particular readings of texts or lines of inquiry converge, the problems and anxieties attendant upon transposing an oral performance into print is underscored in Stephen Morton's discussion of the works of Jeanette Armstrong, a Canadian Okanagan writer. The dilemma which Armstrong has to confront is that her recall of the community's cultural practices is being rendered in 'the very language that repressed the practices'; and furthermore, her account of Aboriginal women's lives is being articulated through the individual-centred 'I' of lyric poetry (Morton, Chapter 8: 18–19). Within the broader argument of his challenging essay, Morton calls marginality into question as one of the privileged metaphors of postcolonial studies; and sets about repositioning the margins with reference to a selection of postcolonial literature which is rarely examined together: the hidden histories of subaltern groups in India, Adivasi voices, dalit autobiography, the narratives of people of mixed descent, the fiction and poetry of First Nation and Maori writers. As in the example from Jeanette Armstrong, the experiments with form and language in these texts are varied and innovative, and are 'always also connected to a struggle for social and political empowerment' (24) in the face of different kinds of oppression: colonial rule, the hegemony of dominant societies, and neo-liberal globalization.

Gail Low's scrupulously detailed account of the 'production, emergence, and dissemination of national and regional literatures' (Low, Chapter 10: 1) in anglophone West Africa and the anglophone

Caribbean traces the hesitant though not inconsiderable beginnings in the nineteenth century before moving into the ferment of activity which marked the decolonizing and early post-independence periods. Publishing was not free, and has never been free, of metropolitan control and market forces. But two high points can be singled out from Low's survey. First, magazine publishing which burgeoned in the 1940s and 1950s. Spurred on by the nationalist impulse in the Caribbean, magazines, such as *Bim*, *Kyk-over-al*, and *Focus*, encouraged local writing that broke with the English tradition and was faithful to the cultures from which it sprang. Between them, they brought to their readers a clutch of now famous names – Derek Walcott, George Lamming, Sam Selvon, Wilson Harris and Martin Carter (211). In the same period, in West African countries, such as Nigeria, journals 'associated with the newly emerging university colleges provided publishing opportunities for John Pepper Clark, Wole Soyinka, and Christopher Okigbo' (215). Second, there was the book trade. The creation of Oxford University Press' Three Crowns series was to make available the plays of Soyinka and Clark as well as, in the 1970s, poetry by distinguished Indian poets, among them A.K. Ramanujan and Nissim Ezekiel; and while the African Writers Series started with reprints of novels by Achebe, among others, it was not long before it began publishing new works by new writers, such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. In the light of the vigorous and rich outputs of postcolonial literature today, these early publishing ventures were surely inspired, however short-lived, and however compromised by commercial considerations of lucrative markets in the newly independent countries.

Perhaps there is no better way to sum up the overarching idea and the specific lines of inquiry in this *Companion* than to quote here Christopher Okigbo's words from 'Silences: Lament of the Silent Sisters III' (Okigbo 1971: 41):

> We carry in our worlds that flourish
> Our worlds that have failed . . .

Note

1 Even as the writing of this Introduction proceeds, news comes in of 'the final throes of the Sri Lankan Civil war' – see, for example, *The Times*, May 29 2009 – and the high death toll among innocent civilians.

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Chapter 1

Framing Identities

David Richards

Frantz Fanon remembered an incident when, as a young student of psychiatry in France, his presence on a crowded train was noticed by a child:

> "Look, a Negro!" The circle was drawing a bit tighter. I made no secret of my amusement.
>
> "Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!" Frightened! Frightened! Now they were beginning to be afraid of me. I made up my mind to laugh myself to tears, but laughter had become impossible. [. . .] Then, assailed at various points, the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema. In the train it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person. In the train I was given not one but two, three places [. . .] On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object.
>
> (Fanon 1986 [1952]: 112–13)

The incident is recollected in Fanon's first major book, *Black Skin, White Masks*, which appeared in 1952. However, the work was not originally intended for publication, but for submission as an academic dissertation in order that Fanon might qualify as a psychiatrist at the University of Lyon. His supervisor at the faculty of medicine rejected the thesis and compelled Fanon to write a second piece which was more acceptable to the medical authorities. As David Macey, Fanon's

biographer, comments, the rejection of the thesis that became one of the most influential and foundational texts of postcolonialism was predictable, since it 'defied all academic and scientific conventions' in combining an 'experimental exploration of the author's subjectivity' with lengthy quotations from literary works (Macey 2001: 138–9). The work was unconventional in other respects too. In analysing the effects of racism, Fanon had strayed from the strict path of psychiatry, which was dedicated to medical intervention and cure, into the rather more nebulous field of psychoanalysis. Further, the book was written in a style that was more poetic than scientific, influenced by the existential writings of Camus and Sartre, and by the Negritude poetics of his Martinican teacher and mentor, Aimé Césaire.

The child's terrified response to the presence of the black man, and the ubiquitous, daily, casual racism of French society in the mid-twentieth century which it symbolizes, triggers a 'crumbling' of the 'corporeal schema' in Fanon. The 'corporeal schema', a term derived from Gestalt psychology that Fanon had taken from the work of Jean Lhermitte, refers to the essential sense we have of ourselves as physical presences; a sense which enables us to interact and engage with the world around us (Macey 2001: 165). Racism fractures this ability to engage with others at a fundamental level by substituting a 'corporeal schema' with a 'racial epidermal schema'. Instead of a body among other bodies with which he shares space, Fanon becomes in this encounter a 'black body' marked out by his difference, his 'otherness'. The effects of this dislocation of presence are metaphorically dramatic – he is no longer 'a man among other men' but an 'object' of fear and loathing, 'excised' from productive contact with others and 'imprisoned', as the title of the chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks* where this appears has it, in 'the fact of blackness'.

'The fact of blackness' is Fanon's main preoccupation in *Black Skin, White Masks*. His intention is to diagnose this 'febrile' condition, but his analysis goes much further and has a wider relevance than this deeply personal recollection of a moment of 'nausea'. The incident on the train is symptomatic of a much wider, global 'dislocation', as Fanon describes it, which has its roots in the pernicious effects of colonialism. The growth of European empires and dominance by foreign powers have had an impact on the economic, political, and cultural lives of subject peoples who experience radical distortions of their language, law, and civil society; indeed, imperialist intervention is a fundamental denial of the enabling features of humanity. But for Fanon, colonialism does more than simply deprive the colonized of

their independence. Colonialism and its handmaiden, racism, strike much more deeply into the social and individual psychology of the colonized. The colonial regime re-enacts on a grand scale the drama of the incident on the train by substituting a society's 'corporeal schema', as it were, with an image of alienation and domination where the colonial looks at the world and sees only a reflection of imperial power which has replaced an enabling sense of otherness. The colonial condition prevents, therefore, the formation of workable forms of social and cultural life by creating psychological dependence on these substituted images of domination and inferiority.

In other words, colonialism attacks the very essence of identity in its subject peoples by inducing a form of mental illness:

> The Negro's behaviour makes him akin to an obsessive neurotic type, or, if one prefers, he puts himself into a complete situational neurosis. In the man of colour there is a constant effort to run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence. [. . .] The attitude of the Black man toward the white, or toward his own race, often duplicates almost completely a constellation of delirium, frequently bordering on the region of the pathological.
>
> (Fanon 1986: 60)

And

> every ontology is made unattainable in a colonized and civilized society.
>
> (Fanon 1986: 109)

Fanon is here, I think, using the term 'civilized' in a somewhat ironic sense. He was not alone, nor was he the first, to attempt to diagnose the psychological dynamics of colonial and racist discourses. Fanon located his own position from a triangulation of different influences from existentialism, colonial anthropology, and Negritude. He was profoundly influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre's deconstruction of anti-Semitism, and he replicates in his discussion of 'the fact of blackness' Sartre's counter-intuitive argument concerning Jewish identity that '[t]he Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew; that is the simple truth from which we must start . . . It is the anti-Semite who *makes* the Jew' (Sartre 1965 [1946]: 69). This remarkable reversal, that identity is neither 'natural' nor 'essential', but constructed from discourses of difference and inequality, finds an immediate echo in Fanon when he writes that 'not only must the black man be black;

he must be black in relation to the white man' (Fanon 1986: 110). But it was in his engagement with anthropology that Fanon further refined this position. A central argument of *Black Skin, White Masks* concerns Octave Mannoni's then recent book on Madagascar, *Prospero and Caliban* (1950). On the face of it, Fanon would seem to share some very basic points of agreement with Mannoni: that colonialism extends into the realms of the psyche, and a full understanding of colonization is only possible if its psychological impact is properly acknowledged. But Fanon and Mannoni soon parted company as Mannoni argued that colonization does not *create* in its subjects the 'constellation of delirium' of the pathological and neurotic types Fanon observed in himself and others, but rather colonization is a type of traumatic experience that makes overt these latent forms of psychosis. In exasperation Fanon asks, 'why does he try to make the inferiority complex something that antedates colonization?' (Fanon 1986: 85) And echoing Sartre again, he declares, 'Let us have the courage to say it outright: *It is the racist who creates his inferior*.' (93).

Fanon also quarrelled with the very basic assumptions of the psychoanalytic method he had adopted to diagnose the colonial condition. The concept of the Oedipus complex is the root and origin of Freudian (and later Lacanian) psychoanalysis as it is the central theory of Freud's first major work *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (1913). As the subtitle of Freud's text may suggest, he was helped in the writing of this seminal work in the emerging field of psychoanalysis by a number of works in colonial anthropology, particularly Sir James Frazer's *Totemism and Exogamy* (1910) which he drew on particularly heavily. Frazer's four-volume work collected data from missionaries and travellers from all over the European empires to construct a compendium of every known form of totemic belief, which Freud then used to speculate on the nature of an original prehistoric human society. Having constructed an image of the archaic and original 'primal horde' from Frazer's work on contemporary colonized peoples, Freud argued that avoiding sexual intercourse with members of the same clan or family must arise from 'the oldest and most powerful of human desires' (Freud 2001 [1913]: 32). To safeguard themselves, the primal horde fashioned strict taboos on incest, but these taboos only demonstrate ambivalent psychic impulses 'corresponding to *both* a wish and a counter-wish', and thus there exists a 'psychological agreement between taboo and obsessional neurosis' (35–6). Freud named it the Oedipus complex from the Greek legend of Oedipus who unknowingly

killed his father and married his own mother. The Oedipus complex is the metanarrative of universal incestuous fears; but it also expresses paradoxically our fundamental desires and, so deeply is it ingrained in our psychic existence from prehistory to the present, that it can be thought of as 'the beginnings of religion, morals, society and art' (156). Everything flows from this archaic mixture of desire and fear. Fanon, however, was not convinced of the universal applicability of the concept: 'Like it or not, the Oedipus complex is far from coming into being among Negroes' (Fanon 1986: 151–2). It could be, he argued, that the anthropologists whose data Freud used, had projected their own cultural obsessions, unique to their societies, onto the peoples they had studied and consequently 'discovered' Oedipal complexes where none existed (152). This is a radical revision. A revisionism which not only undermines many of the fundamental principles of psychoanalysis (principles that Fanon himself relied upon to build his argument), but which also reiterates the necessity to see particular psychological states as arising from particular cultural and historical moments.

The impact of Fanon's initial analysis of the psychology of colonialism was to be felt in a number of related but distinct areas. His insistence on linkages between colonial oppression and psychological repression led him to the formulation of a fully 'politicized' version of psychoanalytical discourse, and to his role of political philosopher of anti-colonial liberation movements. As anti-colonial conflicts escalated, particularly in Algeria where he participated in the war against the French, Fanon argued in his subsequent book, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), that the mere achievement of independence from empire was insufficient to remove the colonialists' distorting mirror and to return the subjected peoples to their rightful sense of identity. The colonial rupture had made 'a constellation of delirium' which perpetuates a tragic cycle and renders the colonial subject silent, invisible, and unformed since language, law, civil society, culture now consist of the replicated divisions of colonial identity. There is no possibility of a return to a state prior to colonial intervention, nor is there a 'cure' for colonialism; recuperation is only possible through violence. Only insurrection and civil war, matching the violence of imperial domination with the violence of resistance, will enable the colonial subject to achieve catharsis and be healed. Violence, for Fanon, was not only a political strategy to secure independence, it was a psychological necessity to liberate the minds of the colonized from the repressive effects of the empire. Here, Fanon is attempting to confront a major

issue in the identity politics of decolonization: how, when colonialism psychologically debilitates so radically, can the colonial or postcolonial subject achieve any kind of agency? His answer is that the colonial subject achieves agency through the cleansing power of violence. There is not the space here to explore further how Fanon's potent combination of political and psychic liberation through violent action found a ready audience among the 'wretched of the earth' of the European empires, and beyond, in black consciousness movements in the United States, and radical movements in Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America. However, as James Le Sueur argues in his *Uncivil war: Intellectuals and Identity Politics during the Decolonization of Algeria* (2005), Fanon foregrounded the problems of identity and agency for those 'confronting the problem of decolonization', propelled 'alterity or the issue of Otherness' into the position of being the single most important theoretical concern of decolonization, and made 'identity' the universal *lingua franca* of contemporary global postcolonial discourse.

If Fanon's writings on identity made a significant impact on anticolonial political rhetoric, his work both drew on, and helped to reshape, emerging forms of literary expression and cultural criticism. *Black Skin, White Masks* is embedded in and rests upon literary works; indeed, it makes as much of an intervention in literary concerns as it does in either psychology or liberation politics, so dependent is it upon literary texts for its 'evidence' of the impress of empire. Fanon deals with two kinds of literary texts. The first is the now rarely read fictions and semi-autobiographical writings of empire: works by Mayotte Capécia, Abdoulaye Sadji, and René Maran. To varying degrees, Fanon is disparaging or dismissive of each of these. Fanon's purpose is not only to use these writings as evidence of his thesis but to deploy them as foils to another set of literary texts with which they are compared: the Negritude poetry of Leopold Sedar Senghor and Aimé Césaire. Negritude was a francophone literary and political movement that was begun in France in the 1930s by a group of colonial intellectuals, Senghor from Senegal, Césaire from Martinique, and Leon Damas from Guiana. Its influences ranged from the Black American Harlem Renaissance to European Surrealism, and it was strongly supported by the Existentialists, particularly Jean-Paul Sartre who wrote an influential essay in their praise entitled 'Orphée Noir' (1948). Although all the Negritudinists were committed to countering the racist dogma of colonialism by promoting the cultural identity and value of Black arts and cultures, there are important differences among them of which

Fanon is all too aware. Senghor's version of Negritude emphasized the physical, sensuous, and mythical qualities of Black African identity; his poetry is filled with images of a dark, female Africa, the body, and the drum.

> Naked woman, dark woman
> Ripe fruit with firm flesh, dark raptures of black wine,
> Mouth that gives music to my mouth
> Savanna of clear horizons, savanna quivering to the fervent caress
> Of the East Wind, sculptured tom-tom, stretched drumskin
> Moaning under the hands of the conqueror
> Your deep contralto voice is the spiritual song of the Beloved.
> ('Black woman' [1948] see Senghor 1964)

This short extract is typical of Senghor's belief that 'l'émotion est nègre, comme la raison est héllène' ('emotion is Negro, reason is Greek'). For Senghor, black identity is the inverse mirror image of white identity: emotion rather than reason, body over intellect, rhythm against logic. Although Fanon could see the strategic value of any consciousness movement that tried to undo the depredations of colonialism, this anti-racism merely inverted colonial racism without challenging its basic presuppositions. Rather than liberating the agency of colonial subjects, Senghor's Negritude simply confirmed racism by turning 'negative' stereotypical racial identities into 'positive' racial values. 'My black skin is not the repository of specific values,' Fanon commented, in a way that would be echoed later by many anglophone writers, Wole Soyinka most famously in the statement at a conference in Kampala in 1962, 'A tiger does not proclaim his tigritude, he pounces.'

Aimé Césaire's brand of Negritude was more to Fanon's taste, although not without qualification. Césaire was a fellow Martinican, and briefly taught both Fanon and the poet Edouard Glissant in Martinique. 'No book by Senghor has ever been banned by a French government,' comments David Macey (2001: 184); the same could not be said of the Antillean form of Negritude. Césaire, in his *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* [*Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*] (1939) defines his Negritude as belonging to:

> Those who invented neither powder nor compass
> Those who harnessed neither steam nor electricity
> Those who explored neither the seas or the skies but those
> without whom the earth would not be the earth
> [. . .]

> My negritude is not a stone, its deafness hurled against the clamor of the day
> My negritude is not a leukoma of dead liquid over the earth's dead eye
> My negritude is neither tower nor cathedral
> It takes root in the red flesh of the soil
> It takes root in the ardent flesh of the sky
> It breaks through the opaque prostration with its upright patience.
> (Césaire 1983: 67, 69)

The language here is deeply indebted to French modernism (particularly the Surrealists who promoted his work), as was Senghor's, but Césaire's Negritude, although rooted in anti-racism and anti-colonialism, is not tied in the same way as Senghor's to an essentialized black racial identity. In important ways, Césaire's Negritude breaks out of the discourse of race to embrace all those subject to imperial hegemony; in that sense, 'blackness' is not only or merely a matter of skin colour but encodes a set of relationships of subjugation to dominant military, technological, and colonial powers. Fanon's response to these lines, which he quoted in *Black Skin, White Masks*, was exuberant: 'Yes, all those are my brothers – a "bitter brotherhood" imprisons all of us alike' (124).

In the anglophone Caribbean, seemingly without the benefit of the influence of French modernism, surrealism, existentialism, and the developing theories of self and other, similar expressions of the psychological damage inflicted on subjugated identities were, nonetheless, being explored. In 1953, the Barbadian writer, George Lamming, published *In the Castle of my Skin,* the first of a series of semi-autobiographical fictions that would explore, in a Fanonian way but independent of Fanon, the colonial and postcolonial condition (see also *The Emigrants*, 1954, *The Pleasures of Exile*, 1960, and *Natives of my Person*, 1972). In an introduction he wrote to a new edition of *In the Castle of My Skin* celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of publication, Lamming makes explicit the novel's purpose which is to explore the question of colonial identity:

> It was not a physical cruelty. Indeed, the colonial experience of my generation was almost wholly without violence. No torture, no concentration camp, no mysterious disappearance of hostile natives, no army encamped with orders to kill. The Caribbean endured a different kind of subjugation. It was a terror of the mind: a daily exercise in self-mutilation. Black versus Black in a battle for self-improvement. [. . .]

> The result was a fractured consciousness, a deep split in its sensibility which now raised difficult problems of language and values; the whole issue of cultural allegiance between imposed norms of White Power, represented by a small numerical minority, and the fragmented memory of the African masses: between white instruction and Black imagination.
>
> (Lamming 1994: xxxix, xxxvii)

There are conflicting assessments of Fanon's contribution to anti-colonial political action: in Algeria he is regarded as a national hero, but in his native Martinique he is only grudgingly acknowledged. Since his early death from leukemia in 1961, his political legacy has divided commentators into those who see him as the prophet of liberation from empire, and those who regard him as the harbinger of an era of violence and terrorism. In the postcolonial academy, however, the reception of Fanon's ideas on the colonial condition has been much less equivocal. His writings have had a profound effect on an increasingly influential body of visual artists, writers, sociologists, anthropologists and cultural theorists engaged in an interdisciplinary undertaking to refashion the epistemological basis for the discussion and analysis of visual representations, literatures, and cultures, in an era 'after empire'. To gauge the distance travelled since 1961, we must leap forward in time to a conference on Fanon's legacy held at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London in 1995 as a prelude to a major exhibition, *Mirage: Enigmas of Race, Difference and Desire*. The conference took its theme from Fanon's key chapter in *Black Skin, White Masks* – 'The Fact of Blackness', and was an indication of the growth both in significance and application of the central ideas of postcolonialism. Among those contributing were Martine Attille (filmmaker), Homi Bhabha (literary critic and theorist), Stuart Hall (sociologist), bell hooks (writer, artist, and cultural activist), Isaac Julien (filmmaker), Steve McQueen (artist), Mark Nash (editor and filmmaker), and Françoise Vergès (political scientist). In many respects, this was a different world from that in which Fanon wrote *Black Skin, White Masks*; the colonial regimes Fanon railed against have passed into history (although many feel they have simply reinvented themselves), and the discourse has changed from Fanon's admixture of psychoanalysis, literature, and polemic to embrace an astonishing range of disciplines and practices (with many questioning Fanon's views of women and gays). But, at the centre of all these different voices with different concerns, the old Fanonian questions of identity and agency still shaped the postcolonial agenda.

Let us take these two dates – the death of Fanon in Algeria in 1961, and remembering Fanon in London in 1995 – and ask what happened in between? An imperfect and partial answer is that Edward Said happened in between. Said was already a distinguished literary critic when his ground-breaking work *Orientalism* appeared in 1978. *Orientalism* was an extended critique of Western representations of the Orient that had, Said argued, depicted the East as exhibiting cultural traits and qualities that were fundamentally different from, indeed opposite to, the West. Orientalists portrayed the East as the West's weak and irrational 'other', a shadowy reverse mirror image of a vigorous and reasonable occident. Far from offering a 'real' image, Orientalist discourse, Said controversially claimed, was a construction, which placed the 'orient' in a discourse that repeatedly expressed and reinforced unequal power relations between the West and the East. Orientalism was nothing more than the ideological support for colonial domination, and, although concerned principally with the West's construction of the orient, Orientalism was but one of a number of '–isms', such as Africanism and Americanism, that supported global colonial hegemony. The book, and the subsequent controversies it provoked, projected Said into the centre of the postcolonial debate on identity and cultural representation that took two related courses: he wrote extensively on the representation of Islam and the Palestinian conflict, as in *The Middle East: What Chances For Peace?* (1980), *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (1981), and *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* (1988); and he continued to uncover the impact of colonial discourses in the canonical works of English literature, as in *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983), and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Throughout, Said had an abiding interest in Fanon's theories of colonial identity, returning repeatedly to his writings, most notably in the essays on 'traveling theory' (*The World, the Text, and the Critic,* 1983) and in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2000) where he argued that Fanon adapted Georg Lukács' idea of 'reification' (a form of alienation, or distortion of consciousness, by which unequal class relationships are sustained) for colonial conditions of racial inequality. But it was probably his re-reading of canonical literary works that brought about the greatest transformation in postcolonial literary studies. In *Culture and Imperialism,* Said applied what he called 'contrapuntal readings' to literary texts to uncover the presence of hitherto hidden or obscured colonial contexts that alter our sense of the texts' meanings. In his reading of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, for example, he argued that the material wealth

and high social position of the Bertram family are wholly dependent on the slave trade, indeed the central narrative is occasioned by Sir Thomas' absence in Antigua to put his West Indian plantations in order. Yet, Said argues, Austen only obliquely reflects this complicity in empire, an involvement which is revealed when the novel is read 'against the grain' or 'contrapuntally'.

Said radically transformed postcolonialism and, although towards the end of his life he criticized postcolonialism's increasing turn towards solipsism, he did much to shape an agenda of engaged political commitment and 'contrapuntal' critical analysis. First and foremost, Said embedded a process of questioning, which postcolonialism shares with many other forms of poststructuralist analysis, of the 'essential' or 'natural' or 'commonsense' categories by which identity is constructed: 'race', ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality. After Fanon, and after Said, postcolonialism sees identities, not as fixed and rooted, but as products of a world in constant motion. Although 'race', ethnicity, and nationality may appear to be the solid bedrock upon which we shape a sense of ourselves, these are not, nor have they ever been, stable, but are always being formed and reformed in different patterns and combinations in a process of constant interaction and change shaped by historical circumstance. As a consequence, identities are also in a constant state of flux. Colonialism has been a major engine driving an accelerated pace of change, forcing different cultures into new forms, 'unfixing' what was thought to be solid, and creating new identities. The postcolonial project is, therefore, concerned to deconstruct the older language of identity founded upon notions of impermeable entities, such as the nation, culture, and selfhood, and to reconstruct the debate around hybrid and porous formations, such as displacement, dislocation, and migrancy. This postcolonial subject inhabits 'travelling cultures' (meaning cultures in a constant process of transformation), transgressive intercultural zones and intersecting regions (see Pratt 1992), transnational and nomad identities (see Clifford 1997). According to Stuart Hall, these 'diasporic conjunctures' offer a truer model of identity than that which is founded upon, for example, the fixities of race and nation. They 'invite a reconception . . . of familiar notions of ethnicity and identity' (Clifford 1997: 36). However, the reconception of identity which postcolonial theory offers is neither neutral nor detached from its subject, but engaged and oppositional, since such a reconception of others also requires a radical reconception of one's own identity as similarly 'fluid' and transforming. It involves an interrogation of such words as 'homeland', 'nation', 'border', 'people', the 'orient' in

order to reimagine identity, not as exclusive, static, and pure, but as intercultural, plural, contingent, and constantly negotiated through contact with others. Postcolonialism is, therefore, constantly challenging accepted notions of 'being', particularly when those notions arise out of the 'fractured consciousness', as Lamming has it, of colonialism.

Of all those theorists involved in current postcolonial debates, perhaps the most Fanonian is Homi K. Bhabha. At least, he has written an illuminating foreword to a reissue of *Black Skin, White Masks* published in 1986, which he expanded upon in his subsequent book *The Location of Culture* (1994). In some important respects, Bhabha's work begins where Fanon's ends, with the 'fact of blackness' – Fanon's encounter with the child on the train and the crippling sense of having one's identity defined and trapped within another's representation of oneself. Bhabha pushes this much further than Fanon, and even further than Said's deconstruction of cultural representations, when he declares that 'the question of identity can never be seen "beyond representation"' (Bhabha 1987: 6): all we can know of identity is its manifestation in reproduction and we inhabit identities, like Sartre's Jew, forced upon us by others. Bhabha goes on to define further that construction of identity as descending from 'two . . . traditions in the discourse of identity':

> the philosophical tradition of identity as the process of self-reflection in the mirror of (human) nature: and the anthropological view of the difference of human identity as located in the division of Nature/Culture.
> (Bhabha 1987: 5)

This needs a little unpicking. By the 'philosophical tradition', Bhabha means the sense we have of a unique selfhood whereby we imagine ourselves as possessing a distinctive core or kernel which is not the product of anything external to us but our inimitable possession. I look in a mirror and see 'something' that I take to be the *real* me. But this may be only an optical illusion, as it were, an effect created by a discourse of the self in philosophy, the arts, religion, and present deep within the culture and historical moment I inhabit. Indeed, the anthropologist, Marcel Mauss, the art historian, Jacob Burckhart, and the literary critic, Stephen Greenblatt, among others, have argued that this self-fashioning has an origin and a history that began in the Renaissance and is an effect of new modes of representation. The 'anthropological view' Bhabha refers to alludes to our position as actors within a social matrix of similar actors. In other words, I am known

in this respect, not by my unique qualities of self, but by my position in the social sphere where I identify myself and am identified by others according to a set of roles I fulfil (family, occupation, religion, etc.) and in relation to others like (or unlike) me playing other equivalent roles. I am identified by the part I play in a collective of possible identities. Bhabha's intention is to deconstruct both traditions: the 'philosophical' which emphasizes notions of an autonomous selfhood, and the anthropological which places identity in a *habitus* of social practices. However, for Bhabha, and this is the key point, the post-colonial subject fits into neither of these 'traditions in the discourse of identity'. Indeed the key 'fact' of postcolonial identity is that it lies *between* the frames of these mirrors of identity. Consequently, Bhabha sees the postcolonial subject as 'displaced', 'dislocated', 'hybrid' (in the sense of combining several different cultural traces into a new formation): the postcolonial subject is 'an incalculable object, quite literally difficult to place' and 'the demands of authority cannot unify its message nor simply identify its subjects' (Bhabha, 1986: xxii). The philosophical tradition was never part of the postcolonial's inheritance, and anyway colonialism suppressed any notion of selfhood (unique or otherwise) in subject peoples, just as it destroyed the social matrices that constitute the 'anthropological view' of identity. Fanon's encounter on the train, which he sees as a moment of 'nausea', is paradoxically a source of agency since in encounters such as these the postcolonial subject possesses the 'the evil eye, that seeks to outstare linear history and turn its progressive dream into nightmarish chaos' (Bhabha 1987: 8). The fixed orders of colonial difference are split apart by postcolonial identities that cannot be 'placed' or located in the frame, and know only fluid boundaries free from borders and frames of all kinds. Words such as 'displacement', 'dislocation', 'migrancy' fill Bhabha's writings on postcolonial identity. Strictly speaking, such terms describe only a part of the postcolonial historical experience, although the global population of exiles and refugees is increasing exponentially. The term 'migrant' also covers a very broad spectrum of social types, from the wealthy cosmopolitan novelist born in India, educated in England, and resident in New York (who feels that the problem is not that he comes from nowhere, but from too many places) to the homeless asylum seeker or illiterate economic migrant (who feels that the problem is that there is nowhere left to go). But Bhabha is using these terms partly metaphorically to describe a condition in postmodernity: the rupture caused by empire has created a universal psychic 'migrancy' and sense of dislocation as well as physical displacements. Such

metaphorical usage has attracted criticism that Bhabha's one-size-fits-all postcolonial subject lacks both historical specificity and sensitivity to different kinds of postcolonial experience, but it has also provided a powerful set of analytical tools for reading.

For example, Sam Selvon's novel, *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), is given a new and refreshing relevance by the kinds of readings Bhabha has enabled. The novel concerns a group of male working-class West Indian migrants in London in the 1950s – 'the Boys'. This first Windrush generation of arrivants would seem to represent perfectly the post-colonial experiences of being caught between the frames of representation of cultural identities. Indeed the text has been read as a definitive expression of the migrant experience. The Boys are placeless, subjected to abuse and stereotypical labelling, disconnected from histories, roles, ethnicities. In the following extract, the boys gather at Moses's one-room flat:

> In the grimness of the winter, with your hand plying space like a blind man's stick in the yellow fog, with ice on the ground and a coldness defying all effort to keep warm, the boys coming and going, working, eating, sleeping, going about the vast metropolis like veteran Londoners.
>
> Nearly every Sunday morning, like if they going to church, the boys liming in Moses room, coming together for a oldtalk, to find out the latest gen, what happening, when is the next fete, Bart asking if anybody see his girl anywhere, Cap recounting an episode he had with a woman by the tube station the night before, Big City want to know why the arse he can't win at pool, Galahad recounting a clash with the colour problem in a restaurant in Piccadilly, Harris saying he hopes the weather turns, Five saying he have to drive a truck to Glasgow tomorrow.
>
> (Selvon 2006: 122)

Selvon's text explores the 'nausea' of fracture and dislocation, but there is also as much in this text about postcolonial agency, and as much about location as about dislocation. As James Procter has argued, this is a novel about dwelling as much as it is about migrancy (Procter 2003): the Boys evoke a series of locations, as in that wonderful phrase, their hands 'plying space like a blind man's stick' – the tube, Piccadilly, Glasgow, Moses's room – 'like if they going to church'. The Boys act upon the fact of their displacement in a dynamic negotiation with place. Far from being lost, or invisible, to representation, their identities as strategic individuals are made out of this interaction, and new identities emerge in praxis, in performance. There is no contradiction in saying that the text is simultaneously about dislocation *and*

location, far from it; it is in the dynamic interchanges between these states that a reconception of notions of ethnicity and identity is enacted in Moses as he engages with 'differently-centred' but 'interconnected' worlds (Clifford 1997: 25, 27) and begins to 'live each of their lives, one by one'.

Like Said and Bhabha, Gayatri C. Spivak began as a literary critic, and her main contribution to the postcolonial debate on identity arose out of early work on the Anglo-Irish modernist poet, W.B. Yeats, whom she read as presenting multiple, changing identities in his life and writings (Spivak 1974). This was followed by a celebrated translation of Jacques Derrida's seminal text of poststructuralism, *Of Grammatology* (1976). These two apparently dissimilar routes nonetheless travel a common path: to deconstruct accepted notions of identity (the figure of the individual and singular canonical literary figure) and to seek out the overlooked or hidden presences in the text. Viewed in this way, Spivak's next step seems wholly logical: to inquire into and to recover from history and literature those excluded voices of the marginalized or, in the term used by the Marxist intellectual, Antonio Gramsci, the 'subaltern'. The Subaltern Studies Collective or Group (SSG), which Spivak is most closely associated with, comprises a number of South Asian intellectuals and academics (most notably Ranajit Guha) concerned with the rewriting of the history of India, not as the traditional narrative of elites engaged in a heroic struggle with the British empire, but as small-scale local insurrections (often failing) enacted by groups and individuals – workers, peasants, women – ignored or 'written out' of the historical grand narrative. In many respects, this search for an alternative and truer history to that which has been hijacked and falsified by dominant political interests marks a radical step towards a remembering of those who have been the victims of a form of cultural and historical amnesia. But it also contains the seeds of something rather different: if subaltern history is the true history, the subaltern's voice is then the voice of an authentic Indian identity. What began as a Marxist endeavour to rewrite 'history from below', can be turned, against the will of those who write that history, to serve the purposes of their right-wing political opponents seeking support for fundamentalist ideologies of Hindu nationalism. It is precisely on this issue that Spivak parts company from the SSG and, in doing so, she poses one of the fundamental questions of postcolonial identity theory: 'Can the subaltern speak?'

Spivak's essay of this title is a classic application of Derridean analysis which, through the loops, twists, and turns of deconstruction,

leads to some compelling and problematic impasses. The first problem concerns the provenance of the method of analysis itself: postcolonialism applies external, male-dominated discourse from the Western academy to the question of the subaltern and therefore is in danger of reproducing a form of 'colonization' of the subaltern subject which it ostensibly professes to oppose. The second problem concerns the nature of what is identified by this analysis: to identify the subaltern and bring that voice out of the silent shadows of history is to render the subaltern no longer truly 'subaltern', but to incorporate that hidden or obscured identity into dominant discourse. The third problem concerns the valorization of the subaltern: for the subaltern to speak (or rather, perhaps, for postcolonial discourse to speak for the subaltern) as a site of true and authentic identity is to essentialize that voice, again reproducing the very attributes the project set out to challenge in the first place. The logic of these arguments seems to be leading to an inescapable conclusion: for the subaltern to be 'subaltern', he or she must remain silent. And so, too, must the postcolonial critic.

Spivak had already rehearsed these arguments in relation to a literary text in her collection *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1988): her introduction, translation, and essay on the Bengali short story, 'Breast-Giver', by Mahasweta Devi. The central figure, Jashoda, is a wet nurse, the breast-giver of the title, to the children of a wealthy Brahmin family, and, although the bodily labour gradually drains her, quite literally, of her strength, she is the only breadwinner in the family and must continue to feed the children of the elite until she dies horribly of untreated breast cancer. Devi's own notes to the story suggest a very specific reading of 'Breast-Giver' as a national allegory of India: the subaltern Jashoda is an allegorical figure of Mother India, whose exploitation by the elite has been ignored by history but whose sacrifice nonetheless enables the survival of others. Devi's reading of her own narrative is clearly thought of by herself as the female subaltern 'speaking' and, through the telling of this forgotten story, claiming a central voice in the narrative of national identity. Spivak's interpretation is rather different. Although she praises Devi's intention to foreground the plight of the overlooked, Devi's lending of a voice to the subaltern runs the gamut of 'problems' Spivak has elaborated in 'Can the subaltern speak?' Further, by tying the essential subaltern to the nationalist figure of Mother India, Devi elevates Jashoda to a mythical status which undercuts the fundamental truths of her actual position, not as goddess, but as a subaltern woman whose

'reproductive body is employed to produce economic value' (Morton 2003: 126). The story of class, gender, and the body is eclipsed by another of heroic struggle and self-sacrifice, wherein the previously unrecognized subaltern finds a new, but still essentialized identity, as the mythology of the nation.

The subaltern still has not spoken, and perhaps never truly can until the world changes, although Devi has come closest to creating the conditions for enunciation. But the question of the subaltern is, ultimately for Spivak, an ethical and political question. It is clear from her scrutiny of the subaltern debate that, although real, the kinds of 'problems' she has elaborated are without solution in terms of the current postcolonial debate, where ideas formed (in Western academe) outside the site of conflict (in Eastern social orders) come trailing self-defeating paradoxes and insurmountable essentialisms. But 'silence' on the matter of economic, class, and gender inequalities, which are just as real and even more pressing, is not an option either. Subaltern identification, however compromised, is necessary to enable agency, according to Fanon's original premise. In order to break open this dilemma, Spivak proposes a kind of compromise to enable subaltern identity and therefore agency. Her concept of 'strategic essentialism' argues that it is necessary to adopt certain 'essentialized' identities (national, ethnic, gender, racial) in order to 'speak' and to achieve specific strategic goals. To return to (and revise) Soyinka's critique of Senghor's Negritude, 'strategic essentialism' means it is necessary for the tiger to assert its 'tigritude', while always knowing its assertion is spurious, in order to 'pounce'. Without strategic essentialism, all that is left of the postcolonial project of liberation and agency is the solipsistic nihilism of the postcolonial academy, broken on the rocks of its own deconstruction.

To conclude, it is perhaps necessary to return to the place where this essay began. Fanon's purpose was not only to observe and analyse the 'constellation of delirium' of the colonial subject, but to oppose it and, by opposing, to end it in initiating a new moment in history which is truly *post*colonial. The 'incident on the train' has not only been a point of origin for many postcolonial theorists, critics, and writers, it has also been a constant touchstone and a point from which one could measure progress towards that place which is 'after empire'. Half a century and more later, there is still a considerable distance to travel, not least because the colonial regimes Fanon fought have themselves travelled along a parallel route which is also, like postcolonialism, beyond national and ethnic identity, to globalization which, if one follows

A. Sivanandan, 'is the latest stage of imperialism' (Sivanadan 1999: 5). A more nuanced critique of globalization is offered by John Berger when he writes that in globalization 'There is no horizon . . . There is no continuity between actions, there are no pauses, no paths, no pattern, no past and no future. There is only the clamour of the disparate, fragmentary present' (Berger 1999). Yet there is something in the progress of the debates on postcolonial identity which is uncomfortably close to the effects of globalization: a tendency towards what James Clifford calls the 'fashionable postmodernist notion of nomadology' which heralds 'the breakdown of everything into everything' (Clifford 1992). The more postcolonialism attends, quite properly, to the analysis of 'the excluded other', 'the operations of reason', 'inside/outside structures', 'alterity', 'difference', 'displacement', 'the destabilizing encroachment of the marginal', 'the subversive subaltern', and 'the constitutive dependency of the centre on the marginal' (all terms used to summarize postcolonial concerns by Young 2001), the more, ironically, it seems to describe, not Fanon's notion of a liberated postcolonial identity, but a new regime of globalized subjects. Postcolonialism has taken great strides in refining the use of psychoanalytic discourse in the articulation of postcolonial identity, of issues of agency and representation, of the politics of location and dislocation, and in providing a structure of ideas for understanding the formation of new identities, but it is still some way off from realizing Fanon's exhortation to future postcolonial intellectuals: 'Let there be no mistake about it; it is to this zone of occult instability where the people dwell that we must come' (Fanon 1985 [1961]: 183).

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Chapter 2

Orality and Literacy

Part 1: India

G.N. Devy

> . . . and when the colonial government took away the entire forest of the Korku tribe to build the colonial railways, the Korkus were driven to cultivating rocky fields that could never grow enough to feed them. They grew feeble, and slowly the Sickle Cell anaemia hidden in their genes surfaced. Children started dying even before they became adults. Not knowing how to save their children, the Korkus erected a hut outside the village; and the children who were close to death were sent there to wait for the ancestors to take them away.
>
> Mahadu was the last Korku child. As he waited, with hunger as vast as an ocean in his belly, he heard a whistle, a train whistle. He ran to the railway track, and smelt in it the forests of the ancestors. As the train was passing by, he jumped on to it. Soon he was in a place called Bombay. There he saw, after so many months, food! And he ate, he ate everything that he saw, food, houses, shops, towers, the courts and the university. With so much food, Mahadu grew tall, his head almost reached the sky. He was thirsty too. He bent down, and in a single gulp drank the entire Arabian sea. Then he stood again, lifted and stretched his arms, plucked the stars in the sky, and, in strange alphabets made of stars, started writing the story of the Korkus again.
>
> (From an oral tale told by Mahasweta Devi to the adivasi children at the Adivasi Academy in 1999, before it was written down in Bangla and published as a work of fiction.)

Literature, speech, and writing

In our time, literature has come to be associated chiefly with writing, though the distinction between 'literature' and 'orature' exclusively in

terms of form, style, and discourse is a daunting task. A close analysis of any significant 'written' work of literature will indicate that it has internalized and consciously foregrounded features of 'spoken' language, such as speech rhythms, conversational tones and musical tonality, dialects and regional styles. Similarly, no composition belonging to a given oral tradition is free of linguistic self-consciousness; and devices serving to aid memory, such as pauses and stops or 'punctuation', allusions to earlier compositions and texts, and even stylistic clues that help in exploration of the authorial imagination are all features of written literature. Given the overlap of the conventions of speech and script in oral and written traditions, the two linguistic manifestations of a society's creative imagination clearly cannot be taken to stand for a simple polarity between literacy and illiteracy; or between 'literature' (all that is 'written') and 'orature' (all that is 'spoken or sung'). This kind of distinction will obviously raise issues regarding the status of the Homeric epics, and all other 'oral' epics, and even some of the great plays in experimental modern theatre that are performed before being fully scripted. Similarly, if one were to think of 'literature' and 'orature' as mutually exclusive categories of linguistic creativity, one may miss the very essence of a great many 'literary' works ranging, say, from Chaucer's verse portrayals to Joyce's 'stream of consciousness' fiction. Even if literary theory has not, so far, managed to point out how the two categories can be defined as entirely distinct from each other, there is a lot in literary histories to show that the two traditions constantly return to each other and draw upon each other for sustenance.

It is generally assumed that compositions in the languages that do not have scripts can be described as 'oral literature', while the 'texts' produced in languages having script can be designated 'literature'. However, the distinction between written texts, 'literature', and oral compositions, 'orature', is more likely to have come about with the emergence of print technology as a means of literary dissemination than with the histories of scripts. In the Indian subcontinent, scripts such as Sharada, Kharoshti, Brahmi, and Nagari had been in existence for centuries before some of the Indian languages were committed to print technology. However, literary productions in most Indian languages were to remain predominantly 'oral' in character until print technology brought them to the threshold of 'writing'. At the same time, the languages that escaped from being committed to the print medium continued to produce literature entirely in the oral tradition, though their cultural, historical, and social contexts were not

dissimilar from those languages which had moved into the print medium. As such it is difficult to say if a given set of historical or economic conditions will necessarily bring a given oral tradition close to becoming a tradition of written literature. Besides, given the rapidity with which 'soft copy' writing has been replacing the conventional mode of writing with a pen or pencil on paper, and the speed with which the digital conversion of voice into virtual signs is becoming possible, it is uncertain if literature will retain writing as the most evolved form of linguistic creativity. Therefore, one can only wonder if the progression from the oral to the written is the inevitable route by which human linguistic creativity will be brought to its logical conclusion.

During the progression from the oral to the written, literary forms tend to lose some of their formal features and cultural identities, and, at the same time, to acquire some new ones. To that extent, a distinction can be made between the two linguistic manifestations of a society's creative imagination. Oral literature, unlike written literature, is not an exclusively verbal or lexical art. It is inevitably intermixed with song, music, dance, ritual and craft. The objects one identifies as craft are not produced in a given community for aesthetic pleasure alone. They form an integral part of the community's daily life. Often, such objects carry with them an imprint of the supernatural as conceived in the imagination and myths of the specific community. The shapes, colours, and forms of these objects reflect the fears, anxieties, aspirations and fantasies in the community's collective unconscious. The rituals, with which the objects are linked, reflect the complexities of the collective memory, and the cultural norms and thought patterns from which emerge the linguistic forms of oral traditions. As a community move from an 'oral' to a 'written' form of expression, what has been 'craft' within that society starts to be seen as 'production' or 'product'; and, at the same time, quite imperceptibly, the boundaries between 'pleasure' and 'pain' in that society start shifting. Thus, the move from the oral to the written is also a shift in the culture's aesthetic sensibility.

The aesthetics of adivasi oral traditions

While some of the 'main' languages of India started getting printed during the early years of the nineteenth century, a large number of languages spoken by the forest-dwelling adivasi communities remained untouched by print technology. As a result, the oral traditions of these

communities have to this day continued to exist and oral narratives and songs continued to be produced. Though the historical and economic contexts for the two kinds of language communities may be largely identical, the literary aesthetics of the two show a marked difference. The most striking difference is to be seen in the manner in which the linear sequence of time is interpreted, and the formation of space is perceived.

One of the main characteristics of adivasi art is its distinctive approach to spatial imagery, an approach which may be described as 'hallucinatory'. Whether it is the oral and literary form, or the visual and pictorial form, adivasi artists seem to interpret the verbal and pictorial space as demarcated by an extremely flexible 'framing'. The boundaries, therefore, between art and non-art are highly porous. Adivasi epic can commence its narration out of what may seem a trivial everyday event. Adivasi paintings merge with their own living space as if the two are not different at all. And within the narrative itself, or within the painted imagery, there is no deliberate attempt made to follow a sequence. The episodes told and the images delineated take on the apparently chaotic shapes of dreams. In their paintings, one can find a curious mixture of traditional and contemporary imagery. Yet, one would be wrong to assume that adivasi arts do not employ any ordering principles. For example, every adivasi performance and creation recalls another such performance or creation belonging to a previous occasion. The creativity of adivasi artists lies in adhering to the authority of the past which is at the same time being subverted, more out of playfulness than out of a sense of irony. Playfulness, indeed, is the soul of adivasi art. Though oral and pictorial art creations in adivasi communities are intimately related to ritual, and though the element of the sacred can never be left out of creativity, adivasi art is rarely pompous, nor does it assume a moralizing tone. The artist very seldom takes on the role of the maker, it is always one of the receiver or the interpreter.

Another distinctive feature of adivasi art is its indulgence of the medium. When an adivasi storyteller narrates an episode, he likes to stop at a phrase or word, and, playing upon its tonal qualities, exploit the most out of its phonetic potential. Adivasi craftsmen and painters like to show off their love of the colours they use. They have an intense sense of shapes and figures, and an acute feel for the texture of the materials that they use. In whatever they build or make, they know how to reveal and highlight the shapes, tones, and textures that they handle. It is as if for them the message of the medium is far more

important than the message framed in the conceptual understanding of the artist. Hence, every adivasi artist conceals his individual identity by foregrounding the medium itself. Adivasi creations exude a certain love for the materials used, almost as if they are prayerful offerings to the elements that make this world such a mysteriously beautiful place.

There is a very strange attitude towards the stock of adivasi knowledge prevalent in India. It is believed that the knowledge about medicinal herbs and seeds of diverse plant species which adivasis hold should be documented, patented if possible, and the money realized out of such patenting should be used for adivasi development. That done, the question of knowledge in relation to adivasis is considered to have no further importance. But it is necessary to ask if adivasis cannot be made to participate in the contemporary knowledge processes, and be seen as 'knowledge communities' of their own unique kind. A close study of oral literature reveal that 'literary' compositions are rarely constructed purely as aesthetic objects, rather they are produced in order to serve other knowledge related activities as well. These activities can range from preserving the local history and clan memory to theological observations to knowledge related to medicine, ecology, agriculture, biology, animal life or political strategy. Whereas in the case of written literature, these functions are passed over to specialized disciplines, such as Medicine, Law, History, Theology, Plant Pathology, Agriculture and so on, adivasi oral literature has an integrated relationship with many areas of intellectual and imaginative life.

One key problem confronting many post-independence societies in Asia and Africa is illiteracy, in particular among the rural and the tribal population. Even where there are mass literacy drives, these are hampered by a shortage of trained teachers willing to go to the rural and remote areas, by inadequate infrastructure, and a general apathy among the villagers towards the set curriculum. The survival of oral traditions as repositories of knowledge becomes an important issue in this context. If the state cannot provide schools in the villages, if persons who understand the local culture cannot be identified and be sent to village schools, if no relevance exists between what is taught and the life as it is lived in the villages, it is but natural that the children's creativity will not blossom. Moreover, if the knowledge systems of a given community are not taken into account while designing the pedagogy, education can only serve to perpetuate the interests of the dominant society. Thus, oral traditions that have survived prejudicial treatment under colonial rule as well as by the dominant society after Independence need to be brought into use as part of the curriculum

and pedagogy. This will prevent the numerous and rich traditions of oral literature from being relegated to the status of folklore. More importantly, it will help to bring about a renewed and vital reciprocity between the oral and textual traditions in the areas of imaginative expression as well as discursive knowledge. The following brief survey is a reminder of the synergy which existed between the two in pre-colonial India.

The oral and the written in Ancient India

While the literary tradition in India is about 3,500 years old, the medium of print is barely 200 years old. The principal mode of literary transmission prior to the nineteenth century was oral. Certainly, scripts had been used in India for recording literary as well as discursive texts from at least the fifth century BC. Poets wrote, using the known scripts, on thin barks of trees or palm leaves; and scholars, who studied these texts and used them in schools and universities, reproduced them periodically so as to keep the written word alive. Yet the oral tradition was never replaced by the tradition of written literature. The poetics of composition as well as the conventions of literary reception were profoundly influenced throughout the history of India by oral forms. Of the two major epics that have shaped Indian sensibility, the *Mahabharata* is an oral epic. So were the *Puranas* in their initial phase. The *sutas*, storytellers belonging closest to the Brahminic order in the caste hierarchy, used to narrate these orally. They gave to the common people religious and ethical instruction in the form of stories retold from the great epics. While this convention of *suta*-narration came to an end some time during the ninth century, there are, even today, in every Indian village an elder, a man or a woman, who performs the function of keeping the epic alive through the oral mode. Unlike the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* was composed by a single author and in a uniform meter. Its plot and characters show unity and consistency. Yet even this epic was assimilated into the *suta* tradition of oral narration; and it became a common practice to listen to a learned man narrate the epic rather than read the poem itself.

The oral convention grew in range and variety as time passed. In ancient and medieval India, a number of oral forms of presentation developed round the plot of the *Ramayana*. The famous Ramlila, a ritual folk dance-drama, depicts scenes from the epic. And in every town, small and big, in the north of India, there are groups of local actors who produce and perform the Ramlila even today. Some of the

medieval translations of the *Ramayana* in modern Indian languages were meant more for oral transmission than for display of lexical accomplishment. The most notable among these is the *Tulsi-Ramayana*, a composition with which every speaker of the Hindi language has some familiarity. It must be added that the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* were not appropriated entirely by the oral tradition. They made an equally significant contribution to the tradition of written literature in India. Kalidasa's celebrated literary work, *Raghuvamsha*, is the best known example of mainstream literature using the epics. One may, therefore, say that the two epics functioned as the unifying link between the elite and the folk.

The Vedas are the oldest work of literature known in Indian history. No definite information on their authorship is available; and, as such, they are considered to have a divine origin. A total of seventy-two meters were used in them. The musical element in the Vedic verses was so overpowering that they were believed to be vested with extraordinary magical powers. Having acquired this special spiritual status, Vedic verses exerted a hold over the Indian imagination which the turbulent social history of India has not been able to shake off. In the course of time, the schools that taught Vedic sciences developed special methods of memorizing the verses. Books were written about the ways in which the oral purity of the mantras could be preserved. To this day, Vedic verses are transmitted orally and there are scholars who can recite the entire body of this ancient poetry without the slightest change of a syllable and, so it is claimed, exactly in the original oral form. Rarely has any other oral tradition of poetry been so venerated and so well preserved. It was because the Vedic tradition was already well established when the epics were composed that the epics too were committed to the oral tradition. In the Vedic *mantra* tradition, oral recitation was employed to preserve the purity of the sacred, in the *suta* tradition it was used to achieve effectiveness of communication. In either case, the oral was privileged over the written.

The oral tradition in Indian literature is by no means confined to poetic literature. The narrative tradition is shaped to suit oral transmission from the very beginnings of prose fiction in India. The stories in the *Katha-sarita-sagara*, a large compendium of tales which forms the foundation of Indian tradition of fiction, and the *Jataka*, a collection depicting episodes from the Buddha's many lives, formed the familiar repertory of wandering monks and reveal in their narrative structure the itinerary of their tellers. For example, they are never without the motif of a long journey; and they are stories that have travelled and

gathered more stories around them on the way. In them, the plot takes the listener from one character to another, one life to another, one place to another quite effortlessly. They are never constrained by the idea of unity of place or time or theme. They are stories to be told and retold, flexible in plot and accessible to audiences of varying social, religious, and ethical persuasions.

The dramatic tradition in India is considered to have made a beginning with the theatre developed by Bharatamuni, commonly referred to as Bharata, and is believed to have lived during the second century BC. His theoretical compendium, the *Bharata-natyashastra*, enjoys the same place in the Indian tradition of drama and the associated arts, such as dance and music, as does Aristotle's *Poetics* in Western literature. The well-defined conventions of gesture and the simplified story structure which were favoured by Bharata indicate that there had been before him a long tradition of folk performances. Drama flourished in India for over eight centuries following Bharata. Dramatic texts were produced for performances at court by Shudraka, Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti and Harsha. But never was a play written in ancient India which did not make use of folk elements and folk dialects. At the same time, the folk forms of drama in India drew freely upon elite conventions, theology, philosophy and poetry. These forms continue to survive in most modern Indian languages. The Kannada language has the Yakshagana theatre, Gujarati the Bhavai theatre, Marathi the Tamasha theatre and Hindi its Ramlila. These are by no means simplistic forms. They have well developed theatre conventions of their own, strikingly different from the aesthetics of theatre based on written texts. Western dramatists and thinkers, such as Antonin Artaud and Bertolt Brecht, have felt attracted to the techniques developed by Indian folk theatre. These regional forms do not have a fixed and written text to support the performances. They are spontaneous and rely heavily on improvisation by the actors. In most cases, their plots are based on well known episodes from the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana*. As the audiences are familiar with the epics, the performances focus more on technique and stylization rather than on any dramatic unfolding of the plot.

Medieval India

Indian literature witnessed significant developments at the beginning of the medieval period. From the eleventh century to the fifteenth,

several new languages emerged in India. These were derived from Sanskrit and Tamil and were languages commonly spoken by the people. The poets who started to write in these new languages developed the practice of composing texts that straddled at one and the same time written and oral traditions. In other words, the poems were written, and copies of the written text were made – a process facilitated by the acquisition of paper technology in India in the twelfth century – but, as previously, the reproduction of these texts was done mainly through oral modes. It was for this reason that the diction of poetry was drawn from the spoken language, and the concerns reflected in poetry were mainly the concerns of the people.

Previously, written literature in India depended for inspiration on literary conventions. From the eleventh century onward the lived life and the living tongue became more important for the poets. New modes of music and new metrical patterns started dominating poetry. Some of the very best poets in the history of Indian poetry – Nanak, Tukaram, Kabir, Mira, Akkamahadevi, Narsi Mehta and Surdas – belong to this glorious period of Indian oral literature. These poets are collectively known as the *bhakti* poets, for they sang of a devotion that posed a challenge to established religion and social structure. They humanized god, brought religion to the people, and brought people closer to the divine. They worked as prophets of equality and freedom. Above all, they created poetry of abiding beauty in the languages spoken by the people, and, in doing so, they created new literary languages. The influence of the *bhakti* poets on the Indian masses was so profound and pervasive that even to this day their songs are sung by people in villages and cities. *Bhakti* poetry was oral in practice but of remarkable aesthetic sophistication and philosophic maturity. Besides, it was this poetry that, as all great literature does, brought about social integration. It cut across the barriers of caste, religion, gender and age. And, finally, it performed the valuable task of bringing the heritage of classical Indian culture to modern India.

The use of paper for writing had become common practice during the seventeenth century. And the poets, chroniclers, and storytellers felt encouraged to write their works in decorated books because they could then get royal patronage. During this century and the next, a process began in Indian literature by which the written work was considered more valuable than an oral composition. The force behind this new canon building was Islam which held the written word to be sacred. Though medieval Islamic India witnessed a rich flourishing of short verse genres which gained wide circulation even in common

conversation, more importantly, calligraphy became a precious art, and book-making a lucrative practice. Hence, the transition from book-making in the form of manuscripts to print was extremely smooth. This transition gained impetus under British rule during the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

There is no unanimity among linguists as to the exact number of living languages in India, but, going by the census figures, there are about ninety of them with more than ten thousand speakers for each. Print technology has not reached more than a third of these people. In other words, the literature of about two-thirds of the 'major' languages in the Indian subcontinent continues to exist in oral traditions. Nearly a third of India's population is officially listed as 'illiterate'; but it would be gross mistake to label these people as non-literary, for numerous traditions of poetry and knowledge continue to survive through India's 'illiterate'. During the last two decades in particular, there has been a remarkable literary upsurge among India's adivasi communities; and adivasi literature has gradually started moving towards the literary centres in India. Furthermore, as noted in the sections above, the literate population in India participates in a variety of ways in the perpetuation and growth of the country's oral literature. But, probably the most spectacular testimony to India's age-old love for the oral is the immense popularity of the Indian cinema. It is not just the more haunting songs and an occasional bit of dialogue that capture the popular imagination. Often entire dialogue sequences from full length films have come to be enshrined in the popular memory. So phenomenal is the place carved by the Indian cinema in the popular imagination that there is no comparison in any other art form to it elsewhere in the world. In brief, perhaps among the issues that postcolonial critics have raised in discoursing upon 'writing back to the empire', the convergence of literacy and oral creativity so deeply embedded in India's social practice may be regarded as one of the most challenging.

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Orality and Literacy

Part 2: South Africa

Duncan Brown

Oral literature and performance genres have been crucial in mediating many of the central aspects of human thought, interaction, belief and record in South Africa, both historically and in the present. While they were, for many years, relatively neglected by literary scholars using critical paradigms which favoured print, or orality was perceived to be more properly the concern of anthropology, ethnography, and folkore studies,[1] oral genres have recently received much more complex and substantial literary attention, with a number of significant studies appearing in the field. Despite this upsurge in interest, and the obvious potential for interchange between orality studies and postcolonial studies, postcolonial scholars in South Africa have generally paid very little attention to oral literature and performance. The relative lack of attention proceeds partly from certain limitations or contradictions within the theory and practice of postcolonial theory, but also from problems within the history of studies of oral literature in South Africa and beyond. Orality and performance, both as subject matter and as critical methodologies, have important implications for postcolonial studies, as well as much to gain from an engagement with the (generally more theorized) work of postcolonial critics. This chapter describes the range of oral literature and performance which characterize past and present life in southern Africa; discusses the histories of orality and postcolonial studies in South Africa and elsewhere; and then suggests the possibilities of critical rapprochement between orality and postcolonialism.

From the songs and stories of the Bushmen and Khoi to the praise poems (Zulu/Xhosa: *izibongo*; Sotho: *lithoko*) of African leaders, oral literature and performance have been important features of South African life since the development of the first human communities in the region. In addition to prominent 'public' forms of panegyric to the leader, other oral forms have flourished – and continue to flourish – in African societies: songs to the clan; family songs (especially at weddings and funerals); love lyrics; children's verse; work songs; lullabies; personal praises; religious songs; songs to animals; songs of divination; and many others. There are also highly developed traditions of storytelling, including historical narratives (Zulu: *indaba*) and folk tales (Zulu: *izinganekwane*; Xhosa: *iintsomi*). The influence of missionaries and Christian discourse gave rise to forms which drew on the harmonies and poetics of Christian hymns, such as Ntsikana's 'Great Hymn' in the early nineteenth century, and the compositions of the Zulu evangelist Isaiah Shembe in the early twentieth century.

With urbanization following rapidly on colonial occupation, oral forms began to be – indeed continue to be – adapted to changing industrial and political contexts. Migrant workers in the mines of the Witwatersrand have used forms of praise poetry since the early twentieth century to praise or criticize *indunas* or shift bosses. Sotho miners have developed a genre of oral poetry called *sefela* which aesthetically encodes their experience as migrant workers, while in shebeens and bars Sotho women perform poetic narratives (*seoeleoele*) through the medium of song and dance (Coplan 1987: 13–14; 1994), and they comment on gender relations through the performance of *kiba* songs. Zulu musical performers have negotiated the possibilities and difficulties of urban experience through the hybridized forms of *maskanda* and *isicathamiya*. In the apartheid 'homelands', particularly the Transkei, praise poets played an important role in orchestrating resistance to leaders like Chief Kaiser Matanzima and others.

A number of poets have over the years successfully adapted oral forms to the printed page, among them H.I.E. Dhlomo, B.W. Vilakazi, A.C. Jordan, David Yali-Manisi (also renowned as a performer) and Mazisi Kunene. In the first four decades of the twentieth century S.E.K. Mqhayi, possibly the best-known oral poet in South Africa (he was named *imbongi yesizwe jikelele* – praise poet of the whole nation – by a Xhosa newspaper of the time), and Nontsizi Mgwetho (probably the most prolific Xhosa woman poet in South African literary history)[2] had successfully combined African modes of oral performance with the Western technology of print. During the political upheaval of the 1970s,

Soweto poets, such as Ingoapele Madingoane and Dumakude ka Ndlovu, experimented with oral forms as a means of disseminating their messages while avoiding not only state censorship but also the perceived 'gatekeeping' of white-controlled literary magazines, and Mothobi Mutloatse produced oral-influenced forms which he called 'proemdras' – 'Prose, Poem and Drama all in one!' (Mutloatse 1980: 5). Oral poetry has also been linked for many years to trade union activity in South Africa, with reports, for example, going back to a praise poet (*imbongi*) named Hlongwe who, in the 1930s in Durban, performed praise poems to the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (Sole 1987: 108).

During the 1980s, poets such as Alfred Qabula and Mi S'dumo Hlatshwayo utilized the form of *izibongo* to mobilize support for the union movement, while Mzwakhe Mbuli – widely known as 'the people's poet' – achieved acclaim for his poetry performances at mass meetings and political funerals. There are even records of praise poems at university ceremonies. Notable examples are: a poem by Pumelele M. Pumulwana at the Fort Hare graduation in 1939, and Chief S.M. Burns-Ncamashe's response to the installation of a new Chancellor at Rhodes University on 30 March 1977 (Opland 1984: 191). At his inauguration as President of South Africa in 1994, Nelson Mandela was the subject of a poem by Mzwakhe Mbuli and two *izibongo*. An *imbongi* performed at the opening of South Africa's first democratic parliament, and at a celebration of a recent victory by the South African cricket team!

As Megan Biesele and others have shown, !Kung and Ju/'hoan Bushman people continue to produce sophisticated oral literatures, though the circumstances in which they live are impoverished in the extreme (Biesele 1976; 1993; 1999). The storyteller, Gcina Mhlophe, attracts large audiences to her performances, and her oral-influenced written narratives are widely read. Ronnie Govender has successfully adapted into drama and fiction aspects of oral narration from the South African Indian community in KwaZulu-Natal. Rap groups, such as Prophets of da City, TRO, and Brasse vannie Kaap, draw on both globalized hip-hop idioms/forms and localized performative genres of oral poetry and narrative, while the distinctive musical form of *kwaito* has become – not uncontroversially – something of a national episteme. Poets, such as Lesego Rampolokeng and the Botsotso Jesters, ply their rap-, ragga- and dub-influenced rhythms at clubs and concerts in South Africa and beyond to considerable acclaim, and slam poetry and 'open mic' sessions draw participants and audiences across university

campuses as well as pubs and night clubs. The oral and performative remain central in negotiating the pressures and pleasures of contemporary South African life.

Studies of oral literature and performance have a fairly long and well-established, though not unproblematic, history internationally and in South Africa. Despite the enormous potential for their mutual engagement, orality studies and postcolonial studies have, however, tended to follow separate – in several cases antagonistic – trajectories. There is virtually no reference to postcolonial theory in any of the major and recent studies of oral literature nationally and internationally: those by Leroy Vail and Landeg White (1991); Karin Barber (1991); Isidore Okpewho (1992); Isabel Hofmeyr (1993); Megan Biesele (1993); David Coplan (1994); Liz Gunner (1994); Graham Furniss and Liz Gunner (1995); Harold Scheub (1996; 1998); Jeff Opland (1998); Duncan Brown (1998); Carol Muller (1999); Jens Brockmeier, Min Wang and David R. Olson (2002); Russell H. Kaschula (2001; 2002); John Miles Foley (1995; 2002); or Graham Furniss (2004). Such work tends to concern itself with social history, linguistics, translation studies, anthropology, orality and performance studies, or literary/cultural studies; and where literary theory is engaged, it is generally poststructuralism rather than postcolonialism. Almost emblematically, Karin Barber and P.F. de Moraes Farias's landmark collection on oral literature, *Discourse and its Disguises: The Interpretation of African Oral Texts*, was published in the same year (1989) as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's renowned, if not uncontested, study *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, but the two studies reveal almost no intersection or overlap in terms of contributors or bibliographies, despite the obvious potential for these. In the early 1990s, it seems, orality scholars read Barber while the postcolonials read Bhabha.

Much of the pioneering work on oral literature in southern Africa occurred within the context of colonization – whether produced by missionaries seeking to understand their prospective converts and their languages more adequately; magistrates or governors wanting to find 'better' ways to govern; state ethnographers or linguists in the service and advocacy of empire (often with explicitly Social-Darwinist agendas); or an admixture of the above with apparently genuine interest. The legacy, in the work of people such as James Stuart, A.T. Bryant, Henry Callaway or Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd is an invaluable archive, though one requiring careful contextualization. There have also been significant and ground-breaking studies of oral literature by black scholars, in particular H.I.E. Dhlomo (1939; 1947–8), B.W.

Vilakazi (1938; 1945), A.C. Jordan (1973), D.P. Kunene (1971), and Mazisi Kunene (1961), which continue to inform orality studies today. With the 'retribalizing' policy of the National Party following its coming to power in South Africa in 1948, studies of oral literature – especially in departments of African languages – became, in some cases, problematically entangled with the ideology of apartheid and its promotion of fossilized and essentialized notions of 'ethnic identity' and 'racial otherness'; or they restricted themselves to the 'safe' areas of lexical study or morphology over the more challenging and resistant potential of oral texts in South Africa. Nevertheless, crucial studies appeared by Damane and Sanders (1974), Hodza and Fortune (1979), Cope (1968), Schapera (1965), and Rycroft and Ngcobo (1988) – studies which deserve renewed attention from scholars today.

Until fairly recently, studies of oral literature worldwide tended to be either anthropological or literary-formalist in approach. With some notable exceptions (in relation to southern Africa, particularly the work of Coplan, James, Erlmann and the Comaroffs), anthropological studies have emphasized the role of the text as a carrier of cultural or social information and paid little attention to literary form. Literary studies have tended to remove forms from the time, place, and circumstances out of which they have emerged. The ideas of Milman Parry, who in the 1920s and 1930s studied the Homeric tradition and its parallels with modern Slavic epics, and those of his student, Albert Lord, have dominated discussions of orality in departments of literature. Both Parry and Lord treat oral literature as a universal genre characterized by common techniques of composition and delivery (a paradigmatic position of which postcolonial scholars would understandably be wary) rather than as emerging in distinct forms under disparate historical circumstances. Certainly Parry's emphasis on the performer's ability to improvise directed much-needed attention to the individual-aesthetic shaping of material, in contrast to the anthropological reading which located the poem or story in the 'collective consciousness' or 'memory' of the 'tribe' or 'band'. Parry is unable to account, however, for the functioning of oral texts within specific societies. Instead, as Ruth Finnegan argued, criticism of the Parry-Lord school tends to confine itself to the 'study of detailed stylistic points and formulaic systems leading to statistical conclusions' (1976: 127).

Responding to such readings, a number of critics have more recently argued for the necessity of developing models which acknowledge simultaneously the textuality and historicity of oral texts, of combining a 'sociology' with a 'poetics' of oral literature. Barber and de Moraes

Farias define the problem as follows: 'The issue was how to put textuality back into history, and history back into textuality' (1989: 2). The movement away from the dehistoricized readings of the Parry-Lord school was prefigured in the work of Ruth Finnegan. She located the development of the genre of Zulu praise poetry, for example, firmly in the aristocratic structures of Zulu society (1978: 122). Similarly historicized readings of African oral poetry and performance genres have been offered by, among others, Karin Barber, Liz Gunner, Isabel Hofmeyr, and Landeg White and Leroy Vail. As Hofmeyr herself notes, though, accounts of oral theory as moving teleologically from the formalist Parry-Lord model to the text/history dialectic of Barber and de Moraes Farias are rather simplistic, as oral-formulaic theories (and even evolutionist paradigms) continue to influence contemporary scholars (1999: 19). Jeff Opland, whose work on Xhosa poetry of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been extremely influential, draws on the ideas of Parry and Lord, especially their discussion of the process of composition during performance. He is careful, however, to locate the development of poetic forms within the specificities of particular societal moments.

The solution proposed by Barber and De Moraes Farias to the problem of combining a poetics with a sociology of oral literature has affinities with the redefinition of literary studies advanced by Terry Eagleton at the end of *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983) – a return to the study of rhetoric (1989: 3). Hence the crucial questions for criticism are: what does the text seek to accomplish in the social and political spheres, and how does it accomplish this – that is, by what rhetorical features/formal strategies? Such a historicization of literary form can avoid the limitations of a universalized generic reading by locating the texts within the concerns of their societies while at the same time granting their status as shaped utterances. Other developments in literary theory also have important implications for oral study. As early as 1982, Arnold Krupat pointed out that poststructuralist theory – with its 're-examination of such concepts as voice, text and performance, and of the ontological and epistemological significance of the sign' – has greatly enhanced the ability of critics to deal with the complexities of Native American literature (323); and Henry Louis Gates' notion of 'signiyin(g)', draws both on poststructural understandings of signification and on West African performative and hermeneutic models (1988). As I shall suggest, postcolonial theorizing of notions of marginality and recentering, hybridity, alterity, subalternity, modalities of (intellectual) power, and so on, has important possibilities

for engaging with oral and performative texts, in particular their transcription, translation, and analysis within the academy as well as their generation of meaning beyond localized contexts. However, the postcolonial may also find itself interrogated in this encounter.

As is the case globally, postcolonial criticism in South Africa has been a 'field of enquiry rather than a unified theory – and a field, moreover, within which people have taken up heterogeneous and contradictory positions'; nevertheless it can be said to 'produce a predominant theoretical effect' (Barber 1999: 127). Despite the asking of cogent questions by South African critics like David Attwell – such as 'What is our distinctive experience of the postcolonial condition? And what relationship do we have with discourses of postcoloniality produced elsewhere? More broadly, what does it mean to think the postcolonial in South Africa?' (1993: 1) – postcolonial studies in South Africa has tended to replicate metropolitan patterns in focusing on the relatively 'elite' form of the novel in English (J.M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, more recently Zakes Mda) or engaging in deconstructive readings of colonial/mission discourses. Engagements with oral performance, popular genres or material in African languages have been rare.

While the lack of engagement by postcolonial scholars in South Africa with the oral and the performative may be attributable in part to a wariness of the relative lack of historicization or theorization in the institutional practices of oral studies, as well as to larger resistances to the oral within literary studies itself, I think certain difficulties within postcolonial studies are also causative. In particular, the potentially homogenizing effect of the postcolonial studies model, as well as problems within its conception of agency and silence on the part of the colonized, need further scrutiny.

In its overarching theorization of colonizer-colonized and centre-margin relations, postcolonial studies often constructs a homogenizing grand narrative that is insufficiently cognizant of the particularities of local histories, and that tends to elide specific voice or erase any distinctiveness of identity or action. In her eloquent, if polemical, article 'African-language Literature and Postcolonial Criticism', Karin Barber makes the point forcefully that this grand narrative is centrally concerned with empire's inscription of itself, and pays only the most glancing attention to colonized peoples, despite apparently being impelled by their needs:

> In so far as it is invoked at all, the indigenous discourse appears only fleetingly, glimpsed out of the corner of the eye, conjured up almost

> inadvertently; it crosses the path of colonial criticism obliquely, metaphorically, ambivalently and evasively, only to advertise its own inaccessibility. The theoretical effect is to consign 'native' discourses to the realms of the unknowable, or to imply that they were displaced, erased or absorbed by the dominant colonial discourses.
>
> (Barber 1999: 128–9)

The consequence of this kind of argument is to problematize the notion of agency for the colonized: 'what actually happened', Barber reminds us, 'was not only, or always, the result of colonial policies' (1999: 141) – a position supported by Benita Parry (1994), among others.

Not only does the grand narrative of postcolonial theory effectively silence the colonized, it explicitly theorizes their silencing within the colonial encounter, an aspect of postcolonial theory which has been much debated. Theorists as diverse as Memmi, Fanon, Spivak, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, and Bhabha have all written about the silencing (whether actual or effective) of the colonized in the process of colonization. While almost all colonial occupation involved the physical and discursive subjection of indigenous peoples, the destruction of social orders, and the ruthless suppression of dissent, even a cursory acquaintance with oral and popular performance genres from colonial and postcolonial societies suggests that the attempts to silence the other were far from successful: the colonized have continued to speak, often in unofficial ways and from unofficial spaces, but also from the centres of their societies.

Memmi's understanding is not of actual silence, but of effective silence and stagnation: he argues that the 'illiterate person is simply walled into his language and rechews scraps of oral culture' (1991: 120). Similarly, Fanon conceives of no possibility, in the initial stages of colonization, of the colonized speaking or existing outside the circumscribed position defined by the settler: 'In fact the settler is right when he speaks of knowing "them" well. For it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence' (1990: 28). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin talk more directly about theorizing the 'silencing and oppression of the colonial subject', and they quote Spivak's discussion of 'the silencing of the muted native subject' (1989: 177). For Spivak's claim about subalternity – 'There is no space from where the subaltern (sexed) subject can speak' (Spivak 1985: 122) – they claim broader implications: 'the silencing of the subaltern woman extends to the whole of the colonial world, and to the silencing and muting of all natives, male or female' (1989: 177–8). Homi Bhabha has also concerned himself with the construction of the colonized's identity

within the discourse of colonization, but he allows that the subaltern can and does indeed speak in limited ways (1984: 126–7).

Benita Parry (1987) has questioned theories on the complete subjection of the colonized person to, and silencing within, the master discourses of colonization. She argues instead – with Fanon – that the colonized moves beyond such silencing into articulation: like Fanon she sees the colonized subject as overcoming the alienation and self-loathing of his/her colonial identity to assert a newly integrated and defiant self. Despite her best intentions, though, Parry seems unwittingly to perpetuate the myth of the silence of the colonized, for – like Fanon – she is unable to recognize the multiple and shifting modes of articulation of the colonized prior to the stage of resistance; nor to recognise that not all colonial subjects are as firmly trapped within the master discourse of the colonizer. In a later piece, however, she has produced a more complex picture of the colonial encounter, looking more sympathetically, though not uncritically, at what are referred to dismissively by many colonial and postcolonial scholars as 'nativist' movements and the discursive possibilities and ambiguities which they embody (1994).

It becomes increasingly clear that it is not that the colonized has been unable to speak, but that the colonizer, and too often the postcolonial critic, has been unable to hear. The verb 'hear' is used deliberately to indicate the way in which the colonizer has been unable often to understand the language(s) of the colonized; and been unable, through the limitations of reception practices and critical methodologies directed toward print and source-language English texts, to make sense of, or even in many cases identify, forms of oral expression. What Krupat describes in relation to the imperial gaze could also apply to some of the problematics of postcolonial criticism: '[A]ny people who are perceived as somehow unable to speak when they speak their own languages, are not very likely to be perceived as having a literature – especially when they do not write . . .' (2006: 176).

Along with this erasure of forms of expression other than writing in English goes an ideological model in which – disturbingly echoing the 'evolutionist' concerns of Social-Darwinism – the oral is regarded by postcolonial criticism as premodern and prehistorical, of value only as a point of origin, an influence within the written, or a kind of guarantor of authenticity/difference. The effect – as Barber suggests – is to direct attention to a portion of the literary production within postcolonial societies, and either ignorantly or culpably to refigure the part as the whole:

> [T]he model proposed by postcolonial criticism – the model in which colonial glottophagia silences the native until s/he masters and subverts the colonizer's language – is based on a fundamental misconception, almost a will to ignorance. By casting the indigenous as always and only outside or underneath the 'mainstream' literary discourses of modern Africa, it turns a blind eye to what is in fact the actual mainstream, the cultural discourses of the majority, in most of Africa.
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> (1999: 137)

Orality studies and postcolonial studies can benefit enormously from a mutual engagement, and have already begun to do so in important instances, as I shall suggest at the end of this chapter. As well as addressing some of the issues which I have discussed above, orality studies can assist postcolonial scholars in granting serious attention to forms of 'traditional', 'indigenous' or 'non-Western' knowledge, including the work of organic intellectuals, something to which postcolonial studies has generally paid only lip service. In turn, postcolonial theory can offer important correctives to orality studies, including pointing up lingering essentialisms in relation to identity ('the Xhosa are/were' category of statement which still recurs in books and articles), theorizing notions of alterity, marginality and subalternity, and directing attention to the ambivalent, often compromised, status of the intellectual in relation to mediation, interpretation, and intellectual authority.

While the oral remains only a shadowy presence even in recent postcolonial studies publications, such as those by Schwarz and Ray (2000), Ashcroft (2001), Harrison (2003), Lazarus (2004), Loomba (2005) or Loomba et al. (2005), there are signs of rapprochement both from within postcolonial studies, and from critics working at the interface of orality/popular performance and postcolonialism. Various studies limn new possibilities for combining the insights of postcolonial studies with specific attention to voice, agency, and the ways in which people have actually spoken, or continue to do so. Two edited volumes, Stewart Brown's *The Pressures of the Text: Orality, Texts and the Telling of Tales* (1995) and Duncan Brown's *Oral Literature and Performance in Southern Africa* (1999), suggest ways in which more productive interchanges may occur, with Ato Quayson's essay on Ben Okri and Amos Tutuola in the former (1995: 96–117) and Brown's introduction in the latter (1999: 1–17) addressing these questions explicitly. Liz Gunner's recent work on Isaiah Shembe and the Church of the Nazarites (2004) combines her own detailed and nuanced fieldwork and archival study with a theoretically sophisticated approach,

alert equally to recent ideas in orality and postcolonial studies, and finding in them significant 'fit'. The project *Women Writing Africa: The Southern Region* (Daymond, et al. 2003), despite the occlusion of the oral which the title might suggest, recovers a wide range of oral and written texts by women, so refiguring conventional literary and cultural histories in southern Africa, and 'talking back' to the silence imposed by colonialism and perpetuated by a range of discourses, including postcolonial studies. As well as treating a range of other concerns, the editors' introduction draws postcolonial debates and oral studies into extremely fruitful exchange. Isabel Hofmeyr's (2004) returning of attention to the actual – rather than metaphorical – circulation of oral and printed texts, as well as the various modalities between the oral and the printed, provides a significant model for future work. So too does the work of theologians like Gerald West (2003) and R.S. Sugirtharajah (2002; 2003), who draw on postcolonial discussions of power and its various inscriptions, but ground these in studies of the specific readings and 'uses' of texts at particular historical junctures. In the related field of drama studies, Helen Gilbert's work on Aboriginal drama has suggestive possibilities for research at the oral studies/postcolonial nexus (1994), as does some of the material in Lizbeth Goodman and Jane de Gay (2000).

Perhaps the most significant challenge for orality and postcolonial studies is engagement with historical contexts in which relationships between the 'oral' and 'printed' are so complex, multi-directional, and polymorphous that far more complex theorization and more contextual specificity are required in research. Barber describes something of what is involved:

> Even more significant is the huge domain of semi-oral, semi-written contemporary popular culture, in which materials migrate through print, speech, and electronic media in a network of allusions which brings a wide range of 'literary' expression within the reach of the semi-literate school leavers who make up the majority of the contemporary urban African masses. The scene of cultural production that these genres inhabit is such as to call into question the hard-and-fast distinction between 'oral' and 'written', and between 'traditional' and 'modern'. Modern popular culture is a scene of metamorphoses and mutations, in which written texts are performed, performed texts can be given a written recension, and a network of allusions and cross-references enables audiences in whatever state of literacy to access texts in one way or another.
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> (1999: 138)

Robert Young makes an analogous point about multi-vocality, instability, persistence and ambiguity in describing *rai* music as a paradigmatically postcolonial form (2003: 69–79). Perhaps the complexity of cultural forms evident today should also return us critically to our own terminology and conceptual frameworks; reminding us that – notwithstanding significant developments in multimedia technologies – spoken and written encounters have always been more complex, multi-directional and ontologically ambiguous than the language of orality/literacy or colonizer/colonized can ever allow.

Notes

1 In most university libraries, books and journals on oral literature and performance continue to be catalogued under the subject areas of anthropology, ethnography or folkore.
2 See Opland (2007) and Brown (2006).

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Chapter 3

The Politics of Rewriting

C.L. Innes

> Say Robinson Crusoe was true to life. Well then Friday buried him. Every Friday buries a Thursday if you come to look at it.
>
> (Joyce 1993 [1922]: 105)

The concepts of 'writing back' and rewriting are well established, both in postcolonial literature itself and in writing about it. Decades before this trope became established in postcolonial literary criticism through the impact of *The Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin: 1989), whose title draws on Salman Rushdie's newspaper article, 'The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance' (Rushdie 1982), many authors had made explicit their concern to correct the misrepresentations of their culture and history which were produced by, and in turn helped to produce, colonial attitudes. In this respect, Chinua Achebe has been among the most outspoken in his denunciation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (Achebe 1988) and in his determination to refute Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* by telling that story 'from the inside' partly through his second novel, *No Longer At Ease* (Achebe 1972: 4). Achebe's first novel *Things Fall Apart* provides a book length alternative to the final imagined paragraph by the white District Commissioner, a paragraph which encapsulates colonial attitudes to what the District Commissioner terms 'the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger' (Achebe 1976: 148).

Achebe's first two novels illustrate two kinds of responses to the literature of the imperial centre, on the one hand 'writing back' to a

generalized set of attitudes, and on the other 'rewriting' a specific colonial text by revisiting its plot and/or characters. Many postcolonial texts incorporate both kinds of responses. Examples of 'rewriting' which also involves 'writing back' include versions of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* by Aimé Césaire, George Lamming and Marina Warner; Caryl Phillips' revisiting of *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice* in *The Nature of Blood*; counter-narratives to Conrad's description of a journey into the interior in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy*, V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*, David Dabydeen's *The Intended*, Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise*, Jean Rhys's *A Voyage in the* Dark, Patrick White's *Voss*, and Wilson Harris's *Palace of the Peacock*. Salman Rushdie revises E.M. Forster's character Dr Aziz and the Amritsar massacre, as well as official versions of Indian history, in *Midnight's Children*. However, not all 'rewriting' involves 'writing back' in terms of anti-colonial critique. More recently Zadie Smith has published a contemporary British or Atlantic revisiting of *Howard's End.* Smith has called this novel a 'homage' to E.M. Forster, and thus it might be seen as her claim to Forster's literary heritage as part of her own. Similarly Derek Walcott's *Omeros* can be read not so much as a 'writing back' as an incorporation of both Homer and Joyce into a hybrid Caribbean tradition.

At stake in many rewritings of canonical European texts is the question of authority and authenticity, linked to issues of representation and self-representation: the insider establishes the authority of his or her narrative and account of the culture over the outsider's version. What is deemed an inauthentic and incorrect reading of African, Australian, Indian or Caribbean history and culture is to be replaced and superseded by a new and authentic one. And thus Friday buries Crusoe, and Thursday's story is supplanted by Friday's. And yet, at the heart of many of these postcolonial narratives is the paradox that in the very act of offering a more authoritative, a more informed account of their history, they also fundamentally question all claims to authority and the power to represent others.

This essay focuses on several examples of rewriting by authors from Southern Africa, the Caribbean, and Australia. Although these areas have very different histories and cultures, they all share the experience of dispossession of indigenous peoples by European settlers and administrators, racial and ethnic discrimination, and the imposition of the English language, cultural norms and traditions. Australia and the Caribbean also share a history of forced transportation, of convict and slave labour respectively. Each of the postcolonial texts discussed here takes either *Robinson Crusoe*, *Jane Eyre*, or *Great Expectations*,

foregrounds marginalized or excluded figures in them, specifically with reference to race, gender, and/or class, and places them in the context of that history of physical and cultural dispossession. In so doing, each text raises questions about narrative forms, ideas of character, and the relation between words and things. I begin with *Robinson Crusoe*, regarded by many as the work which initiated the English novel as a genre.

In 1912, James Joyce delivered two lectures in Trieste, one on Daniel Defoe and one on William Blake. According to Frank Budgen, Joyce was a great admirer of Defoe, and had read all of his works (Budgen 1972: 186). There are occasional references to Defoe in *Ulysses* not only in the Oxen of the Sun passages, but in Leopold Bloom's thoughts, for example, at the funeral of Paddy Dignam, where he thinks about the necessity of burial:

> Say Robinson Crusoe was true to life. Well then Friday buried him. Every Friday buries a Thursday if you come to look at it.
>
> O, poor Robinson Crusoe,
> How could you possibly do so?
>
> (Joyce 1993: 105)

Moreover, Bloom had given Molly Defoe's *Moll Flanders* to read, and it is not implausible to think of Moll Flanders as one of the many allusions echoed in Molly Bloom's name. Joyce commented on Defoe's ability to create 'female characters which reduces contemporary criticism to stupefied impotence' (Joyce 1964: 20), and his own creation of Molly might be said to have done the same in its own time. Nevertheless, Molly Bloom herself was less impressed, observing that she did not like 'books with a Molly in them like that one he brought me about the one from Flanders, a whore always shoplifting anything she could cloth and stuff and yards of it' (Joyce 1993: 707).

This difference of opinion between Molly Bloom and her creator accords with a certain ambivalence in Joyce's lecture on Defoe. He describes him as the first Englishman to create truly English characters, an author who eschewed all literary models, drew on no imitations or adaptations of foreign works, and became the father of the English novel (Joyce 1964: 7). Joyce admires the robustness of his realism, and sees his characters as prophetic, declaring that

> English feminism and English imperialism already lurk in these souls. . . . The African pro-consul Cecil Rhodes descends in a direct line from

> [his] Captain Singleton, and the afore-praised Mrs Christian Davies is the presumptive great-great-grandmother of Mrs Pankhurst.
>
> (Joyce 1964: 23).

Robinson Crusoe represents for Joyce the epitome of the English imperialist: 'He is the true prototype of the British colonist, as Friday (the trusty savage who arrives on an unlucky day) is the symbol of the subject races' (Joyce 1964: 24). But, more generally, Defoe exemplifies, in Joyce's view, 'the sensible barbarian' in the presence of the supernatural, the empiricist who demonstrates his limits when faced with the unknown. Defoe reporting on Duncan Campbell, a visionary Scottish boy, is, according to Joyce, 'the realist in the presence of the unknown, is typical of the experience of the man who struggles and conquers in the presence of the dream which he fears may delude him, is the Anglo-Saxon, in short, in the presence of the Celt' (Joyce 1964: 19). Andrew Gibson has argued persuasively that *Ulysses* can be read as 'Joyce's revenge' on the English literary tradition as founded by Defoe, referring to Joyce's novel as 'a gigantic version of "an Irish bull in an English chinashop"' (Gibson 2002: 17). Indeed, in her diary entry for September 26, 1922, Virginia Woolf quotes T.S. Eliot as stating that *Ulysses* would be a landmark because it 'destroyed the whole of the 19th Century. . . . It showed up the futility of all English styles' (Woolf 1978: 203).

Joyce's view of *Robinson Crusoe* as the foundational and quintessential English and imperialist novel is shared by many later postcolonial writers, as is his ambivalent assessment of Defoe as a writer, and the need to enter into dialogue with him. Here I take, as my first example of that dialogue and its implications, a short story by Bessie Head, a coloured South African writer who lived in exile in Botswana from 1964 until her early death in 1986. This short story, 'The Wind and a Boy', comes ninth in her group of short stories, *The Collector of Treasures* (Head 1977), which traces the changes experienced by the Botalaote tribe from a feudal and pre-colonial society, through the impact of Christian missionaries, and of Western mores, economic systems, and modern technology. 'The Wind and a Boy' centres on the relationship between a boy and his grandmother, a boy whose charm, vitality, and beauty 'captivated the imagination and hearts of all the people' (Head 1977: 69). The grandmother, Sejosenye, is admired for her dignity, her strong character, and her 'special gift' for ploughing the land and nurturing her crops. The boy is called Friedman, after a 'friendly foreign doctor' in the hospital where he was born, but, in

the context of the story, his name also suggests 'freed man' and Friday, Crusoe's servant. His grandmother often tells him stories 'about the hunters, warriors, and emissaries of old', or sings songs to him by the fireside. One of the songs which particularly catches his attention is a small fragment she had learned in the brief time, about a year, she attended mission school, a variation of the little ditty that Leopold Bloom remembers:

> 'Welcome, Robinson Crusoe, welcome,' she would sing, in clear, sweet tones. 'How could you stay, so long away, Robinson how could you do so?'

The boy is fascinated by this song, which he believes to be 'a special praise-poem song', and urges his grandmother to tell him all about Crusoe, and so she invents a narrative, very different in content and style from Defoe's.

> 'They say he was a hunter who went by Gwetaside and killed an elephant all by himself,' she said, making up a story on the spot. 'Oh! in those days, no man could kill an elephant by himself. [. . .] Well, one day, Robinson appeared suddenly in their midst and people could see that he had a great thing on his mind. They all gathered around him. He said, "I have killed an elephant for all the people. [. . .] Come I will show you what I have done." Then the women cried in joy: "Loo-loo-loo!" They ran to fetch their containers as some wanted the meat of the elephant; some wanted the fat. The men made their knives sharp. They would make shoes and many things from the skin and bones. There was something for all the people in the great work Robinson Crusoe did.'
>
> All this while, as he listened to the story, the boy's eyes had glowed softly. At the end of it he drew in a long breath.
>
> 'Grandmother,' he whispered, adroitly stepping into the role of Robinson Crusoe, the great hunter. 'One day, I'm going to be like that. I'm going to be a hunter like Robinson Crusoe, and bring meat to all the people.'
>
> (Head 1977: 72–3)

For the boy in his village, Sejosenye's story works not only as an exciting narrative and tale of survival but also as an inspiration. It is a moral story which transforms his life, encouraging him to change from being a self-willed and self-centred boy to a young adolescent who will care for his grandmother and his community. But, as readers

aware of the original novel by Defoe, what strikes us is the difference between his story and hers. Defoe's hero has no concern for 'bringing something for all the people'. Her story is about the importance of community; his story is about the absence of community, about solitary survival, and self-aggrandisement. And, in turn, his novel is intended for the solitary reader, for entertainment and vicarious living, rather than instruction.

Drawing on a double heritage, African oral storytelling and English written fiction, Bessie Head creates therefore a deeply ironic counterpoint between the two traditions, which nevertheless come together to form her own written stories. In so doing, she contrasts the contexts in which those traditions develop, the identity of the storytellers – white European male who was a professional writer and illiterate African grandmother who wrests a living from the soil – the purposes of storytelling, the form and content of the stories, and the nature of the audiences. All these elements are also related to the economic and political structures of the societies in which the stories are told.

'The Wind and a Boy' implicitly illustrates the argument made by Walter Benjamin in his essay, 'The Storyteller':

> The earliest symptom of a process whose end is the decline of storytelling is the rise of the novel at the beginning of modern times. The storyteller takes what he tells from experience – his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale. The novelist has isolated himself. The birthplace of the novel is the solitary individual, who is no longer able to express himself by giving examples of his most important concerns, is himself uncounseled, and cannot counsel others.
>
> (Benjamin 1969: 87).

As James Joyce declared, *Robinson Crusoe* can be seen as the foundational novel, as well as the founding creation of English character, and a paradigm of English imperialism. Benjamin, like other scholars such as Ian Watt, links the rise of capitalism and the development of bourgeois individualism to the origins of the novel as a form. The conclusion of Bessie Head's story makes that link between the end of storytelling, or at least a change in its purpose and content, and the impact of Western capitalism and technology in the neo-colonial state. Cycling back to his village to obtain sugar, flour, and tea, all of which are Western imports which must be obtained by cash, Friedman is run over by a truck, driven by one of 'the new, rich civil-servant class' who had to have a car 'in keeping with their status'.

The story has three 'endings': the first is the horrific death of the boy, dragged by the truck along the road and made faceless; the second is its effect on the grandmother, who, when told of the boy's death, cries out, 'Can't you return those words back?' She then becomes incoherent, singing and talking only to herself, shunned by the villagers until she dies two weeks later. The third ending is apparently the conclusion drawn by the villagers, who discuss the incident 'thoroughly from all sides until it was understood', and that conclusion is spelled out briefly by the narrator:

> And thus progress, development, and a preoccupation with status and living standards announced themselves to the village. It looked like being an ugly story with many decapitated bodies on the main road.
>
> (Head 1977: 75)

The three conclusions to 'The Wind and a Boy' all suggest that new stories and new modes of storytelling have come to stay; neither Western capitalism nor Western stories can be returned – the villagers cannot 'return those words back'. Head's retelling of the Crusoe story is a means of measuring the difference between past and present, and showing what has been lost. In this aspect it compares with Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, and, like that novel, it creates a new hybrid form which brings together oral and literary traditions, allowing them to comment on each other. And yet, it is also the case that Achebe's story of Okonkwo and Head's story of Friedman and his grandmother survive and radically alter our reaction to the colonial and neo-colonial narratives to which they allude.

Bessie Head's six-and-a-half page story provides a demonstration of some of the many ways in which postcolonial writers have responded to the 'othering' or elision of the colonized subject by European writers. And this response involves not merely a foregrounding of previously marginalized figures, telling their stories, as Achebe puts it, 'from the inside', but a fundamental interrogation of the English novelistic tradition and its modes of representation. That interrogation entails also a reconsideration of traditional modes of narrative authority, structure, and character. Thus, Bessie Head's boy in her story is represented variously and inconsistently through the eyes of the village people (he is both naughty and blameless, he also performs different identities), and through a narrator whose voice modulates and changes as the story progresses, from the opening pronouncements reminiscent of orality – 'Like all the village boys, Friedman had a long

wind blowing for him, but perhaps the enchanted wind that blew for him, filled the whole world with magic' – to the grimly matter-of-fact and sociological summary at the end. As Sarah Chetin has argued, Head's narrative technique and tone suppose both a fictive communal audience and an 'outsider' audience, one knowing and one unknowing, so that '(w)e must not only read her stories to learn about the experiences of her Botswana villagers and how their history has shaped their consciousness, but must also learn to use the mythic imagination to shape our own moral vision of a future where we will no longer remain "outsiders", exiled from ourselves and each other' (Chetin 1989: 115).

These issues – of representation, narrative identity and authority, and characterization – are also central to another revisiting of Defoe's fiction, J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*. But, whereas Head responds by moving the marginalized or excluded figures to the centre of her narrative, so that an African woman and her grandson are not only the main subjects of the story but the focus of interest to their fellow villagers, who constantly discuss them, Coetzee foregrounds the *issue* of marginality, and the *problem* of representing the other. (Like Joyce, Coetzee has a long standing interest in Defoe, and, indeed, made Defoe's relationship to his character, Robinson, the substance of his Nobel Prize acceptance speech). Through its setting in contemporary Botswana, Head's story draws attention to cultural difference and change; Coetzee retains the eighteenth-century context in which Defoe lived and worked, and his novel emphasizes gender difference and self-representation as well as the difficulty of knowing and representing a racial and cultural other.

Foe—the very title calls into question the identity of the author whom we have come to know as Defoe, and whom the female narrator, excluded from the version we know, insistently addresses as Mr Foe, which was indeed his 'original' name, and which also implies an inevitable opposition between male and female authors. Coetzee, in his Introduction to the Oxford World's Classics edition of *Robinson Crusoe*, describes the novel as 'a fake autobiography', and Defoe as, not so much a realist in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tradition, except for his empiricism, but 'something simpler: an impersonator, a ventriloquist, even a forger . . .' (Coetzee 1999: vii). In turn, Coetzee creates a 'fake autobiography' and impersonates a female castaway, Susan Barton, whose version of Cruso (as she names him), and Friday, and their life on the island, indeed the island itself, is very different from Defoe's.

Not only does Susan Barton's Cruso refuse to keep a journal, fail to salvage anything but a knife from the wrecked ship, make clothing out of ape skins rather than goat skins, and die before his return to England, but Friday is an African, presumably taken as a slave, rather than an American Indian, and his 'woolly hair' and African features are emphasized in contrast to the straight hair and fine, almost European, features of Defoe's character. Moreover, the island itself is different: the lush and fertile island of Defoe's imagination is replaced by a barren and rocky place, reminiscent of Walcott's version of the island in 'Castaway' with its blowing sand, its rotting seaweed, its sand flies and sea lice, where

> The starved eye devours the seascape for the morsel
> Of a sail.
> The horizon threads it infinitely.
>
> (Walcott 1972)

Although, at first sight, in her use of sharp descriptive details and her practical approach to living on the island and in London, the fictive narrator, Susan Barton, may seem to be similar to Defoe and Crusoe, her attitude to language and writing is very different. As Benita Parry comments,

> The dialogue of Foe and Barton condenses a contest between protagonists holding different positions on language and representation. With her commitment to the priority of speech, Susan Barton formulates the task as descending into Friday's mouth, seeking a means to use Friday as an informant in order to fill the hole in her narrative.
>
> (Parry 1996: 50)

But, for Foe, as a tradesman in the written word, the narrative must conform to a certain genre, with a beginning, middle, and end, and it is the writer's task to fabricate the consciousness and context of this silent 'other'. Indeed, Foe suggests that, as writers and storytellers, he and Susan may 'deplore the barbarism of those who maimed' and silenced Friday, but may also be 'secretly grateful', for 'as long as he is dumb we can tell ourselves his desires are dark to us, and continue to use him as we wish' (Coetzee 1987: 148).

Susan maintains that, as a woman, she *knows* that Friday like herself desires liberty: 'Our desires are plain, his and mine' (Coetzee 1987: 148). Yet she cannot say what freedom might mean for herself or Friday, she can only point to the desire for freedom. Susan's curiosity about

Friday, her aspiration to know what he thinks and the meaning of his actions, music, and dance, her assumption that he is fully human and does not exist simply to serve others, distinguishes her from Foe, and, by extension, Defoe. But we are also made aware of the limitations in her understanding and assumptions, for example, her view that Friday can be at home anywhere in Africa, and it would not matter where he was set down in that continent. On the one hand, she acknowledges that Friday represents for her the 'unknown other', on the other hand, she assumes a generalized understanding of him as an African and a 'savage' who is representative of African culture and experience. And it is his racialized body, his appearance, of which she is most consistently conscious, and thus his difference. Gayatri C. Spivak has remarked, I think correctly, that, through the figure of Susan Barton, Coetzee 'attempts to represent the bourgeois individualist woman in early capitalism as the *agent* of *other*-directed ethics rather than as a combatant in the preferential ethics of self-interest' (Spivak 1999: 182).

Speaking of the pastoral novel in South Africa, Coetzee has himself described the ways in which contemporary readers may respond not only to *Robinson Crusoe* but to his own fictional revisiting of Defoe's work: 'Our craft is all in reading *the other*: gaps, inverses, undersides; the veiled; the dark, the buried, the feminine; alterities' (Coetzee 1988: 81). Moreover, through Susan's persistent assumption that Friday is 'other' and her attempt to 'read' Friday's face and actions, *Foe* is also an analysis of that mode of reading and its limitations. Here one might contrast the binaries constructed by Defoe and Susan – male/female, white/black, civilized/savage, master/slave – with Head's story, in which the boy becomes *both* Friday and Crusoe, the grandmother is at the same time 'a queen', a true mother, and, like Defoe's Crusoe, an outstanding tiller of the soil. Similarly Walcott merges or reverses Crusoe and Friday in his series of 'Castaway' poems, and in his play *Pantomime*.

Both Bessie Head and J.M. Coetzee write from a historical and political context in which apartheid and racial hierarchies, as well as the combined effects of colonialism and capitalism, continue to be a powerful reality. As David Attwell puts it, Coetzee's novel and the figure of Friday as a signifier of an untold story is 'localized in allusive ways in order to make this story of storytelling responsive to the conditions that writers like Coetzee are forced to confront' (Attwell 1993: 104). In particular, Attwell points to Coetzee's characterization of Cruso as informed by Afrikaner Calvinism, his changing of Friday from a handsome Carib youth who is able to speak the words his master teaches him to an African robbed of the ability to speak. Attwell also suggests

that Susan Barton seeking to sell her story in London is reminiscent of Olive Schreiner, and concludes that collectively 'Coetzee's protagonists represent the ambiguous position of postcoloniality that South Africa inhabits'. It is a form of 'colonial postcoloniality' that 'to the extent that it is critical, stands under an ethical and political injunction always to defer to the authority of an emergent nationalist resistance that will inaugurate the age of postcoloniality proper' (Attwell 1993: 108). Like Head's story, Coetzee's novel has more than one ending. The third section concludes with Foe and Barton seeking to teach Friday to write; having learned to fill his slate with 'o's, he must now, according to Foe, be taught to write 'a'. (One recalls Sejosenye's year at mission school where she 'learns abc'.) But neither her story, nor the boy Friedman's, nor Friday's will follow those simple structures and lines; they will make the stories their own. And both Head's story and Coetzee's novel conclude with another, more distant or 'outside' narrator, who reflects on those mutilated 'dead bodies' and their significance in terms of future narratives. The ending of Coetzee's novel, in the voice of an impersonal narrator, moving away from the now dead bodies of Susan Barton, Foe, and Friday, leaves the reader and narrator confronted with the enigmatic power of Friday's indecipherable story, in 'a place where bodies are their own signs. It is the home of Friday'. It is a story and a history which will mingle with and perhaps overwhelm all other histories, 'washing the cliffs and shores of the island', and running 'northward and southward to the end of the earth' (Coetzee 1987: 157). The mute presence of Friday and his role in Coetzee's novel is comparable to the dead black man in Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist*, whose inadequately buried or barely suppressed body haunts the white protagonist, Mehring. One might compare Gordimer as a novelist with Susan Barton in her concern to acknowledge and give voice to Friday's history. Like Barton, Gordimer might be seen as 'the agent of *other*-directed ethics'.

Head, Gordimer, and Coetzee write from within 'the cauldron of history', as Attwell phrases it, and their fiction is a response not only to specific political debates but to the ways in which representations of history are, and will be, a consequence of their changing world. I now turn to a writer who shares Coetzee's concern with the politics of self-representation, but from a more distant point of view, and with less hesitation about representing 'the other', Jean Rhys.

While the fiction of Head and Coetzee writes back to a canonical text from a contemporary South African context and refashions the

Caribbean figure of Friday into an African whose past and future are occluded, Jean Rhys' novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, responds to the marginalization and misrepresentation of a Creole Caribbean woman, iconicized as 'the mad woman in the attic' in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and, subsequently, in Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's critical work as a symbol of repressed anger in fiction by women writers; she is, in Gilbert and Gubar's terms, 'Jane's dark double' (1979), rather as Friday becomes Susan Barton's 'shadow'. Gayatri Spivak's response to Gilbert and Gubar, and her analysis of *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a powerful reminder that Charlotte Brontë's novel contains not only a feminist moral but a suppressed history of colonialism, are now well known – indeed, too well known, in Spivak's own view. Brontë's representation of Bertha Mason, the white Creole woman, marginalizes her to such an extent that she exists on the borderline between human and animal. Here is Jane's unmediated recollection of her first glimpse of Bertha:

> In the deep shade, at the further end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not at first sight tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.
>
> (Brontë 1966 [1847]: 321)

Jean Rhys set out to tell the story of this marginalized figure and restore her to full humanity, and, in so doing, brings into focus the suppressed links between imperialism, economic exploitation, personal relationships, and identity. But, if Bertha can be read as Jane's 'darker double' in the Brontë novel, it is also true that Antoinette is represented, and indeed represents herself, in the context of other 'darker doubles' – her playmate Tia, whom she sees as a mirror image of herself; Amelie, with whom her husband replaces her; and indeed Brontë's Bertha, whom she recognizes as her ghostly self in the gilt-framed mirror in Thornfield. And there is also another double – her mother – who might be seen as a foreshadowing, as an imprisoned mad woman, of both Bertha and Antoinette. She is in turn contrasted with Antoinette's surrogate mother, Christophine, whose wisdom and whose understanding about the nature of imperial and patriarchal exploitation Antoinette is unable to absorb and act upon, because of her yearning for the love of her English husband. Indeed *Wide Sargasso Sea* constructs, almost literally, a house of mirrors, for

the burning of the house in Jamaica which occurs in the first part of the novel becomes a prefiguring of the burning of Thornfield Hall which ends the novel.

The recurrence of doubles in *Wide Sargasso Sea* demonstrates how race does and does not matter, and, perhaps more significantly, how much economic circumstances inform and produce identity. Identity in this novel is not a fixed or stable quality; it is flexible and constantly in formation in response to the constructions and actions of others. This flexibility of character – or rather characterization – is in turn related to the flexibility of the narrative voice, or voices, in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Thus, in the opening paragraph of the novel, the narrator's voice, which is here identified as Antoinette's, acts as a conduit for other voices:

> They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks. The Jamaican ladies had never approved of my mother, 'because she pretty like pretty self' Christophine said.
>
> (Rhys 1968: 15)

As Andrew Gibson remarks, commenting on the shifts in time and verb tense in the narration, the interpolation of multiple voices, the indeterminacy of certain phrases, and the ways in which the narrative voice in *Wide Sargasso Sea* might be related to Julia Kristeva's concept of the semiotic *chora* – that is, 'a mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases':

> It does not help, then, to conceive either of voice or of the 'character speaking' as a single entity. There is rather a fluency of voice which establishes itself at a varying and sometimes indeterminate distance from its subject. This, again, makes voice a multiple flow which is constantly being arrested but also moving beyond stases. In other words, it makes voice conceivable in terms of the *chora*.
>
> (Gibson 1996: 165)

Gibson goes on to suggest that 'the principle of narrative voice – in *Wide Sargasso Sea* at least – is perhaps the principle of the Creole, not one thing nor the other, displaced, modified by context, caught between identities, always suspended somewhere between absent origin and alien context' (Gibson 1996: 165). That fluid and flexible narrative voice is contrasted with another voice, the voice of the narrator whom we read as Rochester, and identify as English and

masculine, a narrator who feels threatened confronted by such lack of stability, and seeks to impose fixed identities and categories. Gibson comments that one might see Antoinette's discourse as 'the repressed other in, as well as of, Rochester's discourse', a discourse which rejects all multiplicity in himself, and demands 'sense, finality, determinacy, clarity, identity, judgement, discrimination'.

One could also describe the contrast between the narratives of Rochester and Antoinette in terms of responses to otherness. The male narrator insists on firm boundaries between England and the Caribbean, between white and black, his self and hers. He turns most violently against Antoinette when he is encouraged to believe that she may be of mixed race, that is, neither purely white nor black. He is threatened by excess, that which seems to overflow its proper boundaries – Antoinette is too sensual, San Dominique is too green, the Caribbean sky and sea are too blue. Thus Antoinette must be objectified and commodified. He reduces her to a marionette, and insists that theirs is simply a commercial relationship; she is traded in marriage to bring funds to sustain Thornfield Hall. At the same time he sees himself as sold by his father in exchange for Antoinette's dowry. The male narrator is unnamed by Rhys – as Spivak points out, he is robbed of his patronymic – while, by renaming Antoinette Bertha, he, on his part asserts control over her and reinscribes her within the parameters of English fiction. She is enclosed within the 'cardboard house' she believes herself to be imprisoned in: 'Then I open the door and walk into their world. It is, as I always knew, made of cardboard. I have seen it before somewhere, this cardboard world where everything is coloured brown or dark red or yellow that has no light in it' (Rhys 1968: 148).

Rhys' Antoinette/Bertha is unable to escape from the plot of Charlotte Brontë's novel in which she remains subordinated to Jane Eyre's fulfilment, but she is given her own voice and a character which escapes the fixity of Brontë's representation of the Creole woman. More importantly, she is given a history, a series of events, each of which marks off possibilities for Antoinette's own fulfilment and hence a different history. In this sense, Antoinette's character is never fixed; she is a product of a specific history, but there is also the sense in which she, like her Aunt Cora or like Christophine, might have chosen differently. We understand *why* she makes the choices she does, or, rather, lacks the confidence to make other choices, but one function of the doubling in the novel is to help us understand that her narrative is not necessarily preordained, and neither is her character and

identity. Similarly, it is clear that the male narrator could have made other choices, could have been another and kinder husband.

The one character in this novel who appears unchanging and unchangeable, who is invested with authority in terms of both morality and truth, is Antoinette's black servant and surrogate mother, Christophine. Her authority comes in part from being outside the social identities of white English and Creole colonizers. Christophine alone is able to accuse Rochester, and, like Benjamin's storyteller, she is able to give counsel though neither Antoinette nor Rochester is willing to accept her wisdom. 'Read and write I don't know; other things I know' are Christophine's last words in the text as Rochester silences her with a threat of biased colonial law, and she walks away 'without looking back' (Rhys 1968: 133).

The three works of fiction I have discussed so far share a distrust of the formal confines exemplified by the canonical English novels to which they respond. Each includes a central character who seeks to escape from or redefine the plot or story imposed on him or her by the imperial author, but fails to do so; and yet we are also shown that within that story or plot other possibilities were always to be glimpsed. They are characters who belong to the changing uncertainties of time rather than rigid boundaries of space. In addition, each text also includes a figure who seems to recur in postcolonial fiction, the figure of a surrogate mother who, in a text which is otherwise sceptical about authority, is nevertheless presented as a source of wisdom. Thus Rhys' Christophine and Head's Sejosenye, as well as Coetzee's Susan Barton, provide counter-narratives and counter-truths to white imperialist narratives; all three are finally silenced by white colonial, patriarchal, and neo-colonial structures. Within their narratives Christophine and Sejosenye are mourned as *exceptional* characters, who are a part of the community, but who also stand outside and above it. They are in a sense stable and unfragmented characters, who do not change, comparable perhaps to a figure like Chielo in *Things Fall Apart*. As such they might be seen as symbolic of a Utopian ideal, an evocation of a caring community which eludes patriarchal and imperial power structures, but which is not compelled by biological necessity or self-interest.

While Head, Coetzee, and Rhys suggest 'mothering' as a representation of the ethics which might have informed an alternative community, and so focus on relationships – or failed relationships – between mothers and the daughters or sons they seek to counsel, the Australian author, Peter Carey, foregrounds relationships between

fathers and sons. Indeed, as many critics have pointed out, the opening sections of *Oscar and Lucinda* (Carey 1988) recall and elaborate scenes in Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son* (1907). And Oscar's journey into the interior, his obsession and destruction, as well as his encounter with aboriginal culture, and the relationship with his 'Intended', recall the novels of two other literary forefathers, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Patrick White's *Voss*. That being the case, it is nevertheless possible to see in the references in the novel to Lucinda's correspondence and meeting with Marian Evans (George Eliot) an alternative female genealogy for Australian writers.

A decade later, Carey published *Jack Maggs* (Carey 1998a), which takes as its protagonist the figure of Magwitch, the convict who leaves Pip a fortune in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations.* Edward Said comments on the implicit spatial relationships in Dickens' work: 'What Dickens envisions for Pip being Magwitch's "London gentleman", is roughly equivalent to what was envisioned by English benevolence for Australia, one social space authorizing another.' Moreover, Said goes on to say, Dickens, like other Victorians, conceived of convicts finding reform or redemption in Australia, but prohibited their re-inclusion in the metropolis, 'which, as all Dickens's fiction testifies, is meticulously charted, spoken for, inhabited by a hierarchy of metropolitan personages' (Said 1993: xvii). One feature of *Jack Maggs* is its meticulous remapping of London, its almost obtrusive historical detail, through which Maggs, and, by extension, Carey, reclaim and reoccupy London (and, later in the novel, through the coach journey to Gloucester, the English countryside). However, it is metaphors of paternity, and relationships between fathers and adoptive sons, which dominate the novel – as indeed they dominate Dickens' novel. Rejecting his foster mother, Ma Britten, who, Fagin-like, turned him into a criminal, and exploited his talents and labour in order to nourish her biological son, Thomas, Magwitch returns to London in order to 'father' and receive filial gratitude from Henry Phipps, his 'adopted son', to whom he has bequeathed a fortune. However, the dysfunctional relationship between Mother Britain and her colonial sons, and between English middle-class gentlemen and the colonial sources of their income, relates to another major theme in the novel, which, like Coetzee's *Foe*, is extensively concerned with the relationship between the writer and his subject, and issues of exploitation, both literary and economic. Carey recreates Dickens as Tobias Oates, the details of whose life and literary interests are recognizably akin to those of the Victorian novelist, and who publishes a

novel titled *The Death of Jack Maggs* in the same years (1860–61) that *Great Expectations* was being serialized. Of Tobias Oates, Carey says,

> I did start out thinking a great deal about Dickens. And I did steal many things about his character for Tobias Oates. I don't know how big a deal that is, but the last day of *Jack Maggs* is given as May 7, 1837, which is the day Dickens's own sister-in-law died. He was passionately attached to her – just as Tobias Oates is attached to *his* sister-in-law – and mourned her the rest of his life. So it's true, I've built in a parallel history to that relationship, which amused me.
>
> (Carey 1998b)

But, rather as Henry Phipps denies any filial relationship with Jack Maggs, hides from him, and then seeks to murder him, Carey disowns Oates/Dickens as father figures, claiming that Oates is 'a writer who's interested in plundering the facts like a journalist and building from there. I never, ever write like that. I really do make stuff up'. And although Carey's novel involves a tussle between Oates and Maggs for possession of Maggs' story, and, indeed, through mesmerism, possession of his being, one is struck by the sheer inventiveness, the fantasies, with which Carey invests his version of the returned convict's story.

Like Coetzee's *Foe*, *Jack Maggs* foregrounds and questions both the process and the ethics by which the writer selects his material and reconstitutes it to make a story. Maggs writes his own story by night, in invisible ink and in mirror writing, as a document which he believes his adoptive English son will treasure. The symbolism is both playful and all too obvious, as one reads this reverse tale of a life, like the lives of so many convicts, never made visible to English readers. (Although Maggs' experience of brutal beatings recalls Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of His Natural Life*, a seminal novel of convict life, published in 1870.) Oates sets out to steal his story from Maggs who, like Susan Barton, admires and seeks to be rescued by an established metropolitan author. But it becomes clear that Oates has invented the phantom that he claims Maggs is haunted by, and that he is deceiving Maggs in order to obtain more dramatic material for a novel of his own, which will, like *Great Expectations*, 'redeem' the convict by killing him. Carey allows Maggs to recover his own identity, through realizing the speciousness of his idealization of England and the English gentleman, and to return to Australia and his true, biological sons. Whereas Maggs has previously told Tobias Oates that it is always better 'to be a bad smell [in London] than a frigging rose in

New South Wales' (Carey 1998: 230), he returns with the orphaned servant, Mercy Larkin, to nurture a dynasty and become president of the Cricket Club in Wingham, New South Wales. In the figure of Mercy, we encounter yet another authoritative woman who is able to heal Maggs, acknowledging the pain etched in his scarred body, and become the surrogate mother to his children.

Like *Jack Maggs*, Carey's next novel, *True History of the Kelly Gang*, is concerned with dispossession. Jack Maggs seeks to reclaim a stake in the country of his birth through an adoptive son but is rejected and realizes that his future lies in Australia rather than England. Maggs escapes his convict past, and a childhood akin to that of Oliver Twist's, or rather he leaves them behind, to become a respectable bourgeois gentleman, and so a truly Dickensian hero. Ned Kelly however is the victim of such respectable members of the new Australian social structure; his father's convict origins continue to haunt him psychologically as well as socially, and his narrative begins and ends in prison. But neither novel refers to the dispossession of the first Australians (who do feature in *Oscar and Lucinda*), and we might recall Ann Curthoys' observation that there is a tendency in Australian culture to offer competing histories of victimization, each of which obscures, or deflects from our vision, other victims (Curthoys 2000). Tobias Oates uses mesmerism to steal Jack Maggs' story; in *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Carey mesmerizes his audience through its convincing mimicry and amplification of Kelly's subaltern but obsessive voice, so that we too can easily fail to see the wider story of dispossession of Aboriginal peoples and the political struggles that inform Australia's history.

The writers chosen as central examples for this discussion of post-colonial rewriting seemed, when I began working on this essay, to offer a variety of contexts and concerns, each starting from different national and ethnic identities. These differences do result in diverse responses to metropolitan representations of racial, cultural, and colonial 'others'. And yet, given the diversity of authorial locations and identities, I am struck nonetheless by the recurrence of certain tropes. The emphasis on alternative mother figures is particularly notable, and I have already discussed their possible significance. But this trope relates to a wider concern with legitimacy, with biological and cultural inheritance, and to a struggle to both claim and disclaim the inheritance of canonical writers, to both acknowledge and displace literary fathers and mothers. Harold Bloom has written about this struggle as 'the anxiety of influence', where in a kind of Oedipal struggle 'strong'

living writers seek to rewrite canonical dead ones (Bloom 1973). In the colonial and postcolonial context 'the anxiety of influence' takes on an additional significance, in that it involves the desire to replace the dominance and authority of an imperial patriarchal system and culture over 'the motherland'. In the case of Australia, and other white settler colonies, however, 'the motherland' is more often thought of as England or Ireland; unlike India, Africa, or Ireland (or the West Indies where both Mother Africa or Mother India and Mother England may be invoked), and Australia itself is rarely symbolized as a benign or suffering mother calling on her sons to rescue her from 'the stranger'. One notes that Jack Maggs returns to Australia, and to his Anglo-Celtic 'race', not to the 'Australian' mother of his sons but with Mercy Larkin, an Englishwoman who will become their adoptive mother. As Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra have observed, Australian cultural nationalism demonstrates an obsessive concern to find foundational myths which give the nation legitimacy by avoiding or overriding acknowledgment of the dispossession and genocide of the Aboriginal peoples who were the original inhabitants of the continent (Hodge and Mishra 1991). Both *Jack Maggs* and *True History of the Kelly Gang* seem to belong to that particular cultural nationalist tradition, whereas *Oscar and Lucinda* at least acknowledges the co-existence of Aboriginal peoples and traditions, perhaps in part because that acknowledgement, however dubious, is also present in another text that Carey writes back to, Patrick White's *Voss*.

Borrowing Richard Terdiman's term used with reference to 'symbolic resistance' in the nineteenth-century French novel, Helen Tiffin has argued that all postcolonial literature is 'counter-discursive' in its concern to subvert the language and literary traditions of the hegemonic culture. However, Tiffin disagrees with Terdiman's view that by its very nature such counter-discursive writing is 'condemned to remain marginal to the dominant discourse' (Tiffin 1987: 33). The anxiety regarding entrapment within the terms of the metropolitan discourse is perhaps recorded through recurring imagery of imprisonment and claustrophobia prevalent in all the texts I have discussed, except the story by Bessie Head. Susan Barton is at first confined in Cruso's hut, and, in London, both she and Foe are hidden away in small rooms and enclosed spaces. Antoinette is literally imprisoned in the attic of Thornfield Hall, but between the cardboard covers of Charlotte Brontë's book as well, while her mother – another Creole heiress – is also confined as a mad woman. Jack Maggs writes his own journal in a tiny enclosed secret room, and at one stage is imprisoned

in the house of Mr Buckley – along with the other servants – while Tobias Oates seeks to possess his story. And London itself is visualized as dark, confining, and claustrophobic, as are the scenes of Jack's childhood when he is pushed down chimneys to help enable burglaries. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette's memories of the semi-wilderness of the gardens surrounding Coulibri and her retreat in San Dominique contrast with enclosure in the English attic room. Similarly the scenes where Susan Barton and Friday travel on their own to Bristol contrast with the stuffy rooms to which they are restricted in London, just as Friday's musical and dance performances escape the confines of a language and a literary narrative in which they have both been captured.

The recurrence of such imagery might suggest the impossibility of escaping the structures and terms of the metropolitan discourse, including its literary traditions, once the postcolonial writer enters into engagement with it, and this has been the view of some postcolonial critics who see rewritings of canonical texts as a reinscription, so that the author who 'writes back' becomes not a resistance fighter or revolutionary but a collaborator. By accepting the oppositions between centre and margin, between colonizer and 'native', it is argued, the postcolonial author perpetuates them even as he or she seeks to disempower them. But one might also argue that the prevalence of images which associate the metropolis and its writers with the confinement or imprisonment of the colonial subject is an acknowledgement by the postcolonial authors of the dangers involved in revisiting and rewriting canonical texts – or, indeed, rereading them. Having lived through the metropolitan narrative, the central characters survive them – at least psychologically, if not always physically.

Furthermore, while acknowledging the danger of confinement within metropolitan narratives, and seeking to confront and dismantle their claims to authority, postcolonial rewritings reject the very concept of fixed oppositions and hierarchies. For their authors are also laying claim to a double or multiple inheritance – they are, to use Edouard Glissant's term, examples of 'Créolité', expressing a mixture of cultural interchanges and interactions through time, rather than affirming a fixed ancestral identity. These cultural interactions involve not only the rewriting of canonical texts but radical rereadings of them, and the understanding that those texts also have no fixed or authoritative reading, and must change through time. And it is in this concept of Créolité that the most effective response to colonialist and imperial narratives can be found. Finally, through their engagement

with canonical texts, postcolonial writers also express their own identity, and acknowledge the identity of their readers, as cosmopolitan participants in a variety of cultures, not simply passive recipients unable to question or choose the terms in which their worlds and the relationships between them are defined.

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Chapter 4

Postcolonial Translations

Susan Bassnett

Defining translation

Translation is an act that involves the transfer of texts written in one language into another. The Latin root of the English word 'translation' implies relocation, *translatus* being the past participle of the verb *transferre*, 'to carry across'. Early uses of the term were both figurative and literal: just as a book could be translated from one language to another, so also could a body be translated from one place to another and, in a religious context, be translated from the earthly to the heavenly. It is important to acknowledge that there is an implicit spatial relationship involved in the act of translation, for in translating there is always both a starting point and a destination or, as contemporary translation theorists define it, a source and a target. Translation is a kind of textual journey from one context into another.

What distinguishes translation from other kinds of writing is precisely the dual relationship involved in that journeying. There is always a source in translation, an original text, and the act of translating involves the transformation of that source into something other, into a text that can be read by a completely new set of readers, in another time and another place. Were the original not to exist, translation could not happen, but the existence of a source means that the translator is involved in a more complex relationship with texts and readers than if he or she were starting out with a blank sheet of paper to create a work *ab initio*. The translator takes a work written by someone else

and transforms it, endeavouring to meet the expectations of a new set of readers. Whereas the writer who starts to produce a new work is engaged in the act of writing with only potential readers in mind, the translator has a double responsibility, both to the readers in the final destination and to the original author.

Determining how the double responsibility works and how it may be weighted has dominated discourse about translation for centuries. St Jerome, following on from Roman authors such as Cicero, famously distinguished between translating 'word for word' and 'sense for sense', but the problems start as soon as any notion of translation is formulated that goes beyond word for word literalism. For, immediately, the problem arises as to the extent to which a translator may exercise independent judgement over a text written by someone else, in short, the fundamental question revolves around the freedom of the translator to reshape that text.

The freedom of the translator

Translation discourse has been dominated by the idea of loss. Again and again the focus is on what cannot be transferred across linguistic boundaries, on what is missed out, or altered, or distorted. There is, implicit in translation, an ideal notion of perfection, a belief that everything in a text can and should somehow be reproduced by the translator. This, of course, is absurd. The act of translating necessarily involves manipulation of the source text, it involves reshaping, rewriting, and recreating. For, as Edward Sapir pointed out, no two languages are ever the same and the worlds inhabited by different language communities are distinct worlds, 'not merely the same world with different labels attached' (Sapir 1956: 59). Languages evolve in different contexts, and each language reflects the world-view of the culture that uses it. Literatures produced in different languages also vary radically from one another, having emerged through diverse sets of norms and expectations. Forms and genres tend to be culture-specific and variable through time, so, in addition to the impossibility of precise linguistic equivalence, there is rarely literary equivalence either, and temporal divides can be as great as geographical ones.

A major problem faced by today's translators of ancient Greek epic, for example, is the demise of the epic poem in the Western tradition, though the rise of the novel has led some translators to choose prose as the most viable medium for contemporary readers, a strategy that

has been attacked as modernizing the ancients. Changes in literary norms necessarily lead translators to think carefully about what their readers will find acceptable, and this is a factor in the selection of works to be translated in the first instance. At its best, translating new literary forms can be a major source of innovation and revitalization. Walter Benjamin helpfully suggests that translation can be the means of ensuring the survival of texts and their 'afterlife' in another culture. But there is also the risk that the target culture will be unable to comprehend aspects of the source because of the vast distance between source and target. So, for example, cultures with a highly sophisticated written tradition may evaluate translations of oral texts as simplistic or child-like, despite the high status accorded to those oral texts in the source culture. In such a case, the freedom of the translator is constrained by the norms operating in the minds of the target readers and by the gulf between cultural contexts.

A central debate among African writers since the 1960s has been the relationship between oral and literary traditions, faced as they are with the challenge of both incorporating in some way an oral cultural heritage in an African language with a reconstituted African version of the colonizers' language. The Ivory Coast writer Ahmadou Kourouma describes the strategy he used to bring together two languages in his own work in such a way as to subvert the hegemony of the dominant language:

> I thought in Malinke and wrote in French by taking what I considered a natural liberty with the classical language. What had I done? Simply given free rein to my temperament by distorting a classical language that is too rigid so that my thoughts can find expression in it. I have therefore translated Malinke into French by breaking the French in order to find and restore an African rhythm.
>
> (Kourouma 2006 [1997]: 108)

Kourouma's way of liberating Malinke is through a process of translation that takes place in the act of writing, and breaks down the rigid boundaries of classical French style as a result. In his case, the incorporation of oral elements from an African language serves creatively to open up the French to receive new rhythms and expressions.

Kourouma's notion of translation is in complete contrast to the traditional Western view of the translator as the servant of the original and the idea of the translation as an inferior copy of that original. In the dedication to his translation of *The Aeneid* (1697), John Dryden depicts the translator as unfree, bound to the original author, unable

to add or take away anything, in short, unable to be creative. Dryden chooses the metaphor of slavery to portray the translator, and, despite the obvious irony, for Dryden's translation practice and other statements on translation show him as taking all kinds of decisions to reshape and rewrite other people's texts, this remains one of the most significant metaphors of its age:

> But slaves we are, and labour in another man's plantation; we dress the vineyard, but the wine is the owner's; if the soil be barren, then we are sure of being scourged; if it be fruitful, and our care succeeds, we are not thanked; for the proud reader will only say, the poor drudge has done his duty.

Dryden's use of the image of the translator as slave coincided with a time when Europe was reaching out to 'discover' and occupy other territories. With the expansion of colonialism, the imagery of slavery and bondage could be playfully employed by one of England's greatest writers to make a distinction between categories of writing. That distinction – between the freedom of the original writer and the enslavement of the translator – was widely adopted and came to dominate thinking about translation for the next three centuries. The translator was in thrall to both the owner of the vineyard and the proud reader; yet whole cultures were being 'translated' at the same time by the establishment of European colonies.

Translation and power

Postcolonial translation theories have, inevitably, been concerned with redefining the relationship between translator, author, and target readers. What is recognized today, thanks to the emergence of Translation Studies as a distinct field of inquiry, is the underlying set of power relationships in any intercultural encounter. Translation does not take place on a horizontal axis, because there are distinct power hierarchies operating between cultural and literary systems, and distinct linguistic hierarchies also. Some cultures are perceived as marginal, others as dominant; some are perceived to have long established literary translations, others to have little or none. This view is determined by factors that are essentially political rather than aesthetic, just as perceptions of languages as major and minor are also ideologically determined. Power relationships are at the root of

such perceptions and central to any discussion of culture and power is the role of language.

In their important work, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin state bluntly that the crucial function of language is as a medium of power (Ashcroft et al. 2001: 38). Writing back in a postcolonial context to the centre of power therefore involves a reappraisal of the dominant language, and a reclaiming of linguistic alternatives, whether as variants of that dominant language or as totally different systems. In his famous essay, 'Towards a National Culture', Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o sets out a manifesto for the way forward for African writers to break away from the European literary mainstream. The key is through language. This is because, Ngũgĩ argues, language carries the values of a people, and the imposition of a language – for example, English, under empire – will necessarily lead to the subjection of peoples who are forced to use the dominant language and suppress their own. The teaching and study of African languages and of the oral traditions that underpin them is seen as central to the rehabilitation process. Colonialism, Ngũgĩ claims, involved both the undervaluing of a people's culture and the elevation of the language of the colonizer: 'The domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized' (wa Thiong'o 1986: 16).

Approaching from another angle in *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, which consists of four essays published between 1918 and 1921, the Indian scholar, nationalist, and sage, Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950), proposed a radical rethinking of the status of European writing in the Indian context and called for much more attention to be paid to Indian literary traditions in the wake of Indian independence. Aurobindo wittily offers an alternative perspective on great European writers, showing how, had the Indians been in the dominant position of assessing European writing, they might have dismissed *The Iliad* as a crude and primitive epos, Dante's *Inferno* as a nightmare of a cruel and superstitious religious fantasy, Shakespeare as a drunken barbarian of considerable genius with an epileptic imagination, the whole dramatic outputs of Greece and Spain and England as a mass of bad ethics and violent horrors, French poetry as a succession of bald and tawdry rhetorical exercises and French fiction as a tainted and immoral thing (Aurobindo 1972: 257). Aurobindo's categorization of the European masters parodies European categorization of classic Indian works, so shockingly encapsulated in Thomas Babington Macaulay's 'Minute on

Indian Education' (1835) when he declared that 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia'.

Translation plays a crucial role in the reclaiming and re-evaluating of a people's language and literature. Harish Trivedi and other Indian scholars have pointed out the subversive power of translating canonical figures, such as Shakespeare, into Indian languages, the translation effectively neutralizing the dominance of the English original. This is particularly significant, given the way in which Shakespeare was exported to India as a model not only of great writing but also of moral superiority. There have also been calls for much more translation among Indian languages and literatures themselves, for greater sharing of traditions and influences rather than perpetuating the translation traffic between Indian languages and English at the expense of greater integration of Indian cultures. Celebrating the diversity of Indian languages and literatures without the medium of English can be seen as a political statement, a move away from what Sachidananda Mohanty has called the missionary tradition of translation in India. There are those, however, like the novelist Shashi Deshpande, who see the future for Indian writing in bilingualism, even while she notes with nostalgia the extent to which her generation of writers have lost touch with their heritage:

> The time when it was possible to gain access to our literary heritage without reading is long past: kathas, puranas, kirtans, folk plays, storytelling – these are no longer part of an educated urban person's life. The present generation of English-educated urban Indians is in fact twice removed from their indigenous language, for the parents are generally English-educated also. Our myths and stories can reach them, if at all, only through English translations. It is like getting the Mahabharata exclusively through Peter Brook.
>
> (Deshpande 1997: 67)

Tymoczko and Gentzler point out in their book, *Translation and Power*, that far from being a marginal, low status activity, translation has actually been a key instrument in the production of knowledge and representations of other cultures. They suggest that translation can be used in diverse ways, and it should not be seen as an act of 'faithful' reproduction because it is

> a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuration, and fabrication – and even, in some cases, of falsification, refusal of information, counterfeiting, and the creation of secret codes.
>
> (Tymoczko and Gentzler 2002: xxi)

In their view, translators as much as politicians are key participants in the making and shaping of knowledge and culture. This is a view shared by Tejaswini Niranjana who has argued that translation actually serves to reinforce the asymmetrical power relationships of colonialism. What happens in translation is that translators select their texts and, in so doing, shape a perspective of the source culture specifically for a target audience, erasing difference and cultural specificity. Harish Trivedi cites Sir William Jones' translation into English of a Sanskrit play, *Sakuntala or the Fatal Ring: An India Drama* (1789) as an example of the kind of practice deplored by Niranjana: the translation is sanitized, the heroine's propensity to sweat is excised from the English, and the translation 'neatly points up the common translatorial temptation to erase much that is culturally specific' (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 7). Jones' decision to take out all references to the heroine's sweat thus removes at a stroke the particular physical conditions of the Indian subcontinent and excises all hints of the Indian interpretation of sweating as a sign of sexual arousal rather than as a symptom of fever. This example serves well to illustrate the way in which translators have made other cultures accessible to their readers by erasing culturally-specific signs in the text that might have been open to different interpretation.

Calibans and cannibals

What comes across repeatedly in postcolonial thinking is the crucial role played by language in the whole colonial enterprise. The task for postcolonial writers is therefore to rethink the very parameters of the languages they use, seeking to reclaim a language that has been imposed upon their culture and, alongside that process of reclamation, looking across into other linguistic zones. Robert Young points out that the colonial experience itself is defined 'through the procedures of being translated, hybridised, with the indigenous culture the target culture' (Granqvist 2006: 28). He also draws attention to the centrality of translation in the experience of migration:

> For a translation will always come after, it will always be belated, in its own time but, in a sense, also out of time, out of place. Gone, lost, missing from its place, wandered off. Intrusive, elsewhere. An intruder. Refugee. Wanderer, nomad, migrant, vagabond, bandit guerrilla.
>
> (Young 2006: 29)

Young's personification of translation as an intruder and transgressor reminds us of the seminal figure in postcolonial thinking, Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and his great cry of rage in Act I when confronted by Prospero and Miranda. Harking back to the freedom he enjoyed on the island before their arrival, and asserting his right to its ownership, Caliban cries:

> You taught me language; and my profit on't
> Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
> For learning me your language!
> (Act I, sc. ii, ll.365–7)

Caliban has lost his own language and is powerless to resist Prospero to whom he has taught all there is to know about the island and who is now able to use that knowledge to support his superior strength. Caliban claims that he showed Prospero and his daughter affection at first, in the early stages when he was learning their language, but this is a claim they both deny, as they accuse him of acting wickedly and in bad faith. There is clearly no trust between master and slave, colonizer and colonized, and language reinforces the abyss that divides them.

Half a century before *The Tempest* was seen by London audiences, a tribe in Brazil, the Tupinamba, killed and ate a Portuguese priest. The horror aroused by cannibalism in the European imagination has been a recurring motif in the work of many writers from the sixteenth century onwards, and it has been suggested that the name Caliban has conscious associations with the word cannibal. But the Tupinamba practised cannibalism in a particular way: the strong and the more revered were considered most fit to be devoured ritualistically by the tribe. In the case of Father Sardinha, an additional complication was that he also preached a doctrine of ritual sacrifice, in which the body and blood of Christ were devoured by His worshippers. That the Tupinamba literally enacted that which the Church enacted symbolically was an irony that was taken up in the 1920s by a group of Brazilian intellectuals, looking for an appropriate image for a postcolonial and modern Brazil. Oswald de Andrade's 'Manifesto Antropofago' was published in 1928, and proposed the metaphor of cannibalism as a way of thinking about the new Brazil and its relationship to Europe. Only by devouring European culture could Brazilians break away from the impositions of the past, and that act of devouring could be read in two ways simultaneously. On the one hand, it could be seen as a

deliberate challenge to the European tradition, as an act of transgression; and on the other, it could be seen as paying homage to all that European culture had given to the New World, just as the eating of the priest could be seen as both a violently transgressive act, breaking the ultimate European taboo, and as an act of homage and respect. In other words, Brazilian writers needed to assert their right to the traditions they had inherited from Europe, while acknowledging at the same time the value of an alternative culture that also formed part of their heritage.

De Andrade's manifesto is an excellent example of how a new way of thinking about cultural heritage can emerge from a revision of history. In his essay, 'History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas' (1970), Wilson Harris takes the idea further, writing in his inimitable fashion about the possibility of alternative ways of seeing that can alter perceptions and knowledge about the past, the present, and the future:

> The true capacity of marginal and disadvantaged cultures resides in their genius to tilt the field of civilization so that one may visualize boundaries of persuasion in new and unsuspected lights to release a different apprehension of reality, the language of reality, a different *reading* of texts of reality.
>
> (Harris 1999: 183)

This new visualization, and hence new ways of thinking, comes from the margins, from people without a vested interest in maintaining the hierarchies of the status quo. The image of 'the field of civilization' being tilted is a powerful one, implying seismic upheaval and great force, a transformation of inner and outer worlds.

The translated colony

Implicit in De Andrade's thinking is an idea which was to be taken up by the de Campos brothers later in the twentieth century, and that is of the colony itself as a translation of the great European Original. Colonies were established, as we know, for valuable raw materials, new markets and commercial gain. The process also involved the export of many aspects of European culture. In the first instance, religion often went hand in hand with profit. In Latin America, the Church established itself rapidly through a series of measures, varying from outright brutality to the subtle shifting of sites and objects of worship from one

culture to another through a process of renaming and resanctifying. Crucial to the missionary enterprise was, of course, translation, and it is significant that in many parts of the world the translation of sacred texts was seen as a fundamental step on the road to 'civilization'. Yet, as Homi Bhabha has argued, the colonial presence is ambivalent, 'split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference' (Bhabha 1994: 107). To illustrate this ambivalence, Bhabha uses an example from India where the Bible, the ultimate European text, was translated into Indian languages. He poses questions that might have been posed by Indians faced for the first time by the Bible and seeking to understand how it could be presented to them as the ultimate authoritative source:

> The native questions quite literally turn the origin of the book into an enigma. First: *how can the word of God come from the flesh-eating mouths of the English?* – a question that faces the unitary and universalist assumption of authority with the cultural difference of its historical moment of enunciation. And later: *how can it be the European Book, when we believe it is God's gift to us? He sent it to us at Hudwar* . . . Imagine the scene: the Bible, perhaps translated into a north Indian dialect like Brigbhasha, handed out free or for only one rupee within a culture where usually only caste Hindus would possess a copy of the Scriptures, received in awe by the natives as both a novelty and a household deity.
>
> (Bhabha 1994: 117)

This example highlights the ambivalence with which the colonizing project was received by the 'natives' who were to be 'civilized' and their souls saved: is the Word of God ours or does it belong to them, are they offering freedom from an oppressive caste system or trying to destroy the traditions that hold a community together? The answer, of course, is both and neither. The colonial enterprise, religious and secular, primarily involved exporting European cultural perspectives and endeavouring to implant them elsewhere.

Ultimately, the colony was always seen as the product of the place of origin, as a kind of copy. Given that a focus in translation discourse is the idea of loss incurred in the transfer, the copy was bound to be regarded as inferior to the original: and similarly the colony was inferior to the culture from which it originated. In both cases, the journey from the point of origin carried the implicit notion of an inferior product resulting from that journey. It is indeed ironic that in an age when the stately homes of England were being built from

the proceeds of (often slave-maintained) overseas enterprises in the newly established colonies, there should have emerged a perception of translation as a marginal, second-class activity. Yet the very basis of the colonial enterprise was the translation of Europe, its history and its culture all over the world.

It is therefore not surprising that, as part of the process of the empire writing back, there should be a strong move today towards delineating a postcolonial poetics of translation which asserts the right of the translator to reshape the source and proclaims the translator as no whit inferior to the original author. Inevitably, such a poetics will vary enormously depending on the context. So the politics of translation in African countries, for example, vary from those of India or Brazil or Latin America; but underpinning the multifaceted debates about language and translation taking place around the world is a recognition of the enormous power of translations, a power that tended to be ignored as cultures strove to assert the strength of their own national traditions in the shaping of their literary systems.

Alvarez and Vidal, in *Translation, Power, Subversion*, summarize very aptly the ideological implications of translating:

> Translation always implies an unstable balance between the power one culture can exert over another. Translation is not the production of one text equivalent to another text, but rather a complex process of rewriting that runs parallel both to the overall view of language and of the 'Other' people have had throughout history; and to the influences and the balance of power that exist between one culture and another.
>
> (Alvarez and Vidal 1996: 4)

Recognizing the complexity of translation and the implicit power relations that underpin every act of translation has been a significant development in the last two decades, one that has been galvanized to some extent by the encounter between the relatively new field of Translation Studies and the equally new field of Postcolonial Studies, both engaged in revisiting the ways in which cultural hegemony has been determined.

Postcolonial translation strategies

Translation is never an innocent activity, since it always involves more than one context, and the relationship between contexts can determine the actual strategies employed by the translator as well as

the response of readers. In Africa, there has been a lot of discussion about how to signpost the oral culture that lies beneath works written in English, French or Portuguese. Chantal Zabus, who has analysed different strategies employed by African writers, states there are two principal techniques in use which she defines as 'cushioning' and 'contextualisation'. The latter involves creating a context in which African words and phrases can function with a significance for readers unfamiliar with them, while 'cushioning' involves padding the text with explanatory words or phrases (Zabus 1991). Maria Tymoczko notes the pressures on African writers that derive from the fact that their principal markets as well as their publishers are predominantly in the Western world. She suggests that writers can opt for the 'fairly aggressive presentation of unfamiliar cultural elements' in the text or choose a more assimilative approach, which may involve 'cushioning' or the use of glossaries or even footnotes. She also draws attention to the increased difficulties facing translators, who may find it more difficult to maintain a balance between the different cultural signs embedded in the text. The preferred solution is for the creation of a work that encodes a range of different levels:

> Particularly in contemporary literary works aimed at intercultural audiences, it is not uncommon to find maps, glossaries, appendices with historical information, or introductions describing the cultural context of the work, while experimental formal techniques and multilayered textual strategies may even permit the use of embedded texts, footnotes and other devices constituting more than one textual level.
>
> (Tymoczko 1999: 22)

Such strategies point to an empowered translator, a far cry from the slavish reproducer of someone else's original. And while African writers and translators seek to assert the presence of a multilingualism that may or may not be explicit in their writing but which underpins their thought processes, elsewhere the focus, as Kourouma explains, has not been on bilingualism or plurilingualism but on reappropriating the European literary canon for creative purposes. This is particularly obvious in the work of many Brazilian and Latin American writers and translators.

Significantly, some of the strongest calls for the creative power of translation have come from Latin America. Octavio Paz formulates a dual vision of the act of writing and translating. The writer chooses words and shapes them in definitive ways, constructing 'a verbal object made of irreplaceable and immovable characters'; the translator, in

contrast, starts with those fixed, immovable signs and sets about 'dismantling the elements of the text, freeing the signs into circulation, then returning them to language' (Paz 1992: 159). This liberationist idea of translation does not rank the translator in some more lowly place, but reinforces the importance of translation as a means of releasing a work written in one context into another for another different set of readers.

The idea of setting free the translator to carry across such texts as are composed within certain linguistic boundaries into another space and time is the antithesis of Dryden's notion of the translator as slave. It is an idea that recognizes the inevitability of change and transformation as a text passes between languages and, most importantly, it is an idea that, while recognizing the status of the source text, in no way sees the target text as its inferior. Jorge Luis Borges states this with his habitual dry humour in his essay on 'The Homeric Versions':

> Translations are a partial and precious documentation of the changes the text suffers. . . . To assume that every recombination of elements is necessarily inferior to its original form is to assume that draft nine is necessarily inferior to draft H – for there can only be drafts. The concept of the 'definitive text' corresponds only to religion or exhaustion. . . . The superstition about the inferiority of translations . . . is the result of absentmindedness. There is no good text that does not seem invariable and definitive if we have turned to it a sufficient number of times.
>
> (Borges 2002: 15)

This affirmative vision of translation with its refusal to insist upon the definitive authority of any text is perhaps the reason why there has been such a great flowering of creative writing across South America. It may also explain why there have been such successful translations of Latin American and Brazilian writers. Translators, such as Giovanni Pontiero, Margaret Sayers Peden, Gregory Rabassa, Eliot Weinberger and Suzanne Jill Levine, are some of the best-known figures who have also spoken and written extensively about their translation practice.

Writers from South America have been challenging European literary hegemony since the end of the nineteenth century, striving to reread and rewrite European models rather than seeking to reject them utterly. Whereas within the Indian and African contexts the tendency has been to rationalize the role of translation as establishing and perpetuating colonization and the dominance of the English language and literature, Brazilian and Latin American writers and intellectuals have consciously set out to reappropriate the European canon. De

Andrade's manifesto that used the story of the cannibalized priest to expound a theory of Brazilian culture has been utilized creatively since the 1960s by the two Brazilian brothers, Haraldo and Augusto de Campos in their endeavour to establish a poetics of translation. Else Ribeiro Pires Vieira summarizes some of the extraordinarily innovative language used by Haraldo de Campos when articulating his own translation practice, the strategies of which differ according to which text he has chosen as his point of departure:

> Translation as 'verse-making', 'reinvention', a 'project of recreation' (in the 1960s), 'translumination' and 'transparadisation' (stemming from his translation of Dante), as 'transtextualization', as 'transcreation', as 'transluciferation' (stemming from his translation of Goethe's *Faust*), as 'transhelenization' (from his translation of the *Iliad* of Homer), as 'poetic reorchestration' (from his rendering of the Hebrew Bible into Brazilian Portuguese), as 'reimagination' (from his transcreation of classical Chinese poetry into Portuguese) are but some of the neologisms coined by Haraldo de Campos that offer a vanguardist poetics of translation as textual revitalization while pointing to the Anthropophagic dimension of feeding on the very text he is translating to derive his metalanguage.
>
> (Vieira 1999: 97)

In terms of translation practice, what de Campos does is to use the original as a starting point and then, having 'devoured' it symbolically, to produce his own unique work. Hence he transforms William Blake's poem 'To a Sick Rose' into a concrete image poem, where the Portuguese words run round the petals of a rose and vanish into its heart, while Goethe's monumental *Faust* is radically shortened through his 'transluciferation' of it. De Campos' method is proclaimed in his essay 'On Translation as Creation and Criticism', first published in 1963 and in which he formulates his own version of anthropophagy:

> Any past which is an 'other' for us deserves to be negated. We could say that it deserves to be eaten, devoured. With this clarification and specification: the cannibal was a polemicist (from the Greek polemos, meaning struggle or combat) but he was also an 'anthologist': he devoured only the enemies he considered strong, to take from them the marrow and protein to fortify and renew his own natural energies.
>
> (De Campos cited in Vieira 1999: 103)

In this essay, de Campos continues to explore the specifically Brazilian anthropophagous approach formulated by his predecessor de Andrade,

and to express himself in terms that reflect some of the thinking about the otherness of the past to be found among other postcolonial writers. Hence he underlines for us the global interest in the cannibalization metaphor in literary production and translation in particular.

Cultural translation

There is another strand in the expanding web of postcolonial discourse about translation: the figurative use of the idea of translation to illustrate the condition of the contemporary migrant. The in-betweenness of translation is highlighted, along with the notion of translation as always involving a journey between a point of origin and a target destination. That inbetweenness – the 'inter' of international, intercultural, interaction – is perceived as a highly charged space that is weighted with meaning. Homi Bhabha has gone so far as to suggest that it is this space that 'carries the burden of the meaning of culture' (Bhabha 1994: 38).

Despite its resistance to definition, other attempts have been made at defining this in-between space. They include Emily Apter's explanation of the term 'translation zone' which she uses in her book that endeavours to engage with translation on a global scale:

> In fastening on the term 'zone' as a theoretical mainstay, the intention has been to imagine a broad intellectual topography that is neither the property of a single nation, nor an amorphous condition associated with postnationalism, but rather a zone of critical engagement that connects the 'l' and the 'n' of transLation and transNation.
>
> (Apter 2006: 5)

Apter is here drawing on the idea of the 'contact zone'. As formulated by Mary Louise Pratt, it is a space of encounter between peoples, a space in which discursive transformations can and do occur as different groups of people seek to represent themselves to one another. The contact zone may be a site of violence, oppression, and resistance or it may be a site of closer, less antagonistic exchange, but it remains a theoretical space in which cultural difference can be explored.

Apter also expands on the theory of cultural translation outlined by Homi Bhabha and considers the tension between theories of textual and cultural translation. What her book highlights is the growing

significance of the idea of translation as intercultural exchange in this century. In the first chapter entitled 'Translation after 9/11: Mistranslating the Art of War', she points out the massive shift of perspective in the aftermath of 9/11 when a crucial shortage of Arabic translators in the United States was suddenly exposed. After decades celebrating the rise and rise of global English, suddenly and violently the need to acknowledge the existence of other languages, other cultures, and other mindsets came sharply into focus.

Questions of equivalence, faithfulness, and accuracy once dominated thinking about translation, but the advent of Descriptive Translation Studies in the late 1970s broadened the discussion, and, by the end of the 1980s, questions of power relations, intercultural exchange, and cultural hierarchies had come to acquire prominence. At the same time that this process, known as the 'cultural turn' in Translation Studies, was taking place, postcolonial theorists, starting from a different disciplinary base, were using notions of translation very differently, effectively divorcing the idea of translation from its primarily linguistic dimension. In *Shame*, for example, Salman Rushdie reflects on the devising of the name 'Pakistan':

> It is well known that the term 'Pakistan,' an acronym, was originally thought up in England by a group of Muslim intellectuals . . . So it was a word born in exile which then went east, was borne-across, translated, and imposed itself upon history; a returning migrant, settling down on partitioned land, forming a palimpsest upon the past.
>
> (Rushdie 1989: 91)

In the above quotation, the idea of translation is explicitly linked to exile and migration, and, as Rushdie goes on to elaborate, besides the losses incurred, there are also gains to be achieved in being carried across. Permutations of this same notion of translation can be found, as well as in Homi Bhabha, already referred to above, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Robert Young.

At first sight, the thinking among postcolonial writers and critics appears to be coming from a place very different from much of the thinking by Translation Studies scholars. But, as Edwin Gentzler has argued, the perspectives to be found in Translation Studies and cultural translation are not so far removed from one another. The myth of the translator as a neutral party, as some kind of unaligned filter has been exploded, and the image of the servile translator is gradually being replaced by the image of the translator as an active force in the transfer of texts. Finally, as Gentzler avers, there is no

question but that postcolonial translation is having an impact on our definitions of what translation is and does:

> Postcolonial translation does not mean some sort of return to an essentialist, precolonial state; rather, it involves complex encounters with new situations, and contemporary translators are increasingly open to mixing textures, beliefs, materials, and languages . . . hybrid sites of new meaning open up; new borders are encountered and crossed, often with surprisingly *creative* results.
>
> (Gentzler 2002: 217)

Conclusion

Postcolonial writers, translators, and literary critics and theorists are, in different ways, consistently engaging with translation. The politics of language is fundamental to any reassessment of literary history, and postcolonial thought inevitably involves relationships between languages, hence translation. Translation may be implicit, as writers struggle to express themselves in one language with another running through their body, or it may be explicit as translators transfer texts across boundaries of language and culture, or it may be figurative, as a site of exchange, a hybrid space charged with multiple meanings. There is room for much more dialogue between disciplines and between writers and translators, but there is at least now a shared recognition that translation is crucial to our understanding of the world we inhabit, not some marginal activity undertaken by people with lesser literary talents. Translation is, and always has been, powerful. We are now coming to recognize that fact.

One strand running through the work of the Australian poet, Les Murray, is a fascination with the idea of a translated identity, and he explores both his Scottishness and his Australianness in many of his poems. In 'Lachlan Macquarie's First Language' he brilliantly explores the loss and gain within a history of migration. Murray's words will serve as my conclusion:

> *The Governor and the seer are talking at night in a room*
> *beyond formality. They are not speaking English.*
> What were Australians like, then, in the time to come?
> They had lost the Gaelic in them. Had they become a nation?
> They had, and a people. A verandah was their capitol
> though they spoke of a town where they kept the English seasons.

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Chapter 5

Nation and Nationalisms

John McLeod

The concept of nation and the concomitant advocacy of various nationalisms have offered colonized peoples significant political and imaginative resources in contesting the authority and legitimacy of the European empires. As an idea or way of thinking, the nation has afforded colonized peoples the chance to conceive of and represent themselves as coherent imagined communities, bonded by common qualities and attributes. It has equally functioned as a major tool of political resistance: the advocacy on the part of the colonized of their belonging to national communities was in many cases the primary means by which anti-colonial political resistance was forged. Such political movements, or nationalisms, occurred in diverse forms throughout the colonized world (hence my preference for the plural term throughout this chapter), from the relatively large-scale European settler colonies of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand to so-called Third World locations, such as India and Nigeria, where indigenous peoples were governed by small sections of European colonialists. Indeed, it is important to grasp from the outset that, as the editors of *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (1992) explain, 'there is no privileged narrative of the nation, no "nationalism in general" such that any single model could prove adequate to its myriad and contradictory historical forms' (Parker et al. 1992: 3).

In postcolonial thought, the historical legacies of nation and nationalisms today are mixed. Noting the ways in which colonialism frequently fragmented and reorganized indigenous communities through violent

acts of settlement, Tamara Sivanandan has argued that anti-colonial nationalisms were both politically effective and culturally regenerative: they 'served to reclaim or imagine forms of community again, to forge collective political identities [. . .] to challenge colonial rule', and also functioned 'as an instrument of cultural resistance against a racist colonial discourse which had long denied all cultural value to its subject peoples, claiming them culturally incapable, therefore, of ruling themselves in the modern world' (Sivanandan 2004: 49). Benita Parry has similarly defended 'the import of liberation struggles conducted in the name of nationalism' which were 'oriented towards the task of reclaiming community from the fragmentation and denigration attendant on colonialism' (Parry 2004: 10). For such critics, the ideas of nation and nationalisms equipped colonized peoples with many vital resources for contesting the ideological, material, and cultural apparatus of European colonialism. For other critics, however, the legitimacy of anti-colonial nationalist struggles is fatally compromised by the often illiberal and confining characteristics of both nation and nationalisms, which are deemed as inevitably ill-equipped to deliver the freedom and suffrage they promise. Paul Gilroy regards such dissident nationalist politics as part of a wider field of 'authoritarian solutions that offered shortcuts to solidarity' (Gilroy 2000: 38–9) for subjected peoples which, like the advocacy of racial distinction by black power movements, could never deliver radically new forms of political and cultural freedom. This alleged fine line between liberation and authoritarianism as regards nation and nationalisms has worried many thinkers in postcolonial studies.

How, we might ask, can such starkly divergent attitudes concerning nation and nationalisms in the colonized world co-exist in contemporary postcolonial studies? As this chapter will suggest, postcolonial literary culture has engendered comparable debates – at different times and in divergent cultural contexts – concerning the relative benefits and problems of nation and nationalisms, specifically as effecting a viable means of anti-colonial resistance and revolution. These debates often echo (but do not neatly replicate) the wider critical conflicts regarding the phenomena pointed out above – conflicts which frequently concern the extent to which nation and nationalisms ultimately engender lasting liberty or continued coercion, sovereignty or servitude, freedom or censorship. As we shall see across settler, Third World, and diaspora contexts, postcolonial literature has frequently opened a vital cultural space, often within the same text, where a revolutionary rendering of the colonized nation is both forged and challenged, and

where the political and cultural goals of anti-colonial nationalisms are both acknowledged and questioned.

The idea of the nation

As Timothy Brennan explains, the nation 'is both historically determined and general. As a term, it refers both to the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous – the "*natio*" – a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging' (Brennan 1990: 45). This key statement establishes the nation as simultaneously concrete and imaginary. On the one hand, it is a matter of polity and government: as I shall explain below, the modern nation-state can be understood as the predominant mode of sovereignty which emerged during modernity, and which bases its legitimacy and territorial boundaries upon distinctly national imaginings of collectivity and belonging. On the other hand, the nation engages the intellect or the emotions, bridging and binding the public pursuit of sovereignty with the individuated realms of subjectivity and psychology. Similarly, discourses of nationalism frequently mediate between (and often deliberately blur) ideological and subjective spheres. As Tom Nairn writes, 'Whenever we talk about nationalism, we normally find ourselves talking before too long about "feelings", "instincts", supposed desires and hankerings to "belong", and so on' (Nairn 1981: 334). Ideas of nation and nationalisms must be understood as potently fusing public and private matters, bonding together issues of power with the mechanics of representation and affect. Hence, the advocacy of, or challenge to, a nation and its identity – as in the raising or burning of a flag – can quickly become an emotionally charged affair.

Most commentators agree that the establishment of nations as sovereign entities is at the heart of the advent of modernity, and point to nation and nationalisms as fundamentally European-born concepts. They are inseparable from the rise of capitalism, colonial expansion, and the emergence of industrial production in Europe from the late sixteenth century onwards. Benedict Anderson dates their emergence to the eighteenth century, when sacred models of power were superseded by secular modes of government: 'in Western Europe the eighteenth century marks not only the dawn of the age of nationalism but the dusk of religious modes of thought' (Anderson 1991: 11). European modernity signalled the demise of feudal systems of government, often absolutist and patrician, and the establishment of democratic

forms of state power in which the concept of the nation superseded the divine right of the monarch to rule, and in which power and authority were subject (in theory, at least) to electoral contest rather than derived from inheritance or traditions of 'noble' blood. These novel forms of government and power required new myths to sustain their legitimacy, and it is here that the 'ancient and nebulous' image of the nation emerged as a potent idea, aligning the subjectivity and psychology of individuals with the sense of belonging to a common people, in whose shared interests the nation-state appeared to function.

As Anderson goes on to argue, the construction of a distinctly national 'people' was aided by new technologies of representation in modern Europe, which were changing the ways in which individuals shaped and shared their sense of collectivity. In Anderson's influential phrase, the nation is an 'imagined political community' (Anderson 1991: 6), and its perpetual and common imagining by large groups of people, most of whom will never meet each other, is central to its endurance. All forms of community are to an extent imagined, perhaps, but in Anderson's view it is the particular style of imagining which distinguishes the nation conceived distinctly as 'a deep, horizontal comradeship' (Anderson 1991: 7). This style of imagining is epitomized in the novel and the newspaper, literary forms which became established in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Drawing upon the work of Walter Benjamin, Anderson argues that characteristic of each of these genres is the production of different places and disparate moments of time as simultaneously existing so that the reader of the daily newspaper, of the novel, comes to imagine himself or herself as linked to a temporality and terrain equally inhabited by others, and hence to a wider community of people.

As Anderson goes on to elaborate, that representation and culture have a central role in upholding (and, contrariwise, contesting) the legitimacy and survival of the nation is also due to the growth of printing from the sixteenth century onwards, and the extending of readerships and literacy in Europe, crucially through the establishment of a standard print language which all vernacular speakers could understand and use to communicate with others. Speakers of different French or English or Spanish vernaculars, for example, 'became capable of comprehending one another via print and paper. In the process, they gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people in their particular language-field, and at the same time that *only those* hundreds of thousands, or millions, so belonged' (Anderson 1991: 44). Indeed, language was one of the most

important ways in which the national people's commonality as well as its exclusive limits were defined.

These new ways of imagining community were bound up with, and contributed to, the transformation of sovereignty. As Hardt and Negri argue, in many ways the concept of the nation took on the metaphysical character previously assigned to the exceptional body of the monarch (Hardt and Negri 2000: 95). Modern sovereignty became indistinguishable from national sovereignty: the nation became the exclusive modality in which power was contested and pursued, often as part of a liberating attempt to establish suffrage for the many by challenging the privileges and authority of an elite few. The revolutions in Europe which challenged residual models of royal command (such as the French Revolution) were politically conceptualized as popular manifestations of nationalism: the 'spiritual identity of the nation' was prized and pursued for the common good of the nation's people, for whom citizenship and freedom (rather than royal subjection) became high political and philosophical aims.

Yet such liberal claims conceal an exclusionary mechanism which has made the advocacy of nation and nationalisms so often a contradictory, and much less democratic, affair. Let us recall Anderson's remark cited above, concerning how Europe's new national subjects 'gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people in their particular language-field, and at the same time that *only those* hundreds of thousands, or millions, so belonged' (Anderson 1991: 44). In italicizing the phrase 'only those' here, Anderson importantly betrays the necessarily exclusionary remit of the nation, and exposes a serious contradiction at its heart, one which also inflected the various forms of European nationalism as well as anti-colonial nationalisms. The nation and its people may uphold egalitarian notions of liberty, community, citizenship and suffrage, to be sure, yet the nation has also to be exclusive ('only those') in order to function. Nations invent divisive borders, coercive regulations, notions of authenticity and illegitimacy which impact upon the matters of belonging and group membership. The nation is always imagined as a finite space, occupying a certain terrain, inclusive of a particular people, 'us' rather than 'them'. Inescapably then, the processes both of imagining the nation and concretizing its administrative authority through the establishment of the nation-state are perhaps fated to be caught between contrary impulses: democratic, egalitarian, and inclusive on the one hand, and domineering, chauvinistic, and exclusive on the other.

In turning to the modern ideas of nation and nationalisms as part of anti-colonial dissidence, therefore, colonized peoples inherited a highly-effective way of thinking about individual and group identity, as well as a form of juridical government which at one level at least promised equality, liberty from foreign oppression, and universal suffrage. A number of anti-colonial leaders – such as Michael Collins in Ireland, Jawaharlal Nehru in India, and Nelson Mandela in South Africa – found in discourses of nationalism an effective means to articulate and fuse together the political and emotional aspirations of oppressed peoples. Yet the contradictions of nation and nationalisms were also maintained in the new forms of anti-colonial nationalisms, making their political pursuit, as well as their exploration in literature, often troubled affairs.

The national borders of most (once-)colonized countries have been imagined and imposed by European powers, who reorganized and violated indigenous mappings of terrain. There are no naturally recurring phenomena which inevitably divide, say, India from Pakistan or Bangladesh; the physical terrain and borders of the lands that have come to be called Brazil, Canada, Nigeria, Haiti, for example, were created by, and often have been inherited from, the European empires. So, as Gayatri C. Spivak argues, the nation is best considered a concept-metaphor 'for which no historically adequate referent may be advanced from postcolonial space' (Spivak 1993: 60). Spivak uses the term 'catachresis' to define a concept-metaphor without an adequate referent; in her parlance, the nation as a 'catachresis' will always be derived from European colonialism and can never be considered a concrete or true entity anchored in any pre-existing realities of once-colonized locations, past or present. In mounting opposition to colonialism through the European-derived rhetoric of the nation, nationhood, and nationalisms, anti-colonial thought must inevitably use the concept-metaphors which have driven colonial subjugation:

> the political claims that are most urgent in decolonized space are tacitly recognized as coded within the legacy of imperialism: nationhood, constitutionality, citizenship, democracy, even culturalism. Within the historical frame of exploration, colonization, decolonization – what is being effectively reclaimed is a series of regulative political concepts, the *supposedly* authoritative narrative of the production of which was written elsewhere, in the social formations of Western Europe.
>
> (Spivak 1993: 60)

Of course, even though it is ultimately a fiction, the nation still matters and retains urgent political import in people's lives, while the

political claims to citizenship and national self-determination on the part of oppressed peoples are no less important despite their derivation in European thought. And as Spivak's use of the phrase '*supposedly* authoritative narrative' hints, the unique forms of anti-colonial nationalism can be quite different to European models: ideas can alter as they move from place to place and across different historical contexts. Furthermore, as Partha Chatterjee has shown in his work on resistance to British rule in India, insurgent and democratic forms of anti-colonial nationalism emerged in the combination of the derivative discourse of nationalism and local forms of knowledge, political ambitions, and historical circumstances (Chatterjee 1986). Nationalist thought in the colonial world is often *not* purely imitative of European thought but can be something else besides.

According to Robert J.C. Young, 'anti-colonial nationalism usually employed some form of nationalism in the service of national liberation. Such nationalism, however, was [. . .] a nuanced strategic way of articulating an anti-colonial hegemony. It did not necessarily comprise the oppressive forms and practices that occur when nationalism is pursued as an end in itself' (Young 2001: 172). Young's words are important to remember so that we distinguish anti-colonial nationalisms from the other kinds of nationalisms which have emerged in world history. That said, and as we shall briefly contemplate from the perspective of postcolonial literature, many anti-colonial nationalisms have nonetheless struggled with the 'oppressive forms and practices' which nationalism perpetually risks incurring, so that even its most uniquely nuanced and strategic examples have been threatened with problems.

Settler nationalisms

The appropriation of ideas of nation and nationalisms was a feature of several white settler populations. For example, from the late nineteenth century Australian settlers came to think of themselves as distinct in identity from the British and, by using the concept-metaphor of the nation, united the continent's various settled territories – New South Wales, Queensland, etc. – into one imagined political community, that is, 'Australia'. The function of literature in imagining the nation and a national people was vital. Creative texts often opened a space where feelings of community and belonging were embedded in particular historical experiences, and in specific landscapes deemed

part of, and mythologized as, the common way of life of the new nation's people.

To take an example: in the 1890s, a number of writers associated with an Australian newspaper called *The Bulletin* began to investigate a specifically Australian national identity which made white settlers distinct. In his poem 'Old Australian Ways' (1902), A.B. ('Banjo') Paterson contrasted the unadventurous familiar environment of England with the exploratory excitements afforded by both Australia and being Australian:

> The narrow ways of English folk
> Are not for such as we;
> They bear the long-accustomed yoke
> Of staid conservancy:
> But all our roads are new and strange,
> And through our blood there runs
> The vagabonding love of change
> That drove us westward of the range
> And westward of the suns.
> (Paterson 1998: 175)

The 'ways' investigated in this poem are not just the behaviour and customs of white Australians, joined together through their collective cultural conduct, but also their physical progress through and conquest of the Australian terrain. Much of the poem turns on laying an imaginary border between England and Australia, with the English united by and condemned for their safe and narrow existence. Australians, however, are joined by a common rejection of English conventionality and by the nurturing of feelings linked to adventure and daring, evidenced by their common 'love' for change and exploration. This new national people is presented in pseudo-heroic terms, conquering the 'strange' landscape through the noble acts of discovery and settlement. Note how such commonality is clinched in distinctly physiological terms as Paterson speaks of 'our blood'. Here he uses one of the most common metaphors of the nation in order to forge a sense of the nation's people as forming a distinctly filial community, almost as if they are part of a common and exclusive race (myths of blood are rarely far from notions of racial difference). Paterson's poem carefully and craftily converts the coincidences of individual experience into a community of affect and blood, where the lyric 'I' is replaced by the collective pronoun which speaks of and for a nation ('*our* roads are new and strange', 'that drove *us* westward of the range'). The resulting

sense of Australianness is both expansive and exclusive: if the English are conservative and narrow, then Australians (like Australia) are heroic and free. The poem weaves together emotional and ideological spheres in its attempt to establish the legitimacy and primacy of the new nation, while at the same time denying its newness through the advocacy of such 'old' Australian ways.

The gathering of such nationalist ways of thinking is evidenced at the time by a growing body of literary representations written by Australian settlers, such as Miles Franklin's novel *My Brilliant Career* (1901), Henry Lawson's poetry, and A.G. Stephens' anthologies, *The Bulletin Reciter* (1901) and *The Bulletin Story Book* (1901). So it is possible to see how, by the beginning of the twentieth century, many Australian settlers had come to question the continuing political authority of (in this instance) Britain over 'their' lands. The utilitarian goals of nation and nationalisms meant that there was only a short step from imagining oneself as belonging to a nation to the pursuit of national self-determination and government: Australia's existence as a distinct nation began in 1901 when its six major territories were integrated to form the Commonwealth of Australia, a dominion of the British Empire. Yet the contradictions at the heart of the nation can never be evaded, perhaps, and Australia's fortunes as a postcolonial nation bear their presence. The success of Paterson's imagined Australian community, bonded by blood and 'vagabonding love', depends on the idea of *terra nullius* – the belief that the landscape of Australia was empty space prior to the advent of European settlement in the late eighteenth century. But those 'new and strange' roads which formed part of the new Australian 'range' were constructed on and through Aboriginal lands, and explored with little care for the rights or cultures of Australia's Aborigines. The Aborigines were never imagined as part of the new Australian people, and imperious myths of race and civilization – entirely in keeping with nationalist aspirations – were mobilized to confine, control, and destroy Aboriginal communities. As Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra argue, in its formation the nation 'adopted the classical attitudes of imperialism in its treatment of the Aboriginal people of Australia. Moreover, this crucial imperialist enterprise was not incorporated at all into the national myth, which could accommodate this major threat to national legitimacy only by not mentioning the matter' (Hodge and Mishra 1991: xiii). The seemingly egalitarian goals of settler nationalism in Australia were compromised by the requirements of exclusivity and selectivity common to all ideas of the nation but which serviced here a particularly

grim example of discrimination. The foundation of settler nations often depended on keeping silent about existing indigenous peoples and their cultures. How, we might ask, can such starkly divergent attitudes concerning nation and nationalisms in the colonized world co-exist in contemporary postcolonial studies?

Alternatively, if indigenous cultures were to be acknowledged, the tendency was often to celebrate and endorse the heroic colonial endeavours of European settlers against the perceived threat of indigenous peoples considered savage, barbaric, and often expendable. In a Southern African context, Michael Chapman explains how the adventure romances of Sir Henry Rider Haggard – including *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) and *She* (1887) – depicted 'initiations into manhood, curiosity about native tribes, the defeat of evil witch doctors, the triumph of science, the superiority of Christian values, and the worth of protestant industry' (Chapman 1996: 130). Other less sensational renderings of Southern Africa in the late nineteenth century attended to the ways in which European settler life in the region raised difficult questions of identity and belonging for settlers. Olive Schreiner's novel, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), for example, is often concerned with 'a radical "inauthenticity": a mismatch of behaviour and convention' (Chapman 1996: 135) on the part of settlers. Such feelings of inauthenticity speak to the problematic dislocation between settler peoples and the places of settlement, where the presence of indigenous communities and cultures challenges nationalist attempts to domesticate the settled terrain as rightfully 'home'. In Canadian literature, writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Duncan Campbell Scott, Archibald Lampman, Stephen Leacock and R.J.C. Stead, explored the travails of settler life, often through metropolitan-derived literary forms, in an attempt to articulate the distinctive experiences of settler life in Canada. Scott's poetry was at times concerned with the Amerindian or First Nations people of Canada, yet his representations often turned on unhappy colonial stereotypes of indigenous peoples as savage and primitive. In the early years of the twentieth century, Scott worked for the Canadian Government's Department of Indian Affairs which was concerned with the at-times brutal 'assimilation' of First Nations people into European settler society. Scott's dual existence as both a poet and public servant of Canada starkly epitomizes the ways in which writers and their work could be complicit in, as well as resource imaginatively, the illiberal goals of settler nationalisms in a number of territories.

To return to the example of Australia, writers since federation have come to think more deeply about the imperialistic and illiberal dynamics of imagining the nation. But this does not necessarily involve a dismissal of the nation and discourses of nationalism. Indeed, many postcolonial texts share with Paterson an inquiry into what it means to be a national subject, an 'Australian', but explore critically some of the tensions between what Homi K. Bhabha has termed the 'pedagogical and the performative' (Bhabha 1994: 146) elements of narrating the nation. As Bhabha sees it, nations require official discourses which plot the emergence and history of the nation, and which define the characteristics and requirements of nationhood for its people. They also require the people to coordinate their subjective behaviour with such pedagogical protocols and perpetually rehearse in their daily lives the nation's rituals. This performative element introduces not only repetition but also contingency into narrating the nation which potentially clash with the pedagogical demands of nationhood: 'The scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a coherent national culture [. . .] In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative' (Bhabha 1994: 145). This split between the pedagogical and the performative, which Bhabha considers to be at the heart of the nation's instability and precariousness, has often preoccupied postcolonial representations of the nation. In several instances they have opened a critical vista on the postcolonial nation by exploring the lack of synchronicity between the received myths of the nation and subjective engagements with the nation.

Consider, for example, Randolph Stow's novel *The Merry-Go-Round in the Sea* (1965) which offers a compelling account of the simultaneous formation and disintegration of the idea of Australia in its depiction of Rob Coram, a young Australian child growing up in the 1940s, and his older cousin, Rick Maplestead, an Australian soldier and sometime prisoner-of-war in Malaya. In the figure of Rob, Stow presents a young boy undergoing the process of being inducted into a pedagogical narrative of national identity; while Rick's soldiering on behalf, and in defence, of Australia offers a sobering meditation on the tight hold which that sense of national identity has over its citizens. Rick's experiences of violence, however, were to trigger a gradual disillusionment with both Australia specifically and the idea of the nation in general.

Rob's induction, which takes the form chiefly of a deepening acquaintance with the landscape, teaches him to think about Australia and himself in a particular way. At the same time, the awkward questions he asks as a child expose the historical silences and concealments which are required by the settler community to construct itself in terms of a national people. His family proudly manufacture an historical narrative of respectability which turns on their descent from worthy, rebellious Celtic figures linked to the Jacobite rebellions in Britain, rather than from the sordid history of transportation and Australia's founding convict population. Yet Rob's childish banter with his grandmother exposes other stories of the nation often kept in shadow. During one conversation, he mentions hearing on the radio an account of the Eureka Stockade of 1854 when gold miners in Ballarat, revolted against their lack of rights. This causes his grandmother some embarrassment as her father had been involved in the revolt. Rob's subsequent questions expose further moments of discomfort for his grandmother:

> Blood, the boy was thinking. Blood was mysterious.
> 'Have I got any nigger blood?' he asked.
> 'Of course not,' his grandmother said, shocked.
> 'Have I got any convict blood?'
> 'Certainly not,' said his grandmother.
> 'If I had convict blood and nigger blood,' the boy said, thinking it out, 'I'd be related to just about everyone in Australia.'
>
> (Stow 1968: 96)

In addition to touching here upon Australia's profoundly unrespectable lawless past, Rob brings to light the presence of the Aborigines which disturbs the legitimacy of the settlers' view of Australia as *terra nullius*, and which shows how the settlers' racist demonization of the other discredits their humanity and their place in the national community. Rob's musing upon the mystery of blood, as well as his grandmother's shocked response, make visible the ways in which myths of Australian identity require a brutalizing discourse of racial hierarchy. In depicting a young boy struggling subjectively with the pedagogical demands of the nation – where race, romanticism and respectability offer the foundations of Australianness – Stow artfully exposes the very things which such demands are meant to conceal: a sordid past of criminality, disrepute, and hostility to the Aborigines.

Earlier in the novel, Rob visits a cave with his family in which they find a series of handprints made by Aborigines. Rob places his hand

over a print made by a child: 'He felt the cold rock under his hand, where a dead boy's hand had once rested. Time and change had removed this child from his country, and his world was not one world, but had in it camps of the dispossessed' (Stow 1968: 56). Delineating Rob's action, Stow exposes both the mechanics of settler nationalism – the covering up of Aboriginal culture with the settlers' presence – as well as a vital consciousness of the 'dispossessed' peoples which settlement has sordidly created. In other words, Stow's novel offers its own performative intervention in the pedagogical perpetuation of the nation by exposing the plural histories – convict, working-class, Aboriginal – often left out of nationalist representations of Australia.

Stow's critical vista is consolidated by the figure of Rick, who returns to Australia having witnessed a series of grim atrocities as first a soldier and then a prisoner of war. His postwar disillusionment calls into question macho myths of the valiant Australian settler, and he comes to question the legitimacy of nationhood in stark and radical ways, in particular the 'heroic nostalgia' (Stow 1968: 165) which shapes the ways in which war is enthusiastically recorded and narrated to growing children. Under such circumstances, pedagogical notions of national belonging, pride, and fellowship take on a distinctly incarcerating character, which Rick rejects along with the role of gallant national hero:

> 'I can't stand,' Rick said, 'this – ah, this arrogant mediocrity. The shoddiness and the wowserism and smug wild-boyos in the bars. And the unspeakable bloody boredom of belonging to a country that keeps up a sort of chorus: Relax, mate, relax, don't make the pace too hot. Relax, you bastard, before you get clobbered.'
>
> (Stow 1968: 273)

But while the novel ends with Rick's performative rejection of the nation, it also depicts in its closing chapters Rob's gradual loss of his childish inquisitiveness and his acceptance of the pedagogies of Australia and Australianness – like a latter-day Paterson, Rob derogates the British as those 'who had declined to found America and Canada and South Africa and New Zealand and Australia' (Stow 1968: 216). With Rob's youthful enthusiasm offset against the veteran Rick's disillusionment at the novel's end, there emerges a vision of the nation as repeatedly revolving through cycles of enthusiasm and disenchantment, turning as perpetually as the illusory merry-go-round which at the novel's opening the young Rob thought he could

spy in the sea. *The Merry-go-round in the Sea* remains caught in the very contradictions of the nation it explores, engendering both a commitment to and critique of Australia and its people.

Third World nationalisms

Decolonization in Africa, the Caribbean, and South Asia was a distinctly different matter from the process in the settler colonies, although once again the concepts of nation and nationalisms remained primary in the pursuit of independence from European control. Many areas in these regions were never settled by large European populations, but administered instead by a small section of European elite, often in co-operation with a newly-created indigenous middle class, and backed up by military force. The several kinds of anti-colonial nationalism which sprang up to contest European rule were markedly militant in tone, though strategies differed ranging from non-violent forms of civil disobedience, as in Mahatma Gandhi's campaign of *satyagraha* in 1940s India, to fierce armed revolt, as in the Mau Mau uprisings in 1960s Kenya. That said, as in settler literatures, postcolonial writing concerning nation and nationalisms in these regions has also attempted to open up a distinctly critical vista by assessing the achievements and pitfalls of anti-colonial nationalist movements once colonialism has formerly ended. At times it can offer a dark vision of the newly-independent nation in the wake of European rule.

In Africa, the forging of anti-colonial militancy through a nationalist agenda and rhetoric was advocated by a number of important intellectuals, no more so than the Martiniquan-born psychologist, Frantz Fanon, whose support of anti-colonial nationalism in the French-controlled Maghreb also proved highly influential in sub-Saharan anglophone locations. In a series of essays collected in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon supported the necessity of violent revolt in colonial situations and argued for the creation of new forms of national consciousness appropriate to the tasks of emancipating African territories from colonialism, and equipping the people with the necessary means to build new, independent postcolonial nations free from the corruptions of the old. Dismissing both a generalized Pan-Africanism and a black politics of resistance as lacking the nuances to address the different challenges faced by the divergent nations of Africa, Fanon's support of anti-colonial nationalism also made clear the important role which culture must play in the forging of the new

nation, and saw cultural endeavours as of a part with the political and military contestation of colonialism.

In his essay 'On National Culture', Fanon noted the derogation of indigenous cultures by colonialism and explored the role which the native intellectual could play in revolutionizing culture in the colony. He proposed that insurgent anti-colonial cultures moved through three phases. In the first, the native intellectual tries to prove his humanity by assimilating and copying the culture of the colonizers – its artistic genres, traditions of representation, and so forth. After such 'unqualified assimilation' (Fanon 1967: 179) comes a second phase, in which the native intellectual turns back to the cultural traditions of his people but tends to immerse himself in the achievements of bygone days, as if their very existence is enough to contest colonialism's prejudice. In Fanon's view, the native intellectual is still cut off from his people in this phase, looking back at a vanished old world rather than concerning himself with the urgent challenges of the new. Finally, in the third or 'fighting phase' (Fanon 1967: 179), the native intellectual reinterprets the cultural resources of the past in terms of the challenges of the present, in order to help produce a radical, dynamized and transformed cultural milieu which both shapes and services the revolutionary struggles of the people.

Fanon's vision of the native intellectual working in the service of the nation's revolution and its people tended to smooth over any possible conflicts between intellectuals and the revolutionary masses; while his vision of a national culture, revolutionary in intent, left unresolved the extent to which such cultural endeavours are meant primarily to support or critique the actions of the people and their leaders. Certainly Fanon was conscious of the pitfalls of what he termed 'national consciousness', and he wrote powerfully against the potential for newly-independent nations to replicate colonial rule by simply installing an indigenous bourgeois government which was as imperious and self-serving as the old colonial administration. He argued that 'The living expression of the nation is the moving consciousness of the whole of the people; it is the coherent, enlightened action of men and women. [. . .] The national government, if it wants to be national, ought to govern by the people and for the people, for the outcasts and by the outcasts' (Fanon 1967: 165). Fanon knew that this egalitarian vision of the nation, in part familiar to us from its European revolutionary antecedents, was always in danger of being defeated by an exclusive, partisan and prejudicial version of the nation – one run by and concerned with the whims of

an elite ruling minority, rather than the rights and needs of the people in general.

Much African literature in the wake of independence accepted the Fanonian responsibility to take as its subject the emergent postcolonial nation and its people, and assist in forging national consciousness. Many writers did so, however, from a primarily critical position and without subscribing to a particular nationalist agenda – indeed, much postcolonial writing about the nation is deliberately non-nationalist in its approach, and we must be wary of interpreting such literature uncritically with recourse to a Fanonian framework. For example, in his novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), written during the same period as Fanon was formulating his ideas, the Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe, offers a critical vista on the fortunes of a Igbo village, Umuofia, and depicts in its closing chapters the first comings of European colonialism to the region in the shape of Christian missionaries. Refusing to revel nostalgically in the village's pre-colonial past, Achebe depicts resolutely a non-idyllic community with its own tensions and problems, both internally and in its relations with the neighbouring villages. The novel's major figure, Okonkwo, is a problematic figure, whose muscular personality and fear of seeming weak in the eyes of other men leads him to a number of rash and violent acts that result in his being banished from Umuofia. Neither an idealized nor laudable hero, Okwonko's characterization enables Achebe to ask significant questions about the conduct of Nigerian peoples in the past and present. Achebe is keen to engage with Igbo culture in all of its complexity. With even-handedness he can be said to remind his readers that European colonialism is not entirely responsible for all the crises which beset Umuofia. Although the novel assists in the postcolonial imagining of Nigeria, it does not assume a distinctly nationalist or revolutionary position; indeed, much of the novel challenges the kind of heroic masculinity which has so often appeared in more militant kinds of anti-colonial nationalisms. Achebe's rendering of Umuofia's history serves as a parable, rather than an accurate narrative, of the nation's difficult past and present conflicts. It assists in forging and dignifying a distinctly postcolonial cultural consciousness for its Nigerian readers, where indigenous culture is considered to be at least the equal of European cultures.

Achebe's work is motivated on the one hand by a desire to contest literary representations of African peoples which he had read with great indignation in the work of writers such as Joseph Conrad and Joyce Cary; on the other hand it pursues the cultural rehabilitation of his

fellow Nigerians, Igbo or otherwise. As Achebe wrote in 1965: 'I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past – with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them' (Achebe 1988: 30). As *Things Fall Apart* makes clear, the writer in the newly-emerging postcolonial nation has at least two responsibilities: these are the cultural regeneration of the colonized location, and the maintenance of a critical, unromantic eye to the imperfections and difficulties in the nation's colonial past and its transitional present. Arguably, it is the second of these responsibilities which has often helped to keep postcolonial literature about the nation tangential to the aims and operations of political forms of anti-colonial nationalism.

Indeed, as independence proceeded in locations across sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean from the late 1950s, many writers pursued an increasingly condemnatory representation of nation, often alarmed by the conduct of the new ruling elites who, as Fanon had warned in 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness', were liable to be as oppressive in wielding power as were colonialist forces (1967 [1961]: 119–65). In his novel, *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), the Ghanaian writer, Ayi Kwei Armah, explored the impact on ordinary Ghanaian people of a crooked, self-interested, and worryingly neo-colonial government. The novel concerns an unnamed central character, referred to only as the man, whose anonymity suggests both the government's indifference to the individual lives of Ghanaians as well as the universality of his story – the man could perhaps be anyone attempting to make an honest living in the new nation mired in corruption. The plot revolves around the man's refusal to accept a bribe – he works as an administrator for the railways and harbour authorities – and the difficulties this creates for him: his wife chastises him at home for refusing to bend the rules to improve their squalid living conditions, and he suffers at work for his honesty. Within the novel, the anti-colonial nationalist leaders are condemned as sycophants of the West deeply out of touch with the people's suffering: 'How could they understand that even those who have not been anywhere know that the black man who has spent his life fleeing from himself into whiteness has no power if the white master gives him none? How were these leaders to know that while they were climbing up to shit in their people's faces, their people had seen their arseholes and drawn away in disgusted laughter?' (Armah 1976: 82). The excremental imagery in this quotation pervades the novel as a whole; it suggests

that the postcolonial nation is soiled by the dirt and filth of corruption, dishonesty and treachery, and is as disreputable as the colonial state which preceded it.

The novel's title, taken a from a graffito which the man sees, implies that the new dawn promised by independence has yet to be realized and remains a deferred hope. In the decades since colonialism formally ended in many Third World locations, it has seemed at times as if the worries of writers, such as Fanon and Armah, about the emergence of exploitative forms of national authority have proved all too true. The unhappy fortunes of several once-colonized countries – many of which have suffered costly civil wars, as in Nigeria and Sri Lanka, or experienced ghastly, murderous dictatorships as in Idi Amin's Uganda or Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire – have led in recent decades to wide disenchantment among postcolonial intellectuals and creative writers with the ideas of nation and nationalisms as effective anti-colonial or revolutionary weapons.

Metropolitan critiques

According to Hardt and Negri, whereas in the struggle for freedom from colonial rule, the claim to nationhood has 'affirmed the dignity of the people and legitimated the demand for independence and equality' (Hardt and Negri 2000: 106), the tendency has been that once 'the nation begins to form as a sovereign state, its progressive functions all but vanish' (Hardt and Negri 2000: 109). This narrative, which plots the demise of the fortunes of nation and nationalisms, is indicative of much postcolonial thinking these days but has also been contested by several Marxist voices in the field (as the opening pages of this essay evidenced). Neil Lazarus, for one, has complained that the current scholarly dismissals of anti-colonial nationalist movements risks forgetting their historical significance and achievements:

> contemporary theorists seem increasingly given to suggesting that the national liberation movements never were what they were – that is, that they were always more concerned with the consolidation of elite power than with the empowering of the powerless, with the extension of privilege rather than with its overthrow, and so on.
>
> (Lazarus 1999: 78)

Consequently, the different examples of anti-colonial nationalism across the globe have found themselves lumped together under a generalized,

pejorative banner, and critics have ignored the fact that, as Robert J.C. Young reminds us, 'anti-colonial nationalisms are by no means all the same' (Young 2001: 171). Unless this fact is recognized, the predominantly theoretical condemnation of nation and nationalisms can lead at times to a situation where both colonialism and anti-colonial nationalisms are seen as equivalent. An example is Simon Gikandi's argument that 'the "founders" of the new postcolonial nations legitimated their authority by claiming the agency of pure modernity (even as they sang praise songs for precolonial traditions) not because they were attracted to the imperial project per se but because they had no real access to modes of knowledge outside the horizon of expectations established by empire' (Gikandi 1996: 18). If anti-colonial nationalisms are indistinguishable from colonialism in their essential make-up, so the argument goes, then they too require determined contestation within postcolonial studies.

Certainly, postcolonial studies in recent years has been marked by the gradual rejection of the ideas of nation and nationalisms on the grounds of their ultimately tyrannical and coercive characteristics (to the dismay of Marxist postcolonial thinkers), and this has occasionally meant that the important gains made by anti-colonial activists in the name of the nation are either forgotten or dismissed. Such thinking has often been promoted by critics with an affinity to migrant and diasporic communities and experiences in Europe and the USA, who from a minority viewpoint argue that geographical and imaginative border-crossings of migrants suggest new models of identity and belonging which eschew the unifying and homogenizing concepts of nation and nationalisms. Homi K. Bhabha's influential work, for example, has called attention to the '[c]ounter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries – both actual and conceptual – [and] disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which "imagined communities" are given essentialist identities' (Bhabha 1994: 149). Paul Gilroy's concept of the 'black Atlantic', which prizes the diverse and restlessly transformative 'compound culture' of black peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe that moves perpetually and untidily between different times and places, is underpinned by the desire 'to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity' (Gilroy 1993: 19). So, although a certain degree of controversy remains, the blanket dismissal of nation and nationalisms in postcolonial studies has become something of an orthodoxy, to the extent that postcolonial thought can often appear resolutely and cheerfully post-nationalist.

In terms of postcolonial literature, things are inevitably less clear-cut. Migrant and diasporic writers, even those who appear transnationally mobile and culturally itinerant, often seem to have a more acute sense of the nation's endurance and even necessity, despite calling attention to the many shortcomings of both nation and nationalisms from a metropolitan position. The Bombay-born novelist, Salman Rushdie, who migrated to England as a schoolboy, is perhaps the most familiar example of a writer who is deemed to articulate that which Bhabha has called 'the truest eye [which] may now belong to the migrant's double vision' (Bhabha 1994: 4). In foregrounding heterogeneity, hybridity, and displacement in his writing, as opposed to the unifying and homogenizing demands of imagined communities, Rushdie has taken the credit for inaugurating a new migrant and diasporic sensibility, placeless and perpetually mobile, which surpasses the contradictions and coercions of nation and nationalisms.

In *Midnight's Children* (1981), Rushdie offers an epic and wittily inventive depiction of the fortunes of twentieth-century India through the voice of the narrator Saleem Sinai, born at the very moment of Indian independence at midnight on 15 August 1947, and whose life is 'handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country' (Rushdie 1982: 9). Saleem's fantastical life-story enables Rushdie to plot some of the failures of India as a postcolonial nation as he sees them, but this does not necessarily mean that Rushdie gives up entirely on the concept and the ideal of India, in particular the secular model of the nation espoused by India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.

Saleem is one of no less than one thousand and one children born in the first hour in Indian independence, each of whom possesses remarkable magical powers. They form an imagined community in Saleem's mind when, owing to a bizarre accident, he discovers that he can telepathically communicate with all of them. They constitute what Saleem calls the Midnight Children's Conference, a parodic image of the fledgling nation which embodies its newness and exciting possibilities. Yet the Conference soon falls into factionalism, discontent, and squabbling, just as the Indian nation descends into international conflict and internal quarrels, culminating in the suspension of democratic institutions and procedures during the 'Emergency' declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on 25 June 1975. The novel's apocalyptic closing image is of fragmentation and dissolution, as Saleem's body violently disintegrates like the postcolonial nation into chaos and anarchy: 'they will trample me underfoot, the numbers

marching one two three, four hundred million five hundred six, reducing me to specks of voiceless dust' (Rushdie 1982: 463).

While the novel points to the failures of postcolonial India – its factionalism, communalism, and governmental authoritarianism – it retains and restates, at the level of literary form, an unshakeable faith in the nation as an egalitarian ideal. The Midnight Children's Conference figuratively expresses Rushdie's belief that 'the defining image of India is the crowd, and the crowd is by its very nature superabundant, heterogeneous, many things at once' (Rushdie 1991: 32). The novel's narrative form – restless, polyvocal, hyperbolic – reflects this superabundance. It weaves together a variety of narrative threads and recalls parodically a wealth of previous representations of India, South Asian and European, so that the term 'many-headed monster' (Rushdie 1982: 115) which Saleem uses to portray India's crowds seems equally useful in describing the text's manifold structure. Unquestionably *Midnight's Children* retains a faith in the Nehruvian ideals of India as a secular and egalitarian nation where many different peoples can live within one homeland. Rushdie's vision of the Indian nation is just as important to the novel's form as his dislocated, multicultural, and migrant sensibility: indeed, crucially, the novel does not reject the nation outright but redescribes it from a migrant point of view. *Midnight's Children* demonstrates that allegedly post-nationalist diasporic representations often do something more complex than dismiss the nation out of hand, and metropolitan representations of the nation can at times be quite closely aligned with some of the objectives of anti-colonial nationalisms.

Keeping this point in mind, it is perhaps useful to make an important distinction between national subjectivity and national citizenship. Certainly, many postcolonial writers have explored at length the new forms of subjectivity which far surpass the potentially exclusionary confines of national identity, and which reflect, culturally and nationally, plural experiences. As Shabine puts it in Derek Walcott's poem, 'The Schooner *Flight*', 'I had no nation now but the imagination' (Walcott 1992: 350). Yet the prizing of these new forms of subjectivity does not walk hand in hand with the outright rejection of the nation in political terms. Several writers have recognized the need to keep with the egalitarian ideals of the nation in demanding that migrants and their descendants are admitted to and should enjoy the rights guaranteed by national citizenship. For example, the St Kitts-born, British-raised novelist, Caryl Phillips, has written powerfully about how 'These days we are all unmoored. Our identities are fluid.

Belonging is a contested state. Home is a place riddled with vexing questions' (Phillips 2001a: 6). At the same time, he has paid tribute to the agency of migrants to remake nations, and he remains committed to a notion of national citizenship and culture which is inclusive of all, regardless of race or origin: 'I would argue that whereas George Orwell claimed that "It needs some very great disaster, such as prolonged subjugation by a foreign enemy, to *destroy* a national culture", the truth is that it needs some very great fortune such as continual waves of immigration to *create* a national culture' (Phillips 2001b: 281).

Phillips's two remarks are evidence of the extent to which the complex contradictions between the liberal and authoritarian tendencies embedded in ideas of nation, nationalisms, and national cultures continue to be played out in contemporary culture, far beyond the particular circumstances of anti-colonial nationalisms and in the new contexts of globalization and transnationalism. And while Bhabha, Gilroy, and others continue to cheerlead the benefits of diaspora in calling for a post-nationalist world, Sudesh Mishra reminds us that diasporic locations can also become 'the smithy where menacing forms of ethno-nationalisms are ritually hammered out' (Mishra 2006: 76). In a seemingly globalized and transnational world, and as postcolonial literature is well aware, the ambiguous ideas of nation and nationalisms endure.

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Chapter 6

Feminism and Womanism

Nana Wilson-Tagoe

There is a fundamental level at which the critical and political perspectives of postcolonialism, feminism, and womanism converge. As theoretical formulations committed to transforming political, race, and gender relations, all three discourses challenge hegemonic and oppressive systems, and explore possibilities for change. How connections between them have been rethought in recent scholarship may illuminate the various transformations that have occurred in each theorization. Initially, postcolonialism's emphasis on colonial relations steered it towards a narrowly anti-colonial agenda almost to the marginalization of other interests and constituencies within post-independence societies themselves. Its foundations in literary studies further oriented it towards interrogations of colonialist biases in aesthetics, deflating the political, social, and economic issues that were the real conditions of possibility for its emergence.

While internal fissures within postcolonialism and the intersections of specific postcolonial histories have generated a rethinking of post-colonial theorizing, it is the interventions of feminism that have done more to complicate postcolonial notions like resistance, identity, subjectivity and difference. What after all is the meaning of postcolonial resistance in the face of other oppressions and power relations in post-independence societies? What does resistance mean in ex-settler colonies where white women occupied complex positions as both colonialists and victims of patriarchal settler governments? It is such feminist questions that have widened parameters and made

postcolonialism inseparable from feminism. A foregrounding of women's experiences and confrontations with sexual ideologies have, in addition, worked to decentre the normative male subject at the heart of postcolonial theory and challenge its conceptual ground.

The insertion of women's experiences in postcolonialism may be a feminist act, but only to an extent. For feminism is really a particular Western inflected political discourse committed to changing patterns of patriarchal domination and sexism in all areas of life and relationships. Linked to the Women's Liberation Movement, its political agenda is premised on a belief in the political, social, legal and sexual equality of women and in their ability to achieve their full potential. In its very beginning, feminism sought to create a homogenous women's standpoint that had its basis in commonly held epistemologies about women. There was the assumption that women shared a common history of patriarchal oppression through 'the political economy of the material conditions of sexuality and reproduction' (Collins 2000: 190); that even where these conditions varied, the knowledges through which women responded to their common oppressions remained uniform.

Such notions of commonality were themselves based on ideas about similar patterns of socialization among women, on their childbearing and nurturing qualities, and on how these might inspire common ways of perceiving, knowing, and conceptualizing experience. Feminism's political ideology derived its unity and organizational strength from this understanding of women's experience. It theorized its notion of sexual politics from the premise that the differentiation of status and power between male and female was the root cause of a patriarchal domination of the world, and feminist discourse should therefore focus primarily on confronting and changing this fundamental inequality in gender relations. Race, class, and sexual orientation would be automatically addressed, it was felt, in the all-embracing politics of gender.

In the 1960s and 1970s, feminist discourse focused on social and personal power relations between the sexes, making these the central political agenda for women globally. Sexual politics became a specific branch of knowledge with a particular set of assumptions and interpretive strategies. Making gender a category of analysis in all areas of knowledge helped feminists to uncover power structures, biases, and exclusions in the construction of knowledge and to rethink almost all the disciplinary paradigms. It was feminism's revisions of existing knowledge and its theorizing of gender that moved the notion of gender itself beyond biological difference into the arena of culture, history,

politics and religion. The idea that it was societies and cultures that constituted meanings around sexual difference seemed a logical way of understanding and probing hierarchical power relations in politics and culture. It helped feminists in all the disciplines to probe the historical roots of assumptions about women and interrogate their meanings. Feminist discourse located constructs like masculinity and femininity in day-to-day cultural, social, and political interaction and sought new ways of understanding and rethinking them.

The questions feminists faced, both in the global liberation movement, and in feminist critical studies, was how to give voice to the dissenting and submerged views and ideas of women and, at the same time, move beyond dissent and rupture to agency. In this early stage of theorization, the notion of agency, whether viewed as an individual or social issue, rested on how both men and women are constituted as subjects in discourse. The ability to challenge existing discourses about women and mobilize them in new ways was seen as one of the most forceful acts of agency in history, and feminist critical interrogations invested a lot in identifying and rethinking discourses built around the silencing, marginalization, and oppression of women.

While feminism has been instrumental in shaping the key debates of postcolonialism and instituting a new inquiry into gender, it has itself been constantly challenged and interrogated, both from within and from constituencies opposed to its partial historical and conceptual grounding. The intersecting ideas from these interrogations have been equally crucial in postcolonialism's rethinking of categories like race, difference, and subjectivity. In the early 1980s, the most vigorous questioning of Euro-American feminism came from African American feminist scholars like bell hooks who objected to the very notion of a common oppression of women. hooks' critical response to the work of Betty Friedman, a principal architect of contemporary feminist thought, exposed the contradictions of Friedman's own political status within a racist, sexist, capitalist state. Her essay, 'Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory' (1984), challenged feminism's mystification of social and class divisions as well as its failure to make meaningful connections between race, class, and gender in its theorizing. Making the plight of middle-class white American women synonymous with a condition that affected all American women, hooks argued, only served to deflect attention from poor non-white women 'who are most victimized by sexist oppression; women who are daily beaten down, mentally, physically and spiritually . . . [and] are powerless to change their condition in life' (2000: 131). To feminism's simple conceptualization

of women's oppression, hooks pointed to diverse other sources of oppression – class, race, religion, sexuality – that could determine how sexism itself is institutionalized as a system of domination.

More than an attack on Friedman and feminism, hooks' essay also speculated on how the unique social status of black women as the objects of racist, classist, and sexist oppression could challenge the prevailing social structure and its ideologies. Black women, she argued, had 'no institutionalized "other" that [they] may discriminate against, exploit or oppress and often have a lived experience that directly challenges the prevailing classist, sexist, racist social structure and its concomitant ideology.' As hooks argued further, 'This lived experience may shape our consciousness in such a way that our world-view differs from those who have a degree of privilege (however relative within the system)' (145). And, as a way of contributing to a real liberatory ideology and movement, 'It is essential for continued feminist struggle that black women recognize the special vantage point our marginality gives us and make use of this perspective to criticize the dominant racist, classist, sexist hegemony' (145). The ramifications of this perspective, however, appear more problematic as hooks moves to examine the specific ways in which black women's concrete experience can reorganize the focus and methodologies of main stream feminism. For while she suggests in a later essay that black women's lived experience would demonstrate an ideological link between patriarchal domination and racial oppression (1989: 22), she concedes that the paradigm of domination and racial oppression needs to include women's own capacity to exploit and oppress.

Indeed, it may be tempting, as Patricia Hill Collins has argued, 'to claim that black women are more oppressed than everyone else and therefore have the best standpoint from which to understand the mechanisms, processes and effects of oppression, [but] this simply may not be true . . . [since] standpoints are rooted in real material conditions structured by social class' (2000: 191). Nevertheless, hooks' essay, however problematic, is perhaps the first hint of the significant role that African American feminist scholars would come to play in the revisions and transformations of feminism and, ultimately, in the development of black feminism as both a parallel and counter-discourse to feminism. As a critique of feminism, it reflected and paralleled attempts in the 1980s to document and theorize African American experience and social activism as a way of developing distinctive interpretations of black women's oppression, and validating alternative ways of knowledge creation in feminist discourse.

hooks' critiques of feminism should perhaps be explored in conjunction with Patricia Hill Collins' essay, 'The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought', which examines the much tougher theoretical implications of inscribing black women's different and experiential knowledge in feminism. Collins' focus in this essay is on how alternative knowledge may be generated from the epistemological assumptions of black women's concrete experiences, particularly in contexts where such knowledge claims, in and of themselves, are routinely ignored or absorbed and marginalized in existing paradigms (199). Conscious of the difficulty of moving among epistemologies and of translating the untranslatable into acceptable knowledge in the interest of synthesis and universality, Collins posits a dialogical approach that accommodates and negotiates with other knowledges without violating their basic political and epistemological assumptions: 'Rather than trying to synthesize competing world-views that may currently defy reconciliation; black feminists can make creative use of their status as mediators, point to common themes and concerns and make their thought an entity unto itself that is rooted in two distinct political and epistemological contexts' (199). The process, Collins explains, is not one of integrating black female folk culture into the body of an academic knowledge that is antithetical to it. It is one of 're-articulating a pre-existing academic discourse to accommodate these knowledge claims' (199). The sustainability of such an approach may be ascertained from two paradoxical developments in the history of feminism as a movement and a theory. On the one hand, the outcome of Collins' approach may be gleaned from the parallel development of a black feminist perspective within feminism, and from how radical critiques by black feminists have been crucial in making the interlocking systems of race, class, and gender central to both feminism and postcolonialism. On the other hand, the difficulties of this approach can be equally measured in the emergence of the alternative and separate discourse of womanism, steeped in specific cultural histories and in new assumptions and methodologies.

Within its very broad agenda, feminism has had its own internal fissures, tensions, conflicts and controversies. Two distinct events contributed to these fissures. First, throughout the 1980s, its discourse was constantly critiqued from historical contexts other than black America. The emerging voices and writings of women outside the Euro-American zone presented a diversity of contexts and women's experiences, revealing the heterogeneity that feminism had subsumed under the single category, 'woman'. Second, the emergence of these

alternative voices and works coincided with the destabilizing discourses of poststructuralism and the challenges they posed to the very idea of a stable subject. These two events posed new pressing questions for feminist theorizing: if there are variations in the cultural definitions of men and women, what part should identity and difference play in feminist theorizing? Similarly, if the subject is no longer stable then how should feminism conceive of the notion of agency which had been so crucial to its politics?

In response particularly to feminism's privileging of the category 'woman', Chandra Talpade Mohanty's interrogations of feminism questioned its binary division of men and women, its assumptions about the universal forms of women's oppression and its appropriations of Third World women's difference. Her seminal essay, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', posited a crucial question: 'If relations of domination and exploitation are defined in terms of divisions – groups which dominate and groups which are dominated – surely the implication is that the accession to power of women as a group is sufficient to dismantle the existing organizations of relations?' (1991: 71). Mohanty's question broadens the contexts of critiques by African American feminists and at the same time raises other questions pertinent to postcolonial feminism. If women are not infallible, then they could just as well be implicated in the larger issues of colonial exploitation and oppression in the history of Western imperialism. Western feminist scholarship cannot avoid, she argues,

> the challenge of situating itself and examining its role in such a global economic and political framework. To do any less would be to ignore the complex interconnections between First and Third World economies and the profound effect of this on the lives of women in all countries.
>
> (54)

How then can mainstream feminism address a general oppression of women that also includes Western women's complicity in exploitation? How can feminist discourse separate women as a 'discursively constituted group and women as material subjects of their history' (56)?

Mohanty's essay also raises important questions about feminism's incorporation of Third World women's difference, doing so only to produce it on its own terms, that is, paternalistically reinforcing Third World women's marginality, evading the connection between First and Third World power relations, and erasing all marginal and resistant

modes of experience (73). Mohanty's arguments, however, beg other related questions: How can the voices of Third World women by themselves counteract their erasure in Euro-American feminism? Can feminist theorizing create new idioms to articulate contending perceptions of difference? Such questions are implicit in Sara Suleri's critical response to Mohanty and to what she perceives as Mohanty's premise that 'only a black can speak for a black, only subcontinental feminists can adequately represent the lived experience of their culture' (2006: 251). The link between gender and race, Suleri argues, must be examined in more complex ways. For, 'if race is to complicate the project of divergent feminisms . . . it cannot take recourse to biologism, nor to the incipient menace of re-writing alterity into the ambiguous shape of the exotic body' (253). But this may be an unfair criticism. Mohanty's essay does grapple with the very questions raised by Suleri. Implicit in her critique of Euro-American feminism is a search for a theoretical focus and language that can articulate the significance of the situated local experience in relation to the larger political and economic structures in which feminism is implicated. In stressing power relations between First and Third World economies, she suggests possibilities for a cross-cultural feminism that is as theoretically attentive to the historical complexities and struggles of the Third World as it is to those of First World women.

In most of the critiques of feminism in the 1980s, the greatest challenge was not so much the inscription of different histories and identity politics; it was how to balance such situated experiences against pressures to recast them within white feminist frameworks. The different approaches to this challenge may be explained in terms of different understandings of identity politics and the much politicized contexts of feminist contestations outside mainstream feminism. For instance, while Collins, Mohanty, and Suleri all envisage the possibilities for cross-cultural feminist politics, bell hooks explores a politicized notion of identity and a more activist coalition with mainstream feminism. In linking identity politics and the notion of the personal to an active political struggle for social justice and transformation, hooks appears to return to the earlier struggles of the Women's and Civil Rights movements where the focus was less on discourse and more on social justice and activism. In such a context alternative narratives of experience would be more than the validation of self, and it would be naïve, hooks suggests, to believe that 'structural, material issues of race, class and power, would first be resolved in terms of personal consciousness' (1989: 109). For ultimately, it is 'the extent to which

[feminists] are able to link radical self-awareness to collective struggles to change and transform self and society that will determine the fate of feminist revolution' (108).

It seems that all the possible questions that may be raised about interracial conflicts, competing groups, hierarchies of power and entrenched discourses in this cross-cultural mobilization are implicitly addressed in hooks' radical conception of the personal and her larger vision of feminist politicization. It is a possibility that answers to the visionary quest that underlies feminism's own fundamental politics. That such a project may be difficult within the present racial and global power structures does not invalidate the vision though it may explain the proliferation of different feminisms and the emergence of womanism as a counter-discourse to both feminism and black feminism.

Feminism in the African context is equally fraught and plagued by controversies though, as Obioma Nnaemeka rightly suggests, it is less a reaction to Western feminism than a phenomenon of the African environment (1998: 9). When viewed in relation to wider national struggles against colonialism, exploitation, globalization and poverty in Africa, feminism is often perceived as an irrelevant Western discourse that is complicit with European cultural imperialism. In scholarly postcolonial and feminist writing, however, scholars have sought a more nuanced differentiation between the themes and agendas of Western and African feminisms. Thus, we find, both as theorists and as creative writers, African women have sought to present different histories and genealogies of feminist activity by linking their contemporary conditions and needs with recurrent aspects of indigenous cultures and concrete traditions of resistance in Africa. In the arena of theory they have sought insights from indigenous ideas about the complementarity of male and female in social existence to explore alternative perspectives on gender and sexual politics. As Filomina Steady argued in 1984, patterns of feminism in Africa 'have developed within a context that views human life from a total rather than dichotomous and exclusive perspective. For women the male is not the "other" but part of the human same' (1987: 8).

In exploring the thrusts of feminist ideas and positions in Africa, scholars have tended to work with very open-ended and generalized definitions of feminism. For instance, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie begins her examination of feminism in an African context with a definition that is open-ended enough to accommodate 'the reality of Africa's social and political complexity' (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 216). Feminism is, in her view, 'an ideology of women in society that includes a political

agenda to seek the rights of women as agents in human society' (216). In this widened definition, the quest for rights and agency can incorporate any number of material conditions that oppress women and inhibit their potential for self-actualization. Here, the feminist project moves beyond a focus on gender as the social construction of men and women. It suggests that other factors like race, class, caste, gender, age, status and sexual orientation can structure relations of power and limit the possibilities, not only of women per se, but also other women and other men.

Recent theoretical and interdisciplinary work on gender in Africa has focused even more specifically on how women understand and relate to several of the categories in Ogundipe's theorization. Ifi Amadiume and Oyeronke Oyewumi have each questioned the inextricable link between biological sex and social construction in feminist thinking. Their researches into pre-colonial Igbo and Yoruba societies reveal different interpretations of sexual difference as well as power relations other than those between men and women. The characteristic subordination of women to men, which is fundamental in feminist theorizations of patriarchy, is seen through different lenses in Amadiume's *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*. What would a feminist notion of gender mean in a context where, as Amadiume's research reveals (1987: 185), gender systems were so flexible that women could play roles normally performed by men, and acquire the power and authority usually coveted by men?

In these pre-colonial societies what distinguished women was not always their subordination to men or even their inferiority but the kinds of power and authority that certain women could wield. Oyewumi's work goes even further to discount the existence of gender in pre-colonial Yoruba society. The Yoruba definition of woman, as she argues, does not have the same associations of powerlessness and inferiority in relation to a normative male. Male and female 'are primarily categories of anatomy, suggesting no underlying assumptions about personalities or psychologies deriving from such' (1997: 34). In contrast to the core ideology of feminism, male and female in old Yoruba did not connote social ranking or express masculinity 'since these categories did not exist in Yoruba thought' (34). The emergence of women as an identifiable category, subordinated to men in all situations and ineligible for leadership roles, Oyeronke argues, was a new development imposed by the patriarchal colonial state.

What is absent from these arguments and what may be deduced for further theorizing are the processes by which other notions of gender

came into play in the postcolonial worlds of these communities, and how they might determine conflicting pulls within African feminisms as well as modify mainstream feminist theorizing of gender. Should gender then be seen as produced by history, location, conflict and negotiation? Rather than the inscription of different and alternative histories simply, these are the questions which would define a distinctive strand in African feminisms. Obioma Nnaemeka suggests an aspect of the postcolonial process when she envisages African feminisms as capturing the fluidity and dynamism of the different cultural imperatives, historical processes, and localized realities that condition women's lives. In moving beyond 'historicisation of intersections that limit us to questions of origin and genealogy' (2004: 361), she opens doors for negotiating not only disciplinary and pedagogical spaces but also ordinary everyday shifts in social and material conditions and how we negotiate them. She argues that 'Feminism is an act that evokes the dynamism and shift of a process as opposed to the stability and reification of a construct or a framework' (378). In the African context, it is imaginative literature more than anthropology or history that has worked best to explore complex transformations in the meanings of gender from colonial to post-independence times.

African women writers, such as Buchi Emecheta and Ama Ata Aidoo, have both mapped and explored these transformations, demonstrating how political and economic changes can generate corresponding shifts in gender and power relations. Though they investigate these changes mostly from domestic spaces, like marriage and motherhood, these contexts are invariably connected to larger colonial structures of political and economic exploitation. Negotiating change in such contexts thus involves a confrontation with gender not just as a sexual tussle between man and woman but as a phenomenon intertwined with colonial power structures and with older patriarchal systems. Gender is historicized but its dynamic becomes much broader than simply a phenomenon imposed from a patriarchal colonial state, as Oyewumi (1997: 34) has suggested. It involves conflicts, struggles, and dialogues between men and women, between women and colonial/patriarchal institutions, and between the self and the otherness within. The widened arena allows both writers to speculate not only on why and how gender relations change but which aspects of the past may be carried along and which discarded. Even where, as in Emecheta's novel, *The Joys of Motherhood*, the protagonist fails to fully negotiate change, the narrative suggests those possibilities that she fails to see. Nnu Ego may not always register the paradoxical transformations

generated by new social economies, languages, and alliances in Lagos city but the reader grasps their transformative possibilities as well as their devastating impact on notions of manhood and power in the Igbo community.

Ama Ata Aidoo's play, *Anowa*, dramatizes similar insights into the changing dynamics of gender and power in nineteenth-century Ghana when it posits an Akan matrilineal system against an acquisitive colonial modernity. Though the colonial system is the catalyst for these social and cultural changes, Aidoo's characters are major players in determining how these changes may be managed. At a major thematic level, the play locates the beginning of women's subordination in Akan society in a new interpretation of marriage that separates the old fluid concept, 'woman', from a new and restricted definition of 'wife'. It identifies an equally new interpretation of manhood that demands the suppression of women's ability to think and question. As the characters act out and negotiate these changes, Aidoo poses a major question for the play's characters and for the audience: If in Akan society a woman was always somewhat equal to a man, how can we explain the reversal that occurs in the transition from woman to wife? How may this be related to the new social economy of colonialism and how can this be resisted? As in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, it is in the competing choices the characters are faced with, and in the unravelling of the drama itself, that Aidoo's question finds its answers. Such dynamic intersections, shifts in conceptual grounding, and negotiations provide the fluid contexts for exploring feminist engagements particularly in African contexts. They are alternative ways of theorizing offered by fictional discourse and may be claimed as valid and legitimate forms of feminist knowledge.

In the broader arena of feminist theory, situated experience and different locations have created not just dissent but separations and culture-specific theorizations such as the various conceptualizations of womanism in African American and African scholarship. The emergence of womanism as a counter-discourse and ideological praxis has been traced to Alice Walker's text, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. But since Walker's 1983 book other perspectives on womanism have emerged, all of which derive from specific cultural contexts. Chikwenye Ogunyemi's 'Womanism: the Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English' (1985) and her full length study of African womanism in *Africa Wo/Man Palava: The Nigerian Novel by Women* (1996) focus on black womanism and African

womanism respectively. Clenora Hudson-Weems's *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* (1993) attempts an integrated theorizing of womanism in the African Diaspora and Africa. Mary Kolowale's *Womanism and African Consciousness* explores African womanism as self-definition (1996), and Tuzyline Allan's *Womanist and Feminist Aesthetics: A Comparative Review* takes a wider and comparative view of the aesthetics of feminism and womanism in British and African literature (1995).

What then is womanism? Is it a version of black feminism, a theorization of black women's thoughts and actions or simply a theory of social change? The substance of the theory, it appears, derives from everyday knowledge already in existence in black communities. Its deployment as the foundations of womanism has a lot to do with black women's sense that their particular needs, collective knowledge, and modes of empowerment do not feature in mainstream feminism. Womanism and feminism are thus related but alternative ideologies of women. If tensions exist between them, it is because feminism has a tendency 'to disallow and neutralize alternative expressions of women's social justice work' (Phillips 2006: xxiii).

Walker's concept of womanism is rooted in the historical experiences of African Americans as they relate with the wider American world, with their men, with each other and with themselves. Her short story, 'Coming Apart', and her critical interpretation of Rebecca Jackson's writings do far more to reveal her nuanced perspectives on womanism than the much quoted phrases from *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*. For the woman protagonist of 'Coming Apart', the gradual process of understanding the undercurrents in her husband's erotic fantasies about white women is also a discovery of how racism and the degradation of women's bodies are experienced in distinctly different and multiple ways by black women. The discovery is also a moment for grasping the self-hate she and her husband suffer as blacks, her own feelings of invisibility on account of her husband's fantasies, and her subjection to the white woman even while they both suffer indignities and violations as women. For, as she recalls, 'it is not unheard of to encounter "erotica" or pornography in which a Black woman and a white woman are both working in "a house of ill-repute," but the Black woman also doubles as the white woman's maid' (Walker 2006: 3).

In Walker's story, this journey of discovery is shared by both the woman protagonist and her black husband. It is as a pair reading the same books that they make discoveries about the world and themselves. The woman's illuminations rub off on her husband, and their

explorations uncover the most repressed and disturbing truths about themselves as black people in America. The black husband comes to know other ways of loving beyond erotic bonding, beyond pornography, beyond even heterosexual sex. He comes to know that 'to make love to his wife as she really is, as who she really is – indeed to make love to any other human being as they really are – will require a soul-rending look into himself' (9). Soon the black husband finds himself reading his wife's books 'and thinking of her – and of her struggles and his fear of sharing them' (10). For, in the final analysis, womanism is about these deep and complex undercurrents in the relationship between black men and black women, about the insights black women gain from their disadvantages and suffering, and about how they transmit this knowledge to the wider black community. This knowledge also incorporates the special gifts of spiritual power that Walker elucidates in 'Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson' (1983). Even though Jackson could neither read nor write, she acquired through her suffering a spiritual power that, Walker says, 'tells us much about the spirituality of human beings, especially of the interior spiritual resources of our mothers, and because of this, makes a valuable contribution to what we know of ourselves' (1983: 78). Walker elevates these insights of black women into a womanist epistemology with a different colour from feminism. Her protagonist in 'Coming Apart', for instance, 'never considered herself a feminist though she was, of course, a womanist. A womanist is a feminist, only more common' (2006: 7).

Walker's theorizing of a womanist perspective goes beyond this recognition of a common experience of racism that binds African American men and women and shapes their sexual politics. In her much quoted definitions of womanism in *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*, Walker posits other meanings of womanism that are more centred on the special insights which a black woman gains from being 'womanish' – acting in bold, outrageous, wilful yet courageous ways – that free her from the limiting conventions of white women and give her a greater purchase on her world. Patricia Hill Collins has argued, however, that in defining this deeper womanist insight in opposition to an inferior and girlish white woman's perspective, Walker places herself contradictorily in both Black Nationalist and feminist perspectives; that while the race-separatism of Black Nationalism may give Walker the secluded space to address gender issues within an African American boundary, it does not allow her to challenge the racially segregated terrain of American social institutions or to foster interracial

co-operation among women (2006: 59). Walker's 'separatism', however, may be more paradoxical and interrogative than Collins suggests. In 'Coming Apart,' the black woman protagonist is tender in her words to her black husband yet uncompromising and tough in her demand that he recognizes the wider context of institutionalized sexism that informs his own attitudes to women.

Carol Marsh Locket is right, then, in seeing Walker's brand of womanism as a concept that 'removes African American women's discourse from subjugation to traditional white feminism and African American male discourse' (1997: 785). As a praxis, it has the potential to move beyond a feminist framework to demand what Layli Phillips calls 'a type of "cognitive mobility" that permits movement among and between divergent logics (cultural, religious, and ideological)' (2006: xxii). Perhaps it is because feminism itself has not made room for this kind of mobility that Phillips and other scholars contest the convergence of womanism and feminism in Walker's conceptualization. Phillips, for instance, points to feminism's continued tendency to 'assimilate all difference onto itself in spite of decades of internal transformations that have enabled the inscription of other alternative experiences and modes of knowing into its framework' (xxxiii). There is also, in Phillips' view, a clear difference in thrust between feminism's excessive focus on sexual politics and women's oppression and womanism's focus on all other sites of oppression.

Without congealing into an ideology with a fixed set of assumptions and principles, womanism presents itself as a culturally-based praxis that accommodates other womanist expressions. This fluidity and open-endedness may be responsible for a proliferation of womanisms that are shaped by different contexts and agendas. For instance, Clenora Hudson-Weems' 'Africana Womanism' (2006) attempts to unify the different histories and experiences of Africana people into a single discourse that engages critically with mainstream feminism, black feminism and African feminism. American feminism, she argues, usurped the resistant struggles of early African American women activists and reshaped them into different political and social agendas. In her view, what a modern Africana womanism needs is a different order of parameters that can address the plight of Africana women globally. But Hudson-Weems' project makes too many generalizations about the unity of a black world, and her suggestion that questions of sexism and gender be addressed solely within Africana cultures fails to recognize the inseparable links between these issues and the wider institutional structures of power.

It is not surprising that Chikwenye Ogunyemi should later explore a specifically African womanism that centres on those African particularities overlooked by Hudson-Weems and black American feminism. *Africa Wo/Man Palava: The Nigerian Novel by Women*, Ogunyemi's second work on womanism, is a significant shift in thrust from an earlier work in which she, like Hudson-Weems, tried to theorize a unified black womanism. In that article, entitled 'Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English' (1985), she moved beyond feminism's key categories of gender and sexism to identify a network of global economic and power structures that work to limit the advancement and self-actualization of both black women and black men. 'The politics of black womanism', she argues, 'is more complex than white sexual politics; for it addresses more directly the ultimate question relating to power: how do we share equitably the world's wealth and concomitant power among the races and between the sexes?' (25). Within this context, Ogunyemi's womanism invests in a particular idea of womanhood which is derived from the epiphanic moment of a girl's self-discovery as a woman and is steeped in black women's historical role as nurturers and preservers of their race. A womanist writer is in this formulation a racially committed writer, concerned as much 'with the black sexual power tussles as with the world power structures that subjugate blacks' (29).

Such a conception of womanism is what frames Ogunyemi's exploration of an underlying motif in black womanist writing in the United States and Africa. Critical analysis of fiction in this earlier essay thus focused on a wide spectrum of women characters in African and African American fiction, mostly single women who, on the face of it, appear to embody a feminist vision of independence and individuality but are, in reality, exemplary matriarchal figures with enduring spiritual and healing visions for their communities. Though Ogunyemi's focus here is chiefly on elucidating the ramifications of the concept itself, her fictional analyses raise some problematic questions: If the womanist fictions she examines are, as she argues, more than protest literature, then where do their conflicts lie since their protagonists appear to achieve integration and resolution so easily? For instance, how does Aidoo's woman protagonist in *Our Sister Killjoy* move from feminism to womanism and with what conflicts? To what extent does the womanist quest remain a visionary but valid one in Aidoo's novel, especially as Sissie fails to reach a compromise with her male lover and abandons the nurturing role? Above all, what is the relationship between the reality of her failure and the visionary possibilities the

narrative suggests at another level? This is a particularly crucial question because, though Ogunyemi formulates a politics of womanism in relation to the reality of black people's lives in their worlds and in wider global institutions, the womanist fictions that exemplify her proposition demand an analysis of connections between the real and the visionary. For it is here that characters find the space to rise above their real world, and here that the complexity of womanist fiction may reside.

Turning her attention specifically to Africa in *Africa Wo/Man Palava*, Ogunyemi identifies a complex dynamic of oppression involving multiple determinants, such as ethnicity, religion, education, location, buying power and geographic location. It is in formulating a new idea of womanism to address this postcolonial context that Ogunyemi is at her most original. Her fascinating deployment of 'palaver' (a parley between colonial male and African male) transforms its racist and patriarchal power dynamics and makes it a new discourse between African men and women, one that doubles as both postcolonial and womanist. 'Palaver', originally meaning trouble or quarrel, becomes a 'problem' that now involves only African men and women and needs both sexes for its resolution. Purged of its unproductive blame/ridicule and superior/inferior connotations in the colonial period, 'palava' (Ogunyemi's new term) is able to encompass different facets of the 'Nigerian dilemma and the bold, radical treatment by Nigerian women "midwifing" the complicated birth of a new nation' (1996: 99). The new concept of 'palava' presents a more complex metaphor of women and nation than the simplistic imaging of women as mothers of the postcolonial nation. For womanism here invests in the African woman's capacity to interrogate those issues of gender and politics that could generate a new equitable nation, issues that go beyond even gender and sexual politics.

The open-endedness of 'palava', Ogunyemi argues, leads inevitably to consensus or reconciliation, since complementarity is crucial to this brand of womanism. But to what extent is 'palava', as it is explored in critical analyses, 'a prelude to and agency for change' (99)? The onus for a conciliatory and successful 'palava' rests with the woman yet the fictional analyses reveal lurking paradoxes that make the ideology more problematic than it appears to be. For instance, Ama Ata Aidoo's woman protagonist in *Our Sister Killjoy* may subsume her personal quest in the larger political struggles of her country and continent, as Ogunyemi rightly suggests; yet Sissie experiences a personal crisis from the entanglement of the personal and the public in her life

and from her problematic relationship with her male lover. She suffers loneliness, has anxieties about her body, about motherhood and even about her 'womanness'. By the end of the novel, she has given up the possibility of compromise and abandoned her lover even though she has continually held on to a vision of complementarity. Her womanist stand is thus not unproblematic and must feature in the processes of 'palava' and its theorization. Indeed, by investing so completely in the transformative power of a mother-centred ideology that wields a spirit of caring, compromise, and inclusiveness at all times, Ogunyemi risks deflating the radical possibilities of her original and fascinating framework. While a context of totalitarianism, ethnicism, poverty, racism, religious fundamentalism and neo-colonialism rightly calls for an ideology that moves beyond the experiences and fates of women in society, that ideology must be one that demands equal and uncompromising dialogue between men and women. The gender crisis must *not* be 'subsumed under the continental turmoil' (115); it must be made parallel to it, because how we deal with it impacts on how we tackle the continental turmoil. In most of the fictional analyses in *Africa Wo/Man Palava*, the possibilities of 'palava' remain obscure. While this does not invalidate the womanist ideology, it requires us to distinguish between the real and the visionary in our analysis rather than make the real stand for the visionary.

Ama Ata Aidoo's much quoted statement about the convergence of feminist and African political agendas is in my view much more weighty than the meanings which are often read into it. Aidoo insists that

> Every woman and every man should be a feminist – especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of African land, African wealth, African lives, and the burden of African development. Because it is not possible to advocate independence for our continent without also believing that African woman must have the best that the environment can offer.
>
> (Aidoo 1998: 47)

Her statement makes both the feminist and public agendas equal by suggesting that the personal and institutional transformations needed to make women equal sharers in a community's wealth are inextricably linked to the transformations necessary for political and economic agency. Such complementarity is what Aidoo's nurturing protagonist, Sissie, refers to when she seeks a new creative language in which men and women can share love, dreams, fantasies, struggle and commitment,

a language '*beyond individual and piecemeal measures*' [my italics] and out of reach of external enemies who might sabotage the continent's revolutionary potential. The statement presents a much tougher basis for negotiation and compromise, and the onus is as much on the male figure as it is on the woman. There are thus elements still of feminist confrontation, conflict, and struggle that go beyond an easy compromise. What I am suggesting is that categories like compromise, complementarity, negotiation and resolution must themselves be subjected to scrutiny in our theorizations of womanism.

In an useful essay on the current categorizations of black feminism and womanism, Patricia Hill Collins points out that, in spite of obscuring more basic challenges confronting African American women as a group, the debates around these distinctions provide 'an excellent opportunity to model a process of building community via heterogeneity and not sameness' (1996: 67). A similar observation can be made about the productive interrogations and rethinking that the intersection between postcolonialism, feminism, black feminism and womanism has inspired in this essay. Though at a fundamental level all these formulations challenge various forms of domination and oppression, the confrontations between them also reveal the possibilities and traps of theory itself. The location of a theory, the position of its adherents, and the power they have to include or exclude are all important considerations in how productively others may use it. If postcolonialism began as a male-centred discourse focused single-mindedly on empire, colonial domination, postcolonial transformations and subjectivities, feminist interrogation of it from women's histories as colonized and colonizing subjects has given it a new language and genealogy. It has opened up numerous perspectives on domination and power, and made it possible to consider women's own capacity to dominate and oppress. The most significant impact that feminism has made on postcolonialism, however, can be seen in the vigorous debates between feminism and black feminism and between feminism and womanism. It was black feminists' insistence on seeing their particular experiences and knowledge as always already marked by race and ethnicity that inspired the productive work on the interlocking categories of race, class, and gender from which postcolonial discourse has benefited immensely.

Feminism itself has had its contradictions. Its visionary aim to become a global movement of women is undermined by the very location of its conceptualization. Thus, while it has critiqued postcolonialism's narrow concept of power and domination, it has itself being attacked

by non-Western feminists for failing to examine its complicit role in imperialism and for theorizing a universal history of women from its own particular history. For this reason debates on feminism since the 1980s have centred consistently on questions of race, class, history, difference and identity politics, even though in its broader sense feminism presents itself as a global and collective political movement committed to addressing women's emancipation, political, family and legal rights, economic status, health and educational opportunities. Why then has difference become such a continuing category of analysis in contemporary feminism? The problem is that, even in these areas of everyday life, feminist politics can only be transformative if it understands and works from specific historical and cultural locations. For non-Western feminists who do not see themselves and their histories in feminist theorization, the ground continues to have to be cleared for connecting specific histories and struggles within meaningful theorizations of emancipation that locate themselves within the broader project of feminism. Can mainstream feminism entertain the challenge of such cross-cultural theorizations? 'Can [it] create the space for the unfolding of "different" theorizing not as an isolated engagement outside feminist theory but as a force that can have a defamiliarizing power on feminist theory?' (Nnaemeka 2004: 381).

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Chapter 7

Cartographies and Visualization

David Howard

Introduction

Postcolonial theorists have rightly linked imperial desire to cartographic design, premising cartography as 'primarily a form of political discourse concerned with the acquisition and maintenance of power' (Harley 1988: 57). Maps have often symbolically reconstructed and reoriented social and physical landscapes into more metropolitan-friendly places of settlement and sovereignty. In other words, 'Within the colonial project, the making of maps constructed a possessable "other" place (and people) and provided a practical guide for dispossessing "others" of their place' (Jacobs 1993: 100). Advancing technologies in the twenty-first century, coupled with ongoing commercial and political imperatives to chart and claim control over territories, peoples, and resources, have arguably maintained elements of the cartographic quest for new data as 'a continuation of the constant colonial struggle to fill voids on maps' (Piper 2002: 6). The following chapter addresses postcolonial perspectives on the processes of map-making, cartographic representation, and the rapidly advancing technologies of digital visualization.

Postcolonial critiques of cartography emphasize the hidden discourse of maps, the intended and unintentional cartographic silences, as much as the visual representation of landscape and political or social boundaries (Harley 1988). In the context of imperial map-making, claims made for the governance or exploitation of territories beyond the metropole highlighted cartography as a forceful intellectual, military,

and commercial marker of state or company intent, as I shall go on to elaborate. But, first, I wish to recall, on a different scale, two examples of individual mental maps of place, whether drawn or narrated, that chart personal accounts of colonialism and empire. Claude McKay (2008) contextualized his experiences of living in France during the 1920s through his 'story without a plot' of Lincoln Agrippa Daily, alias Banjo. McKay described the cosmopolitan, often rough and racist, encounters in Marseille of the portside residents, drifters, and voyagers by remapping and semantically reshaping neighbourhoods. Among the English-speaking artists and harbour-side hobos, the Place Victor Gelu becomes Bum Square; the Quartier Réservé is renamed as The Ditch, and the hillside hospital of Hôtel Dieu is transformed into the Rock of Refuge. Downtown Marseille is now sketched from the perspective of a low-income, male, African Jamaican traveller whose memories of Vieux Port and the Canebière boulevard sit uneasily with more common expectations of modern French urbanity and the wealth of maritime mercantilism in full flow.

Storytelling as much as cartography and visual mapping are fundamental ways of representing spatial knowledge and location. Through his narrative of a global trading hub, McKay was able to map 'his trans-Atlantic, border-crossing sensibility, and his transgressive ability to rise up above labels and categories', and provide a contemporary textual platform for meshed black internationalism and early postcolonial writing (Phillips 2008: xvi; Stephens 2005). The back streets and racialized spaces of Vieux Port were renamed and claimed in a reversal of the colonial mapping project. McKay, and Banjo for his imaginary part, were Jamaican citizens, but their time served in the United States, Canada, and then France, raised further questions as to who or what constitutes the 'postcolonial' and illustrated the variety of postcolonial critiques in currency (Sidaway 2000).

Well beyond the cityscape of McKay's Marseille, Bernadine Evaristo has dramatically and poignantly inverted racialized legacies of empire by re-imagining the semantic and social cartography of the globe. Reversing racial codes of colonialism and slavery, *Blonde Roots* (2008) introduces a fictional world in which plantation owners and overseers hail from an African metropole that dominates and enslaves the 'poor souls' who inhabit the barbarous 'Grey Continent' that is Europe. Rather than refocus the cartographic projection of the earth's surface to provide a counter-mapping of political and economic power lines, Evaristo rewrites the history of scientific racism and redirects trading routes to revolutionize world space.

Cognitive mapping, the linking of literary and visual narratives of place, has formed an important connection between geography, cartography, and postcolonial analysis (Jameson 1991). While maps may be reconstructed from narrative text in order to retrace, spatialize or even 'measure' fictional steps and travels (Moretti 2005), so may the cartographic visualization of real or imagined territories inspire literary accounts of lands to be claimed or plundered. Robert Louis Stevenson created *Treasure Island* (1884) after playfully exploring the fictional possibilities suggested by an inventively painted map, while landlocked at a desk in the Scottish Highlands at the height of the British empire (Letley 1998).

The focus on mapping in this chapter further underlines the recognition that any representation in the form of text or image, and the concomitant acknowledgment of the 'other' as hidden, silent or misrepresented, lies at the core of postcolonial analysis (Said 1978). The ways in which the earth's surface and seas have been mapped, from individual pathways to continental land claims, are part of the 'imaginative geography' or geographies that provide the intellectual schema for commercial and colonial designs on territories and societies (Said 1978). The following pages will highlight the connections between maps, cartographic visualization, colonial knowledge and postcolonial analysis. At an obvious level, the political processes of decolonization have been charted cartographically through the changing shades of map colours, redrafted borders and names, that reflect the ebbs and flows of nationalized territories and the transitional identities of places and the people resident there. Beyond this direct reading of the printed sheet or onscreen graphics, the process of map-making and the visualization of conquered or reclaimed political, commercial, and personal spaces also constitute the dual 'armature of cartographic reason' – namely, the illusion of combining an objective ground 'truth' with a 'discourse of object-ness that reduces the world to a series of [controllable] objects in a visual plane' (Gregory 2004: 54, 118).

Postcolonialism and cartographic debates

The fields of mapping and colonial geographies are evidently entwined. The intersections between the wider concerns of postcolonialism and geography thus 'provide many challenging opportunities to explore the spatiality of colonial discourse, the spatial politics of representation, and the material effects of colonialism in different places' (Blunt &

McEwan 2002: 1). Just as postcolonial studies undergo energetic conceptual debates on meanings, definitions, and directions, cartography and the visualization of spatially-based knowledge are similarly contested: 'the visualities deployed by the production of geographical knowledges are never neutral; they have their foci, their zooms, their highlights, their blinkers and their blindnesses' (Rose 2003: 213). The limits of 'neutrality', varying scales of truth or deception, and the hidden or expressed bias in mapping lie at the core of cartographic concerns. Foucauldian connections of knowledge and power have fuelled the debate between the practitioners of 'scientific' or positivist cartography, by which emphasis is placed upon the sought-after 'truth' and accuracy of map-making, and those who prefer to interpret maps as socially constructed perspectives or representations of the world around. If knowledge constitutes power, argue the latter camp, then maps by default, as visual forms of knowledge, must encompass an aspect of that power and its deployment (Harley 1989 and 1992). If imperialism is then defined as 'an act of geographical violence' through which space is charted and controlled (Said 1993: 271), then cartography has not only been a tool of conquest but, arguably, a weapon employed with vigour and purpose.

Perhaps most obviously, the concept of *terra nullius* was decreed by colonial authorities, and visually captured by cartographers, to deny indigenous property rights and to lay claim to vast tracts of land (Turnbull 2000; Rowse 2001). The physical and graphic mapping of 'newly discovered' or 'unsettled' lands, as presumed and prescribed by empire-builders, formally created colonized places (Carter 1992). The process and outcome of cartographic design, therefore, directly disrupted an existing sense of place to assist with the process of colonial governance: 'The colonial history of nation-states such as Australia testifies to the symbolic and practical possession enacted through the map' (Huggins, Huggins & Jacobs 1995: 171). In New South Wales, the early nineteenth century proclamation by Governor Bourke effectively allowed the imposition of a new cartography to prevail over the existing sand drawings that depicted the territorial claims of Aboriginal groups and to smother the ancestral Dreamings. In more recent decades, Aboriginal Sacred Sites and Land Rights legislation have provided forms of protection as well as the legal basis for counter-claims against mining interventions on ancestral lands in which territories have been re- or 'un-mapped' along the lines of 'authenticated' community or tribal boundaries (Jacobs 1993). Anticolonial cartography was employed in the fight back, as territorial justice issues were not

contested over former colonial claims of 'empty land' but over the allocation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal spaces. The inappropriateness of using maps to identify places of sacredness as temporally or spatially fixed was evidenced in the Coronation Hill controversy in Northern Territory. Confronting proposed mineral mining ventures, following a decision by the Australian government in 1987 to open up the area for extraction, the Jawoyn people were required to substantiate their land rights by proving that interconnected sites associated with the Bula belief system were indeed 'authentic' and longstanding. Legitimacy rested on the proof of tradition, requiring the accurate delineation of sacred spaces, thus setting 'a pre-contact "truth" of an "innocent" and unstrategic Dreaming against the post-contact "invented tradition" of Aboriginal strategists' (Jacobs 1993: 113). The graphic geometry of the map became the battleground on which the authenticated discourse of the sacred successfully, if problematically and to some extent ironically, overcame the secular precision of econometrics and legalized access rights.

Less overt cartographic 'violence' may be derived from an ignorant or misconceived reading of people and place, far removed from the realm of historical colonialism, but closer to present-day assessment, whether as a prospective tourist or media pundit or policy analyst:

> We can criticise, with some knowledge, maps of our own times, neighbourhoods, towns or country; but maps of foreign lands often shape our perceptions with impunity. It is when we are presented with maps of far-off times, or far-off places, that we are at our most fallible and vulnerable, and it is when we are representing the people and places we know least about that we can do most damage.
>
> (Dorling 1998: 279)

Maps in whatever form they appear are in a continual process of being reformed and read. The physical images on a map may change, as new data is uploaded to a geographical information system (GIS) programme, printed colours fade or materials decay, and the social and political context in which they are being assessed evolves to provide new meanings. Pertinent to any map, but perhaps more so when claiming high levels of accuracy or 'truth', is the need to recognize the narrative strategies by which cartographers have displayed the human landscapes of a world successively colonized, decolonized, and now reclaimed in part through postcolonial constructions of space. Maps cannot be understood without knowledge of the social context in they which exist, the qualitative differentiations of the mapped society and of the

audience for which they were produced, and where they are accessed. 'Scientific mapping', that is, cartography lacking a qualitative appreciation of place, distances the subject and produces 'all too easily a socially-empty commodity, a geometrical landscape of cold non-human facts' (Harley 1988: 66).

Beryl Markham, aviatrix and author of *West with the Night*, having grown up in a privileged position in colonial British East Africa, perceived a human backdrop to the clinical, 'scientific' mapping during the nineteenth century that cut through African societies to delineate the colonies that form contemporary states today:

> Yet, looking at it, feeling it, running a finger along its lines, it is a cold thing, a map, humourless and dull, born of callipers and a draughtsman's board. That coastline there, that ragged scrawl of scarlet ink, shows neither sand nor sea nor rock; it speaks of no mariner, blundering full sail in wakeless seas, to bequeath, on sheepskin or slab of wood, a priceless scribble to posterity.
>
> (Markham 1984: 245, cited in Harley 1989: 1)

Markham was very much a product of the colonial upper classes but, coupled with her aviator's quantitative reliance on accurate mapping for navigation, it is perhaps surprising that her understanding of maps consistently looked to the physicality of texture and their emotive place in a colonial historiography:

> Here is your map. Unfold it, follow it, then throw it away, if you will. It is only paper. It is only paper and ink, but if you think a little, if you pause a moment, you will see that these two things have seldom joined to make a document so modest and yet so full with histories of hope or sagas of conquest.
>
> (Markham 1984: 246)

For her, each map was always guarded as a record of journeys travelled and routes remapped. The map was part of a process, something to be modified through use, rather than an end product or commodity to be discarded after use. She could be said to anticipate a postcolonial or postmodern approach to cartography which, adapted from Derridian concepts of rhetoricity, 'demands a search for metaphor and rhetoric in maps where previously scholars had found only measurement and topography' (Harley 1989: 3).

The deconstructionist strategy radically altered the way in which we approach maps, and characteristically upset the normative comprehension

of maps as mere products of geometrical ordering. Leading the challenge to usurp scientific positivism, Brian Harley (1989: 2) developed a 'deconstructionist tactic to break the assumed link between reality and representation which has dominated cartographic thinking, has led it in the pathway of "normal science" since the Enlightenment, and has also provided a ready-made and "taken for granted" epistemology for the history of cartography'. Concomitantly the postcolonial task for cartography has been to expose the hidden agenda of maps. If positivist map-making fails to recognize or challenge, and therefore reproduces, the 'hierarchicalization of space' – for example, by giving greater prominence to a castle or church than to a small homestead or shelter – then existing social inequalities are implicitly reified by design: 'To those who have strength in the world shall be added strength in the map' (Harley 1989: 7).

From colonial to postcolonial mapping techniques

The objective weakness of map-based definitions of place when constituted in the fixed terms of positivist cartographic space is exemplified when positioning Europe. The 'indeterminacy' of Europe in terms of its spatial presence as a unified land mass as well as its loose definition as the 'West' is nowhere more marked than when 'Europe' is delineated as a geographical term (Pocock 2005; Kidd 2008). As a concept 'Europe' has greater salience outside the confines of the territorial map which, while it produces an imagined coherent region, usually hides the complex legacies and contemporary influences revealed by postcolonial analysis (Bhambra 2009: forthcoming). The introduction of a single European currency in 1999 paradoxically illustrated the spatial and economic intricacies of the 'Eurozone'. Each new banknote carries the map of 'Europe' but what is intended as an emblem of its inclusiveness only reveals its fragmented make-up. For one thing, to note the existence of overseas territories of the member states is to call into view, instead of the amalgamated and Eurocentric monetary space, a sprawling and fractured extension stretching from islands in the Indian Ocean to border communities in the Amazon rainforest. Cartographic design on a currency for financial inclusion serves in this instance to highlight the challenging remnants of the colonial and postcolonial present.

Postcolonial analysis thus questions the political and social evolution of map-making. The 'colonial project' was rooted not only in the

geographical imagination of the globe's surface but relied heavily on the 'science' of mapping. Accurate charts were necessary to repeat voyages of 'discovery' and to allocate or divide 'new' colonial territories accordingly. The final two decades of the nineteenth century heralded the inglorious 'scramble for Africa' among European colonizing states. Following the European mapping expeditions that began towards the end of the eighteenth century, the General Act of the Berlin Conference (1884–1885) prompted Britain, France, Germany, Portugal and Italy to claim preferential trade treaties with rulers on the African continent to carve out economic markets, which became the territorial bases for colonial projects and independence struggles (Chamberlain 1974). Postcolonial critiques have been applied not only to the cartographic representations of colonial possessions of the old European empires but have been extended to the mapping conflicts of the 'colonial present' (Gregory 2004). The current scramble for the resources of Antarctica highlights how the colonial mechanisms for making territorial claims and counterclaims not only persist today but remain vested in cartographic validation (Dodds 2006).

As indicated above, cartography has consistently provided the graphic arm of colonial enterprise, yet neither entity should be masked by presumed uniformity. Colonial and commercial ventures were as disconnected in detail as they appear united in aim. The global or regional gaze of the colonizer might provide the basis for shared analysis but, just as multiple postcolonial conditions are recognized as 'unevenly developed' across the world, so too are the varied colonial encounters and the cartographies, the physical and mental maps, that constitute them (McClintock 1992: 87).

Alongside the significance of recognizing varied and divergent colonial agendas and outcomes, neither the consequences of envisaging a global potential for imperial design, nor the intellectual, cartographic stimuli that this necessitated, should be underestimated. Strandsbjerg (2008: 3), following the impetus of Latour (1987 and 1999), has emphasized the importance of gathering, or effectively mobilizing, remote information to assemble 'the globe as a social space'. This required a central locus, a metropolitan and maritime hub, for the collation and analysis of data to construct the globe as 'a unified single space through cartographic means', as exemplified primarily by the publication of Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, the first world atlas in 1570 (Strandsbjerg 2008: 3). A 'cartographic revolution', beginning in the fifteenth century in Europe, and made possible for map-makers by the revision of geometry, served to transform comprehensions of space

and, by default, understandings of how the world and human inhabitants existed (Mignolo 1995). The graphic expression and empirical measurement of spatial knowledge, a desocialization of cartographic space, thus directly mapped and facilitated avenues for colonial practice. The importance and paradox of producing a mapped world vision, a cartographic globe, is succinctly summed up by Strandsbjerg (2008: 25–6) as the 'opaque power' of the map whereby 'submission to the geometric discourse remains a requirement, but at the same time it allows for multiple centres to exist, or in other words, it is possible for different groups to claim authorship and write themselves into the centre'. Thus while dominant religious, political, and commercial power relations, intrinsically derived from the metropole, tended to define a chart's co-ordinates, such opaqueness provided possibilities for recentring or for glimpses from the margins to be revealed.

The links between colonial practice and new forms of scientific mapping are clearly illustrated by the importance placed upon the sixteenth-century project of the *Relaciones Geográficas*. Begun in 1577, a vast quantitative survey of the existing Spanish colonies was launched to measure, to locate accurately, and ultimately to maintain control of the Crown's disparate possessions across the Americas (Mundy 1996; Craib 2000). The corpus of the survey consists of ninety-six locally-drawn maps with accompanying texts. The significance of the former is that, unlike the written commentaries which largely silenced indigenous voices and arbitrarily renamed places, the visual representation of the territories by inhabitants of 'New Spain' gave scope if inadvertently to the graphic conceptions of aboriginal spaces (Mundy 1996). Divergent notions of space, particularly forms of measurement and scale, negated the empirical accuracy of the *Relaciones*, but produced 'an intricate hybrid of new cartographic conventions and the indigenous traditions which were largely incommensurable with the Ptolemaic episteme of map-making into which the maps were supposed to combine' (Strandsbjerg 2008: 22).

The tensions between disparate discourses of spatial knowledge and representation are reflected in the stilted conversations between cartographic practice and the application of critical analysis to the processes and product of map-making. Harley (1992: 232) pointed to a problematic alienation and 'conceptual vacuum' between cartography and postmodern or postcolonial geographical thinking, especially troublesome, he argued, since 'Maps are ineluctably a cultural system'. The 'truths' or facts which maps purport to portray correspond to the cultural and chronological context in which they are produced and

are being read (Harley 1989 and 1992). The issues of accuracy, forms of representation, technical content and the uses to which maps are put all form parts of this perspective. Recognition of a necessity for more detailed discursive analysis formed what might loosely be seen as a subsequent cartographic revolution, or rebellion against received readings. Postmodern and postcolonial reflections shifted the critical terrain by calling for a deregulation of the 'rules' of cartography and further exploration of the textuality of maps, thus necessitating

> a theory of writing and reading which moves beyond naïve imperialism and representationalism, and which does not trivialize the tracings and inscriptions of culture or literalize them, but which integrates and reforms the modes of discourse appropriate to reading. . . . Specifically we need a grammar which transcends, and opens up, the various specialized 'grammars' of the sciences – speaking, writing and mapping. (Pickles 1992: 228)

Rereading colonial mapping projects via these alternative ways of assessing cartographic syntax and symbols has produced new perspectives on imperial design and practice (Turnbull 2000; Harley 2001). Among the most detailed assemblages of colonial map collections is the twenty-two volume *Description de l'Egypte* which came about as a result of the military invasion of Egypt by Napoleon from 1798 to 1801 (Gillipsie & Dewachter 1987). An extensive survey of the country was mandated by French military, political, and intellectual interests to refashion the political and social terrain as a 'natural' colonial acquisition, uniting the great ancient civilization of Egypt with the contemporary might of France. Similar to *Relaciones Geográficas*, the form of mapping aimed at geometrical accuracy or cartographic 'truth' but also incorporated a mixture of text, noted in the alphabet of the colonizer, and sketches to visualize and narrate landscape and society as befitted the project. The context of military occupation and control, and the concomitant use of cartography as a science of conquest, were made explicit in Jean-Baptiste Fourier's preface to the first volume: 'We were many times obliged to replace our weapons with geometrical instruments and, in a sense, to fight over or to conquer the terrain that we were to measure' (cited in Godlewska 1995: 8). Maps were thus a crucial constituent device for the preparatory symbolic appropriation of Egypt as a potential satellite of metropolitan France. They represented and narrated the proposed colonial reform that the French authorities had envisaged: 'The most intimate scale of cartographic intrusion and manipulation in Egypt was the assault on

language and place of the system of transliteration adopted for the place names on the topographic map' (Godlewska 1995: 16).

While deconstructionist critiques challenged the text of maps, the problem of 'technicity' embedded in the processes of map-making has gained more attention as media and computing formats have dramatically enlarged the scope and scales of cartographic production, reception, and audience engagement (Pickles 1992). Changing map forms required an adaptation of readership and analytical responses, acknowledging more clearly, once again, the ways in which maps relay and potentially reshape knowledge-power dynamics in society. Within the broad discipline of Geography, the process and products of 'mapping' have necessitated the reformulation of relatively recent practices:

> The map is to the geographer what the microscope is to the microbiologist, for the ability to shrink the earth and generalize about it . . . The microbiologist must choose a suitable objective lens, and the geographer must select a map scale appropriate to both the phenomenon in question and the 'regional laboratory' in which the geographer is studying it.
>
> (Monmonier & Schnell 1988: 15; cited in Harley 1992: 245)

This 'laboratory' approach to regional geography and Area Studies has been largely rendered obsolete as the intellectual and ethical restrictions of such frameworks have been recognized. The 'normalization' of new critical readings of maps invested in the 'cultural turn', which intellectually re-orientated Geography, as well as many other disciplines in the Social Sciences over the last three decades, has only recently been introduced to the rapidly expanding technologies of geovisual analysis. As map-making has concentrated less on material-based and static products and more on digital and dynamic processes of visualization, the technical platforms by which spatial data can be analysed, displayed, and manipulated have multiplied. Most paper maps are now initiated as digital files and screen-generated from datasets, which remain potentially as open sources for renovation, redefinition, and reproduction.

Geovisual processes and the renewed politics of maps

Evidently a gulf exists in most instances between, on the one hand, the production of a map and the technical discourse that engages with

this process, and, on the other, the application of critical social theory to unpick the contours and symbols of maps – whether hand-drawn on parchment, digitized on screen or produced as interactive GIS tools – and the social practice which surrounds their evolution (Perkins 2003). This division is perhaps most clearly expressed by the differences voiced between cartographers affiliated with organizations such as the British Cartographical Society and the practitioners of computerized geovisualization techniques. To some it would seem that the former group represents the 'pre-postcolonial' approach to map-making that focused on cartographic 'truths' and the accurate representation of the earth's surface. The latter group, however, would no longer perceive cartographers as the sole custodians of maps, as specifically-trained professionals equipped to represent the world. The wider availability of data – access to online census material, for example – and forms of map generation – access to Google Maps, Google Base, and Google Mashup, for example, or freely available computer programmes (Gastner & Newman 2004) – has elicited a fundamental shift from understanding maps as finished products to promoting the techniques of computer-generated geovisualization that emphasize the visual process (Dykes, MacEachren & Kraak 2005).

As a wider global public is increasingly able not only to access but to design, modify, and recreate computerized maps, digitized stores of information have become the key to producing and revising maps. Access to digital databases and the indefinite ability to reproduce data-centric images, rather than the accuracy of finite maps as end products, has further revolutionized the concept of what constitutes mapping. Mapped variables may be updated in real time or automatically, producing infinite editions of changing spaces, renewing data in place; the ephemeral map is here to stay. Such maps indeed may be designed to be interactive, responsive, 'clever' and self-regulating, designed as much to simulate the skills of the human cartographer as to mirror the landscape they represent (Mackaness 1996). The map no longer belongs to the cartographic skills embedded in a colonial authority or government ministry or a state or commercial printing press. Where propaganda maps portray one visual narrative, counter-statements may now be more readily created and disseminated online.

The geovisual turn in map-making is best illustrated by the increasing use of cartograms. As postcolonial theories have challenged the conditions of colonialism, the development of cartograms have likewise reshaped notions of technical accuracy and enhanced the map as political and provocative discourse. Cartograms may be defined as

maps in which the size of a geographical area is drawn proportionately to the value of the data it contains or, more succinctly, 'as maps in which a particular exaggeration is deliberately chosen' (Dorling 1994: 85). They could be by default value-laden and political. The choice of production will shape the way in which an audience receives spatial information and implicitly reveals an authorial bias (Dorling, Barford & Newman 2006). Cartograms are maps in form, yet 'should not be seen as just another option in a cartographic toolbox, but as a fundamental necessity in the *just* mapping of spatial social structure' (Dorling 1994: 101). The following examples from research on urban social inequalities in Kingston, Jamaica, illustrates the visual implications and effectiveness of cartograms compared with standard forms of data mapping.

The class analysis of household census data has been mapped to represent the spatial distribution of socio-economic inequalities (Figure 1) and housing quality (Figure 2) in the capital city using a 'standard' map of enumeration districts and a cartogram respectively. The size of each enumeration district or neighbourhood in the first map reflects the physical area each covers on the ground. The darker shaded sections reflect neighbourhoods in which residents are more likely to have higher incomes, more formal education, and better quality housing – illustrating a wealthier 'uptown' and poorer 'downtown' in general. The second map is a cartogram produced from similar census data, yet the size of each area corresponds to the number of residents living in that neighbourhood. The cartogram indicates more clearly by design that the majority of residents in Kingston are not living in the higher quality housing of the relatively wealthier northern and western suburbs, but are more likely to be residents in the lower income central and southern sections of the city. The social and residential landscape of urban Jamaica is a legacy of colonial land tenure, slavery, and unequal access to education and labour markets. The colonial and post-independence history of the city is well documented and mapped, but a revisualization of residential patterns in order to emphasize ongoing disparities of living conditions and opportunities can revitalize debates on social justice.

Relative decreases in the costs of production and greater access to digital mapping tools have transformed the arenas of cartographic use over the last decade (Thomas & Dorling 2004). In a recent response to the self-posited query: 'Who needs cartographers?' Lilley acknowledged in the journal of the British Cartographical Society: 'The vacuum left by cartographers in the area of data visualization to serve the new and emerging technologies at the beginning of this decade was quickly filled

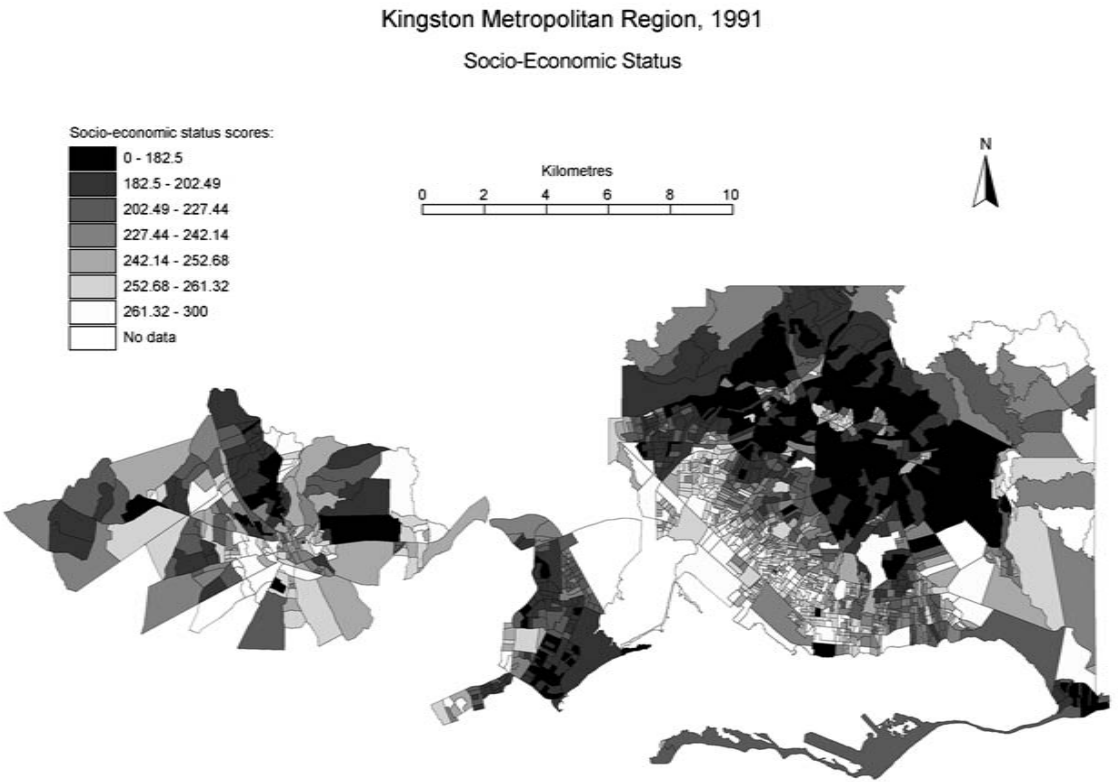

Figure 7.1 Mapping socio-economic status across the Kingston Metropolitan Region, Jamaica, 1991. (Source: from a research project funded by the Leverhulme Trust and reproduced from Clarke and Howard 2006, with permission of authors.)

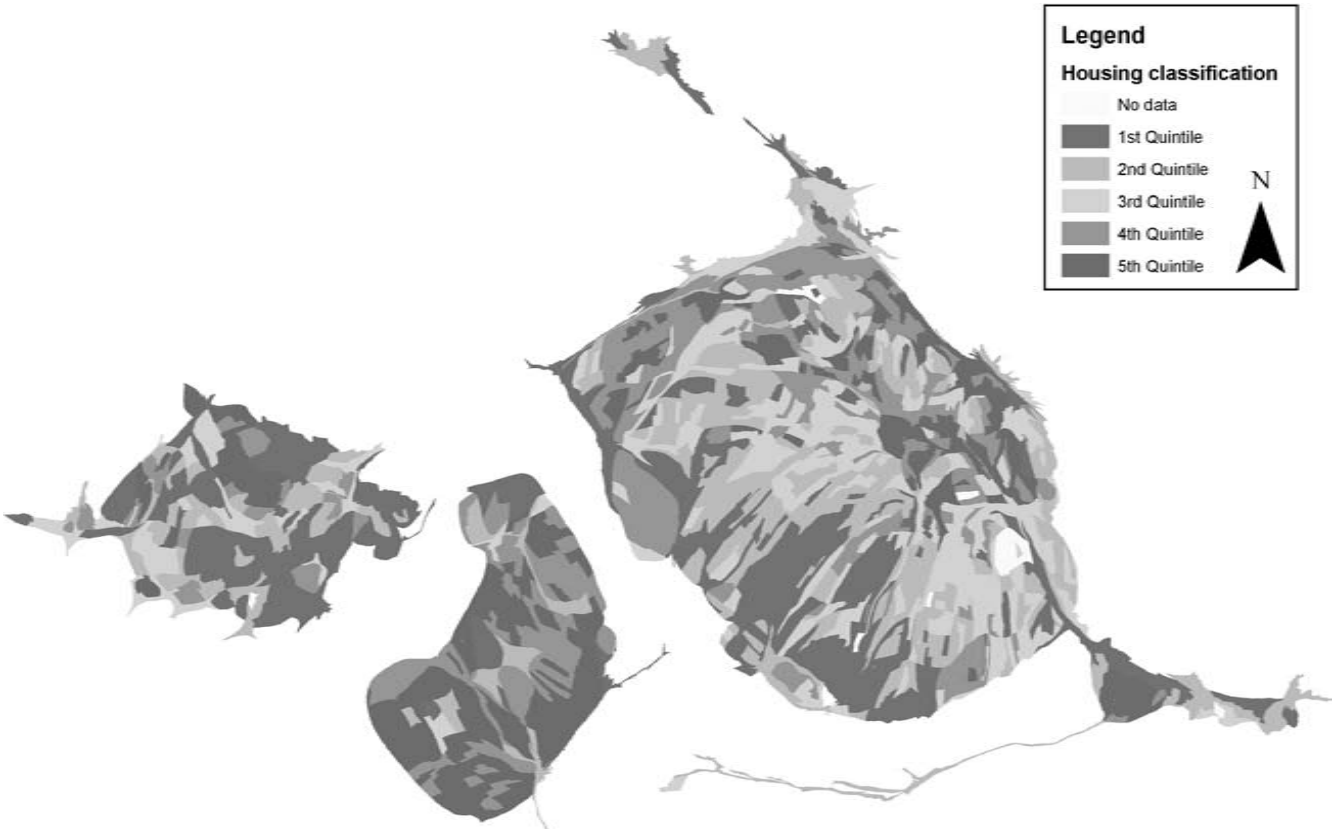

Figure 7.2 Cartogram created to represent the quality of housing across the Kingston Metropolitan Region, 2001. (Source: Nobajas 2008: 10, reproduced with permission of the author.)

by the systems developers and the system users' (Lilley 2007: 205). The space of map-making has arguably become public and democratized, as the separation between producers and users of maps has faded (Dorling 1994; Taylor 1998). Technological advances are impacting on the way individuals and societies visualize social and spatial variations at all scales more rapidly, more readily, relatively more cheaply and in more diverse ways (Dorling 1998).

Devolving cartographic power

Technological changes and wider access to the tools of map-making have permitted a revaluation of colonial and postcolonial cartographies, heralding what has been considered as a democratization of cartography (Taylor 1998). Revisioning global spaces, however, has not occurred without controversies. The Peters map projection proposed a new spatial order for the world atlas when it was launched in 1973. Adopted and promoted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and international development agencies, the Peters version claimed an equal-area projection that did not distort the presence of countries in northern latitudes, as produced by the well-established Mercator projection (Monmonier 1991 and 2004). The initial rapid and wide uptake of the Peters version may be explained by the contemporary political and intellectual climate which recognized that new representations of the world could highlight troubling global social injustices. The Peters projection was promoted as a 'new' start, a way for the world's population to reconsider itself, and a radical step away from the Mercator atlas that seemed steeped in the colonial and imperial contexts of the past.

The Peters intervention, however, was criticized for purporting to portray a 'true' and just representation of the world's population, and for failing to acknowledge that any mapping projection of a sphere onto a flat plane will lead to inaccuracies of representation, distorting territorial size and shape. Cartographic debate continued, and while the Peters projection is now not regarded as a wholly successful anti-colonial mapping project, it was crucial for highlighting the political and ethical context, and the problematic inherent in map production (Harley 1991). Maps are never neutral.

On a smaller scale, but arguably more substantive and politically pragmatic, the advances in participatory mapping techniques and the growth of community mapping projects, with or without digital

technologies, has transformed research methodologies as well as public engagement by encouraging individual and communal mapping biographies. Over the last five years, new community initiatives have meshed local qualitative and quantitative data collection with satellite imagery, building collaborative projects to remap local spaces (Perkins 2007). Maps first produced by colonial authorities have been independently redrawn using Global Positioning Systems to incorporate local learning and to recognize incorrectly delineated indigenous territories. Since the mid-1990s, the Amerindian Peoples' Association in Guyana has employed new mapping technologies to clarify ancestral territorial claims, notably in the Upper Mazaruni region. The successful campaign to 'legitimize' their ownership of resources from the perspective of government and commercial agencies has secured communal tenure, through the participatory spatial mapping of oral histories and community knowledges, and also through mobilizing new or dormant political networks. A core component of the Guyanese Poverty Reduction Strategy also centres on community mapping action to monitor and update social welfare programmes. The scheme recognizes the importance of locating poverty as experienced by residents, moving beyond the inaccuracies and irregularities of state census enumeration. Community and school groups are assisted to chart maps of self-assessed neighbourhood issues, visualizing the areas in which economic deprivation is concentrated.

The preceding discussion has argued that the history of cartography is intimately tied to colonial historiographies and the challenges of postcolonial analysis. Emphasis has rested on the intellectual interpretations and technological transitions which cartography has undergone over the last few decades, but the greatest changes lie in the fusion of map users and producers. Current methodologies have started to address the 'cartographic illusion' of hidden mobilities and personal trajectories, or wayfinding, that become lost or suppressed in even the most interactive mapping process (Ingold 2000: 234). Postcolonial critique places the person as central, and it is this human dimension that, above all, remains central to cartographic analysis:

> For all the power they contain, maps are just pieces of paper or merely ephemeral pixels on a computer screen. It is people who order, draw, purchase, use, and learn from maps. And it is people who will improve them – not necessarily by making them more accurate or objective but, for a start, by being more honest about how and why they are made and by teaching more carefully about how to read them
>
> (Dorling 1998: 279)

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Chapter 8

Marginality: Representations of Subalternity, Aboriginality and Race

Stephen Morton

Marginality is one of the privileged metaphors of postcolonial studies. It is from the margins of colonial subordination and oppression on the grounds of race, class, gender or religion that postcolonial writers and theorists claim political and moral authority to contest or oppose the claims of a dominant European imperial culture. As Graham Huggan explains, 'marginality represents a challenge to the defining imperial "centre" [. . .] The embrace of marginality is, above all, an oppositional discursive strategy that flies in the face of hierarchical social structures and hegemonic cultural codes' (Huggan 2001: 20). The problem with such claims for marginality is that it is the elite political classes of postcolonial societies who often uphold marginality as a representative subject position from which to assert the emancipatory claims of national liberation in former European colonies. Such a problem is articulated by the proletarian revolutionary character, Joseph D'Costa, in Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children*, who says of India's national liberation that 'this independence is for the rich only' (Rushdie 1981: 104).

Many postcolonial writers and theorists have challenged the representative claims to marginality of the elite or dominant classes in postcolonial cultures and societies. For example, drawing on the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci's idea of the subaltern – elaborated in his prison notebooks, written during his incarceration under Mussolini's fascist regime in the 1930s – the South Asian historians known as the Subaltern Studies collective have sought to recover the

histories of insurgency and resistance in South Asia from the perspective of subordinate social classes. As Ranajit Guha puts it in 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India', which forms the introductory essay to the first volume of the series, *Subaltern Studies*, the elitism of Indian history, whether colonialist or bourgeois nationalist, has excluded the 'subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the labouring population and the intermediate strata in town and country – that is, the people' (Guha 1982: 4). What Guha means by subaltern, therefore, is not only the labouring population but 'the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way' (Guha 1982: vii).

Take, for example, 'Chandra's Death' (1987), published in *Subaltern Studies Volume Five*. In this essay, Guha examines a nineteenth-century crime report printed in a Bengali broadsheet about a rural woman of the Bagdi peasant caste of rural West Bengal, who died in an attempt to terminate her pregnancy with the assistance of her close female relatives. Through a careful reading of the document, Guha situates the representation of Chandra's death in relation to the kinship structures of the Bagdi families in the region, and the threat that Chandra's illicit pregnancy posed to the patriarchal authority and caste identity of the Bagdi. While Guha notes that Chandra is absent from the text as a subject, and that this 'absence corresponds to her silence' (1987: 154), he also finds an example of solidarity in the support that the Bagdi women gave to the pregnant woman. For whereas the situation was a straightforward one to the male leader of the village, Magaram, to whom Chandra would lose caste on account of her sexual transgression if she did not carry out an abortion, to the Bagdi women 'abortion with all its risks was preferable to bhek (caste removal)' as a strategy to 'stop the engine of male authority from uprooting a woman from her place in the local society' (164).

As well as articulating the histories of subaltern resistance and agency that are subtly encoded in textual and historical sources, 'Chandra's Death' illustrates the way in which subalternity can denote different forms of social and political marginalization, including gender and caste oppression. Subalternity has also been applied to adivasi or indigenous groups in South Asia. In the fiction and essays of the Bengali writer, Mahasweta Devi, for instance, the social world of the adivasis poses a challenge to the emancipatory claims of bourgeois national liberation; a challenge that reiterates Ranajit Guha's conclusion in 'On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India'

that the 'historic failure of the nation to come to its own [. . .] constitutes the central problematic of the historiography of colonial India' (Guha 1982: 7).

In Mahasweta Devi's novel, *Chotti Munda and his Arrow* (2003), the narrator describes how the adivasi community in Chotti's village regard India's national independence as a bourgeois revolution, which benefits wealthy landowners, who are described as *dikus* or outsiders:

> The August movement did not even touch the life of Chotti's community. It was as if that was the Dikus' struggle for liberation. Dikus never thought of the adivasis as Indian. They did not draw them into the liberation struggle. In war and Independence the life of Chotti and his cohorts remained unchanged.
>
> (Devi 2003: 96).

Chotti Munda is the son of Birsa Munda, a historical figure who led a resistance movement in the late nineteenth century in the district of Chhotanagpur against the eviction of the Munda people from their lands by British colonial administrators and local landlords (Singh 2002). The novel is partly based on Mahasweta Devi's conversations with local people about Birsa Munda's uprising and the political activities of Dhani Munda, who continued to lead the struggle against the oppression of tribal people in the Chhotanagpur region of Bihar during the twentieth century (Devi 2003: ix).

While *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* stresses the social, political, and economic marginalization of Chotti and his community from the event of national liberation, it also makes clear the history and world-view of the adivasi community through a form of storytelling that the narrator describes as epic:

> Everything is for storytelling in Chotti Munda's life [. . .] Everything in Chotti Munda's life is a series of stories. Like many other stories of Munda life this narrative is also epic [. . .] Chotti also becomes a part of the epic, and his ultimate destiny becomes as enormous and suggestive as that of epic heroes
>
> (Devi 2003: 4–7).

This use of an epic storytelling mode serves to privilege Chotti Munda's point of view and the perspective of the community he represents. And in adopting the mode to recount a history of subaltern resistance to marginalization and exploitation, Devi underlines the importance of her subject and the lives of the adivasis. In particular,

the novel traces the community's opposition to bonded labour, a system in which 'a person is forced or obliged to give [labour] free or at rates much below the market rate to a specific landowner from whom s/he may have borrowed paltry sums of money or foodgrains' (Devi 2003: 293). Because bonded labour is a 'trap' which, Chotti observes, 'won' be quit in ten generations' (38), he gradually negotiates a form of limited economic autonomy for the Munda adivasi community by persuading the local village landlord, Tirathnath, to pay the adivasis wages for work done (183–4). This autonomy is, however, threatened by the Youth League, a wing of the Congress Party recruited by Sanjay Gandhi, who carried out many acts of violence against the adivasis during the period of the Emergency, 1975–1977 (Brass 1994: 113; Kohli 1990: 131, 340). In the novel, the Youth League are represented by the characters Romeo and Pahlwan, who are determined to reinstitute the system of compulsory labour. Devi's depiction of the struggle between the adivasis and the Youth League is articulated as a struggle between the subaltern and the representatives of the elite; however, the novel also implies that the violence committed by the Youth League against the adivasis is condemned by certain elements in the local government. In this way, Devi suggests that the subordinate position of the adivasis is at certain times recognized by the local government, even if this recognition serves a political agenda, which does not necessarily benefit the adivasi people in the long term.

In a similar vein to *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*, the Tamil writer Bama in her autobiography *Karukku* (2000) documents the social marginality of a dalit community in a South Indian village. The term dalit means 'of the soil', and is 'the self-chosen name preferred by the so-called "untouchables" or "scheduled castes" who reject the Gandhian designation "Harijan" [children of God] as uppercaste patronizing' (Krishnaswamy 2005: 73). In *Karukku*, the first-person narrator articulates the traumatic experience of caste discrimination from the standpoint of a dalit woman and, in this respect, the work is an example of the testimonial genre because it draws on personal suffering to convey the shared historical experience of oppression (Nayar 2006). In particular, Bama documents her struggle to get an education within the village school system: 'When I was studying in the third class, I hadn't yet heard people speak openly of untouchability. But I had already seen, felt, experienced and been humiliated by what it is' (Bama 2000: 11). The narrator's experience of caste discrimination is exemplified in her account of how people from the Naicker landowning caste in the village would not sit next to her on the bus:

> When I went home for holidays, if there was a Naicker woman sitting next to me in the bus, she'd immediately ask me which place I was going to, what street. As soon as I said the Cheri, she'd get up and move off to another seat. Or she'd tell me to move elsewhere. As if I would go! I'd settle into my seat even more firmly. They'd prefer then to get up and stand all the way rather than sit next to me or to any other woman from the Cheri. They'd be polluted, apparently.
>
> (18)

In the above passage, the narrator infers a feeling of untouchability from the way that the Naicker woman treats her on the bus. Instinctively, the narrator refuses to leave her seat, and thereby resists the spatial segregation associated with the categories of caste identity. At the same time, the analytic proposition, 'They'd be polluted, apparently' (18), suggests an adult narrator retrospectively interpreting an event that happened in her childhood, and translating an experience that she had previously understood intuitively into a political statement.

As an autobiography that also documents the narrator's incipient social consciousness of untouchability in an Indian village, *Karukku* contains elements of the *Bildungsroman* or novel of education. The use of the *Bildungsroman* is increasingly prevalent in postcolonial literatures. As Pheng Cheah has argued, the genre works to demonstrate to a broader reading public the ways in which the life and development of a protagonist mirrors that of the recently decolonized nation (Cheah 2003: 235–48). The irony in *Karukku* is that Bama adapts the conventions of the *Bildungsroman* to articulate the barriers to education facing dalit children in post-independence India. In the local school, the narrator gradually learns how caste prejudice impedes the social and intellectual development of dalit children. Both teachers and children treat the dalit children as scapegoats when 'anything bad happened' (15–16), an observation which is borne out when the narrator is falsely accused of stealing a coconut and excluded from school (16). Later, at high school, the narrator recalls how the 'warden-Sister of our hostel could not abide low-caste or poor children' (17) and would pass derisive comments on the physical appearance of the children.

Despite these social and psychological barriers to her progress, Bama 'studied hard and got the best marks in [her] class'; and is awarded a prize for 'standing first among all the Harijan pupils of that district who took the government S.S.L.C. exam that year' (18). Buoyed by these achievements, Bama is encouraged to pursue a teaching degree at college. She is also determined to work against the caste discrimination shown towards the dalit children in her community by the

Roman Catholic nuns at the college. It is this impulse to change the institutional caste discrimination of the Roman Catholic Church that prompts the narrator to join the local convent as a novice. As she puts it, 'in spite of all the criticism of the nuns [. . .] the thought grew in my mind that I should become a nun, and teach those who suffer that there is a Jesus who cares; to put heart into them and to urge them onwards' (90).

Gradually, the narrator begins to question the meaning of religious rituals, and the hollow rhetoric of the Catholic Church, which claims to love the poor and dispossessed but has actually 'made slaves' of the dalit people 'in the name of God' (94). In doing so, Bama questions the caste inequities within the Indian education system at large. Indeed, if *Karukku* is read as a postcolonial *Bildungsroman* rather than a tragic narrative of dalit subjectivity, it is possible to read Bama's narrative as a call to resist the continued injustices of the caste system from the standpoint of a dalit woman.

The specific form of social marginalization perpetuated by the caste system in South Asia is clearly very different from the race and class hierarchies that are specific to Southern African societies. For whereas the social exclusion of the dalits is bound up with the policing of caste identity in South Asian society, the social oppression of the Masarwa (an indigenous group in Botswana) is linked to the history of European colonization and the appropriation of indigenous lands in Southern Africa. There are nevertheless certain similarities between the experiences of Bama and those of the character, Margaret, in Bessie Head's novel *Maru* (1971). Set in Botswana, the novel explores the threat that Margaret's missionary education poses to the social structure of the village. Margaret comes from a Masarwa background, an ethnic group regarded as equivalent to low castes in South Asia. The marginalization of the Masarwa is established at the beginning of the novel by locating them in a racial hierarchy:

> [I]f the white man thought that Asians were a low, filthy nation, Asians could still smile with relief – at least, they were not Africans. And if the white man thought Africans were a low, filthy nation, Africans in Southern Africa could still smile – at least they were not Bushmen. They all have their monsters. You just have to look different from them, the way the facial features of a Sudra or Tamil do not resemble the facial features of a high caste Hindu, then seemingly anything can be said and done to you as your outer appearance reduces you to the status of a non-human being.
>
> (11)

Simply by attending school, Margaret challenges the cultural stereotypes of the Masarwa within her community. Such a challenge is highlighted by the racial taunts she receives from her peers: 'Since when did a Bushy go to school?' (17). Yet this is not to suggest that Margaret's education, which is made possible by the local missionary's wife, is intended to empower her. For the missionary's wife regards Margaret's education as an 'experiment' (18), rather than appropriate training for life in a Botswana village community: 'Good sense and logical arguments would never be the sole solutions to the difficulties the child would later encounter, but they would create a dedicated scholar and enable the child to gain control over the only part of her life that would be hers, her mind and soul' (16). Significantly, there is no reference to Margaret's social position in the village community in this extract from the novel. While the missionary's wife's attitude towards Margaret's education may be benevolent, it is nonetheless a form of cultural imperialism. Such cultural imperialism is registered in Margaret's failure to see the relevance of W.B. Yeats's poetry to her life in rural Botswana (20).

It is Margaret's appointment as a school teacher to a remote rural village in Botswana that poses the biggest threat to the social structure of the village community in *Maru*. On being asked to identify her racial identity by the school principal, Margaret replies, 'I am a Masarwa' (40). By doing so, she affirms her racial identity, a rhetorical strategy that prompts the villagers to rethink their attitude to the Masarwa. '[The villagers] said: "Prejudice is like the old skin of a snake. It has to be removed bit by bit"' (53). Moreover, it is the village chief, Maru, who regards Margaret as a 'symbol of her tribe' (108), and seeks 'to gain an understanding of the eventual liberation of an oppressed people' by forming a romantic attachment to Margaret. In this way, Maru, as a symbolic leader within a post-independence nation state, not only challenges the racial prejudice of the villagers towards the Masarwa, but also recognizes the need to decolonize the social structures within Botswana that have contributed to the marginalization of the ethnic group: 'for who knew how long people like her had lived faceless, voiceless, almost nameless in the country' (108).

The marginalization of Aboriginal identities and histories has also been a predominant concern for indigenous writers in Australia and Canada. As well as highlighting the histories of colonial dispossession in these settler countries, writers, such as Sally Morgan and Maria Campbell, have contested colonial discourses of miscegenation, which have often marked Aboriginal peoples of mixed-race descent

as racially inferior and socially degenerate. Such concerns may seem to parallel the marginalization of the Masarwa or 'Bushman' in *Maru*. As the narrator puts it, another variant meaning of 'Bushman' was a name given to 'the children of marriage between white and African. Such children bore the complexion of members of the Bushman tribe. . . . There was, maybe, a little more respect granted to a half caste, but in her heart she had grown beyond any definition (19–20). Yet if 'there is a little more respect granted to the half caste' in the fictional world of *Maru*, the white colonial government in Australia regarded Aboriginal children of mixed parentage as a threat to the purity of the white race. It was for this reason that the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia, A.O. Neville, advocated a policy of 'breeding out' the population of mixed blood Australians by separating mixed race Aboriginal children from their mothers. This history of racism towards Aboriginals of mixed-race descent is a predominant concern in Sally Morgan's autobiographical novel, *My Place* (1988).

Set in Australia, *My Place* traces Sally's attempt to discover her Aboriginal ancestry, which is repressed by her mother and grandmother. This repression is a consequence of the women's internalization of the dominant white Australian government's racist policies towards Aboriginal peoples, and the psychological pain that this racism elicits. Such repression is exemplified in the way that Sally's mother lies about the family's ethnic background:

> 'The kids at school want to know what country we come from. They reckon we're not Aussies. Are we Aussies, Mum?'
> Mum was silent. Nan grunted in a cross sort of way, then got up from the table and walked outside.
> 'Come on Mum, what are we?'
> 'What do the kids at school say?'
> 'Anything. Italian, Greek, Indian.'
> 'Tell them you're Indian.'
> I got real excited, then. 'Are we really? Indian!' It sounded so exotic.
> 'When did we come here?' I added.
> 'A long time ago,' Mum replied. 'Now, no more questions. You just tell them you're Indian.'
>
> (Morgan 1988: 38)

Gladys' denial of her Aboriginal identity suggests that she has internalized the values of white Australian social and political discourse. In a similar vein, Sally's grandmother's observation that 'We're like those

Jews' (Morgan 1988: 105) draws a parallel between the experience of being a minority subject in Europe and Australia. It also implies a parallel between Nazi policies towards the Jewish population and the Australian state's policy of attempting to control and eliminate Australians of mixed-race descent. In an account of the Australian state's policy, Tony Barta, for example, describes how the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia, A.O. Neville, had pursued a eugenic policy towards populations deemed to be minorities that connects Australia and Nazi Germany (Barta 2001: 48–9). In a similar vein, Gillian Whitlock identifies connections between 'eugenics and the management of the so-called "problem" of the half-caste population, a problem spelled out through a preoccupation with breeding and descent, and addressed through practices of child removal'. For Whitlock, the description of the half-caste population as a problem to be resolved by the solution of separating children from their families is disturbingly similar to the language of Nazi policies towards the Jewish population (Whitlock 2001: 205).

In consequence of her family's shame and the history of white Australia's racism towards Aboriginal peoples, Sally finds it difficult to reclaim the word Aboriginal as a meaningful category of cultural identity:

> What did it really mean to be an Aboriginal? I'd never lived off the land and been a hunter and a gatherer. I'd never participated in corroborees or heard stories of the Dreamtime. I'd lived all my life in suburbia and told everyone I was Indian. I hardly knew any Aboriginal people. What did it mean for someone like me?
>
> (Morgan 1988: 141)

At this point in the novel the first-person narrator may seem to question the idea that Aboriginality is a fixed and monolithic identity; yet Sally is nevertheless determined to learn more about the cultural practices of her ancestors.

My Place has been criticized for presenting the history of Aboriginal peoples using a Western autobiographical mode that privileges the individual over the community (Hills 1997: 104). However Morgan's technique of embedding stories and images from Aboriginal culture in Sally's autobiographical narrative also gestures towards an oral tradition and mythology that depart from the conventions of the autobiographical genre. There is, for example, her use of motifs, such as bird call. Following a journey to the Australian outback to trace her family's history, for example, Sally gradually learns to read the

significance of bird call as a reference to an Aboriginal form of knowledge. At the beginning of the novel, Sally's grandmother describes the bird in the following way:

> This morning, I was waiting for the bird call. Nan called it her special bird, nobody had heard it but her. This morning, I was going to hear it too [. . .] Still no bird. I squirmed impatiently. Nan poked her stick in the dirt and said, 'It'll be here soon.' She spoke with certainty [. . .]
>
> Suddenly, the yard filled with a high trilling sound. My eyes searched the trees. I couldn't see that bird, but his call was there. The music stopped as abruptly as it had begun.
>
> Nan smiled at me, 'Did you hear him? Did you hear the bird call?'
>
> 'I heard him, Nan,' I whispered in awe.
>
> What a magical moment it had been.
>
> (Morgan 1988: 14)

It is only in retrospect that Sally recognizes the significance of the bird call. By the end of the novel, when the bird reappears, Nan has revealed her cultural heritage, and her link with her ancestors becomes more accentuated because of her imminent death. As the narrator recalls:

> 'Nan', I said slowly as she looked at me, 'about that call, you weren't frightened when you heard it, were you?'
>
> 'Ooh, no,' she scoffed, 'it was the Aboriginal bird, Sally. God sent him to tell me I'm going home soon. Home to my own land and my own people. I got a good spot up there, they all waitin' for me.'
>
> (Morgan 1988: 357)

As well as providing an organizing, unifying detail in terms of the narrative structure of the novel, the bird call functions as a spiritual sign which foreshadows Daisy's death.

Indeed, it is the narrative structure of *My Place* that perhaps most closely links the autobiographical novel to the narrative structure and social context of oral performance. Whereas conventional autobiographical narratives tend to follow a linear structure that documents an individual's childhood and personal development, *My Place* moves away from a linear narrative centred on the individual to a non-linear narrative centred on community and kinship structure. As the critic, Arlene Elder, observes, the embedded narratives of Arthur, Gladys and Daisy supersede Sally's individual narrative of her childhood once Sally discovers her Aboriginal heritage and begins her search for details about her family's experience (Elder 1992). What is more, the collaborative

structure of the narrative registers the shared historical experience of the 'stolen generation': a term that refers to the generation of mixed-race Aboriginal children who were forcibly removed from their land by the state and sent to residential schools in an attempt to control and ultimately eliminate the mixed-race Aboriginal population (see Pierce 1999). By articulating this historical experience, *My Place* contributes to a public acknowledge-ment of the oppression of Aboriginal peoples in contemporary Australia that was epitomized in the 1997 government report on a National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families.

The use of a child protagonist to articulate the experience of social and political marginalization is also employed in the Japanese-Canadian writer Joy Kogawa's novel *Obasan* (1981). In contrast to many of the texts discussed in this chapter which focus on the marginalization of indigenous peoples, the narrative of social marginalization that is foregrounded in *Obasan* re-articulates a history of the Canadian government's treatment of Japanese Canadian immigrants during the Second World War**.** The novel examines the Canadian government's policy of suspending citizenship for Japanese-Canadians in Vancouver, and the internment of Japanese-Canadians in concentration camps in the interior of British Columbia at this time of crisis.

In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben contends that modern nation states, such as Canada, mask their sovereign power over the life and death of the people in a discourse of citizenship and human rights. Against the common assumption that state terror and genocide is an aberration or exceptional case of human atrocity, Agamben argues that the modern nation state is founded on a 'state of exception', where it is possible to define a group of citizens as 'bare life', or people who can be killed without being sacrificed. For Agamben, the space of the camp exemplifies this 'state of exception' because it exposes the hidden foundations of the nation state and its sovereign power over the life and death of its citizens. In *Obasan*, Naomi's account of her family's living conditions in the internment camps in the interior of British Columbia not only exemplifies Agamben's account of 'bare life' and the 'state of exception', but also suggests that the Canadian government's rationale for suspending human rights in the case of Japanese-Canadians has its provenance in a xenophobic discourse towards labour migrants in the first decade of the twentieth century. As Naomi's Aunt Emily explains, '"The war was just an excuse for the racism that was already there. We were rioted against back in 1907, for heavens sakes! We've always faced prejudice"' (Kogawa 1981: 35). Such a

history of race labour is also articulated in Daphne Marlatt's long poem *Steveston* (1974), a collaborative work with the documentary photographer Robert Mindon, which documents the history of Japanese-Canadian labour in a small fishing village at the mouth of the Fraser river in British Columbia. As well as documenting how Steveston was 'home to 2,000 Japanese' (Marlatt and Minden 2001: 56) who were 'Slave[s] of the canneries', the collection gradually reveals how Steveston was 'a ghetto' in which 'survival' was 'the *minimum* requirement, nothing more' (36). By giving voice to this history of race labour, dispossession, and incarceration, both Kogawa and Marlatt challenge the myth of Canada as a democratic and multicultural nation.

Like Mahasweta Devi's *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*, Bama's *Karukku*, and Sally Morgan's *My Place*, Maria Campbell's novel *Halfbreed* (1973) draws on the conventions of autobiography and the historical novel to articulate the history of the Métis from the standpoint of a Métis woman in twentieth-century Saskatchewan. The Métis are people of mixed Aboriginal and European descent in Canada. Their ancestors were born to unions of European fur traders and native women in Northern and Western Canada during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Campbell's story is, however, addressed to all readers, regardless of their racial identity. As she puts it at the beginning of the novel, 'I write this for all of you, to tell you what it is like to be a Halfbreed woman in our country. I want to tell you about the joys and the sorrows, the oppressing poverty, the frustrations and the dreams' (Campbell 1973: 8). She then proceeds to trace the 'oppressing poverty' of the 'Halfbreeds' to the defeat of the Red River Rebellion in Manitoba, a civil and land rights movement led by the Métis leader, Louis Riel, in the nineteenth century. Following an account of this defeat and the subsequent expropriation of Métis people by the Canadian federal government, the novel documents Maria's early childhood experiences and her family's struggle against poverty and racism in rural Saskatchewan. The novel's harrowing descriptions of Maria's experiences as a sex worker, an alcoholic, and a heroine addict in Vancouver may seem to reinforce a stereotype of the First Nations woman as victim. However, Campbell also conveys examples of agency, and resistance to state institutions and their racist policies towards aboriginal peoples. In an account of a greedy priest, who ate all the family's Sunday dinner, for instance, Campbell describes how, when they were children, she and her brother used some of their father's rabbit wire to trip the culprit, after which 'he never dropped by again to eat our Sunday dinners' (Campbell 1973: 30). Again, following a

state inquiry into the suspicious death of one of her father's friends, Gene, after a brawl at a party in St Michele, Campbell notes how the Métis defendants undermined the authority of the court by switching between languages – Cree, French, and English:

> The case came up in court but no evidence could be given. The Halfbreeds needed interpreters so if an English-French interpreter was called they would say that they talked only Cree and when a Cree speaker was brought in it was vice versa. By the time the stories were translated the stories were so mixed up that the case closed.
>
> (Campbell 1973: 62).

For the first-person narrator of *Halfbreed*, it is her maternal grandmother, Cheechum, who stands as a source of strength and defiance. In particular, Cheechum's advice to refuse government welfare – on the grounds that 'when the government gives you something, they take all that you have in return – your pride, your dignity, all the things that make you a living soul' (Campbell 1973: 137) – provides *Halfbreed* with a vision of micropolitical sovereignty. While the novel is far from sanguine about the efficacy of organized political resistance to the Canadian government's policies towards aboriginal peoples, Campbell's description of government welfare as a poisonous gift – or a blanket that destroys rather than gives warmth (150) – highlights the necessity for economic sovereignty as a key to First Nations political autonomy.

The engagement with an oral tradition by indigenous writers from Australia, New Zealand, and North America has also prompted a different critical approach to reading Aboriginal writing. The postcolonial theorist and avant-garde filmmaker, Trinh Minh-ha, for example, has challenged the ethnocentric assumption that storytelling is a form of superstition, which is associated with 'backwardness, ignorance and illiteracy' (Trinh 1989: 124). Invoking the role of storytelling in Maxine Hong Kingston's sequence of stories, *The Woman Warrior*, Trinh argues that what is 'transmitted from generation to generation [by the storyteller] is not only the stories, but the very power of transmission' (Trinh 1989: 134). This idea of the power of transmission is developed further in *Breath Tracks* (1991), a collection of poems by the Okanagan writer, Jeanette Armstrong. As the title suggests, the collection seeks to convey the 'tracks' or traces of oral performance ('breath') through a print medium and lyric voice which may appear to subordinate the voices of Aboriginal women. The policy of naming Aboriginal women as registered treaty Indians, for example, dislocates the subject (denoted by the lyric 'I') from her community. In a similar

way, the residential school system, which many Aboriginal children were forced to attend, attempted to eliminate oral storytelling by defining it as a form of illiteracy. Yet by foregrounding the history of oppression associated with the written word at the forefront of her poetry, Armstrong encourages her readers to read her poetry both as a verbal expression of Aboriginal history and as an attempt to re-inscribe an oral tradition in a Western literary form. It is in and through this double structure of Armstrong's *Breath Tracks* that the histories of her ancestors are, to use Trinh's words, powerfully transmitted.

In 'Threads of Old Memory', Armstrong emphasizes the difficulty of presenting orature, or the written transcription of oral performance, on the printed page. Such difficulty is conveyed through a metapoetic reflection on the vulnerability at stake in transcribing an oral tradition within the conventions of Western print culture. The speaker states:

> Speaking to newcomers in their language is dangerous
> for when I speak
> history is a dreamer
> empowering thought
>
> (Armstrong 1991: 58)

The language of newcomers seems to be 'empowering' because it 'awakens the imaginings of the past', although this past comes 'from a place rooted in the memory of loss' (58). The speaker's act of recalling her cultural practices and knowledge in the very language that repressed these practices is painful. Yet her painful memory of cultural loss is 'experienced in ceremonies', or social rituals that previously linked her community through a 'language [that] spoke only harmony' (58). Such a located expression of the speaker's shared memories and utterances seems to disappear under the weight of 'a language / meant to overpower / to overtake / in skilfully crafted words' (Armstrong 1991: 58). Yet, as the speaker emphasizes, the renaming of such memories and rituals in written English fails to silence the different histories of the 'words steeped in age' (59) which form the poem's historical subtext.

The textual 'links' (59) between Armstrong's lines net together the collective experiences and knowledges of 'a people' in a different form of historical writing. For, embedded in the line 'the calling forth of voices' is the instruction to read her poetry as an oratorical event 'twining past to future' (60). The speaker's 'search for the sacred words' (60) that would bridge the 'gaps' in her historical memory is, however,

endangered by the 'language of newcomers' because that language has been used to marginalize Aboriginal people, and to define them as subjects without history or political sovereignty. For Armstrong, the articulation of Aboriginal women's lives within a Western literary form, such as lyric poetry, is fraught with difficulty and risk. Indeed, Armstrong's commitment to find an appropriate voice for her ancestors does not preclude the possibility of being misunderstood or silenced by the policies and discourses that have represented Aboriginal people as colonial subjects without history or culture. Such discourses fail to recognize how the Aboriginal people continue to act and speak, in spite of their marginalization and ostensible silencing.

Like *Breath Tracks*, Thomas King's novel, *Truth and Bright Water* (1999), is concerned with the historical narrative of European colonialism in Canada, in particular the collecting of native bones and artefacts in Canadian museums of archaeology and anthropology. In a comic reversal of this historical narrative, one of the several story-lines in the novel tells of Monroe Swimmer who infiltrates Canadian museums under the guise of a native artist and 'restores' colonial paintings of the Canadian landscape by reinscribing native figures in the painterly representations: '"I don't think white Canadian settlers wanted their Indians restored." Monroe picks up a stick and tosses it on the bonfire. "I think they liked their Indians where they couldn't see them"' (247). Significantly, Monroe's final 'giveaway' (243) of objects that he has stolen from various museums, including such symbolic items as 'a small bronze statue of an Indian running alongside an elk', a Navajo rug, and two Northwest Coast masks (243), resembles a potlatch ceremony. Banned by the Canadian government, this ceremony involved the demonstration of a particular Chief's social status through the public expenditure or 'giving away' of private property between different Aboriginal families or bands. In this system of gift exchange, the receiver of a gift was obliged to reciprocate with interest or face losing social prestige and power in her or his community. To the Canadian federal government, the sheer wastefulness of a potlatch ceremony, where the giver is empowered by showing a total indifference to their private property and giving it to a member of a different band or nation subverts the rational economic logic of European capitalism, which underpin the foundations of the Canadian state (see Bracken 1997). Yet the federal government's prohibition of the potlatch in the late nineteenth-century also allowed the government to subsequently seize what it described as potlatch paraphernalia, as well as criminalizing West Coast First Nations communities for practising

unlawful economic activities. If we read his actions in relation to the colonial government's prohibition of the potlatch, Monroe Swimmer's act of giving away objects that he has stolen from Canadian museums – which were presumably acquired after the federal government's prohibition of the potlatch in the nineteenth century – can be understood as a further attempt to subvert the colonial foundations of the Canadian state.

If *Truth and Bright Water* is concerned with the use of rituals to question the colonial foundations of the Canadian nation state, Witi Ihimaera's novel *Tangi* (1973) and Patricia Grace's novel *Potiki* (1995 [1986]) foreground the importance of social and cultural rituals for empowering indigenous Maori communities in late twentieth-century postcolonial New Zealand. Situated in Wellington and Gisborne, New Zealand, *Tangi* is ostensibly an elegiac narrative, which documents the attempt of the Maori protagonist, Tama Mahana, to come to terms with his father's death. It also traces Tama's efforts to negotiate his position as a Maori within a dominant Pakeha (white European) society. In the following extract, for instance, Tama stands on the threshold of the meeting house, or Rongopai, a sacred space in which his father's funeral ceremony or tangi is held:

> – E pa. E pa.
> And one step further now.
> Rongopai rises up before you. The roof holds up the night. It is an old meeting house, painted with swirling colours. Beneath the eaves, the light blazes brightest of all. There, your father lies. Don't be afraid. This is the longest journey of all. It is the loneliest of journeys. Haere mai. Haere mai. Step into the light. Come.
>
> (Ihimaera 1973: 135)

By crossing the threshold into the meeting house, Tama proceeds to perform the ritual of tangi, and to acknowledge his responsibility both to his father's memory and to his Maori inheritance. For Ihimaera, the attempt to negotiate two different cultural traditions is a form of what he calls biculturalism, or the 'equality between Maori and European in New Zealand' (Ihimaera cited in Ojinmah 1993: 4). For some Maori nationalists, however, the very idea of a synthesis of Maori and European culture is a form of assimilation that denies the histories of European colonization, and the persistence of European political hegemony in contemporary New Zealand. Yet in *Tangi*, the protagonist's return from Wellington to his family home in Gisborne

to attend his father's funeral ceremony is articulated as a reclaiming of his Maori identity in relation to a broader mythical history of the Maori that stretches back to the time of the union of Rangitane, the Sky Father, and Papatuanuku, the Earth Mother. As the narrator puts it:

> Look now, upon your mother. Your father was her world and she weeps because he is gone. She kneels close to the casket, brushing her father's face with your hands. Her tight embrace with him has been broken, and she is Papatuanuku the Earth Mother who reaches out to him to embrace him again.
>
> (Ihimaera 1973: 151–2)

If *Tangi* is ostensibly a narrative of loss, Ihimaera's detailed account of the tangi asserts the persistence of Maori culture in late twentieth-century New Zealand.

The co-existence and conflict between Maori culture and late capitalist consumer culture in twentieth-century New Zealand is developed further in Patricia Grace's novel *Potiki*. The novel documents a Maori community's struggle to protect their ancestral land from development, that is, being turned into what the venture capitalist, Mr Dolman, calls 'much needed amenities', such as 'First class accommodation, top restaurants, night club, recreation centre with its own golf links' (Grace 1995 [1986]: 88). Against the Eurocentric assumption of Mr Dolman (who is aptly referred to by Roimata and her family as Mr Dollarman) that Maori culture is conservative and backward, the narrator offers a dynamic vision of Maori history through the figure of the spiral. In an attempt to re-educate her children using traditional Maori stories, for example, Roimata describes how 'this train of stories defined our lives, curving out from points on the spiral in ever-widening circles from which neither beginnings nor endings could be defined' (Grace 1995: 41). The figure of the spiral in *Potiki*, as Elizabeth Deloughrey explains, represents a temporal structure, in which Maori history and the history of European colonial modernity coexist:

> The debate between the community and the Dollarman arises over the term 'progress' that Maori characters emphasize they already have. The Dollarman answers that as they are 'unemployed' their progress is 'not obvious', to which one of the Maori speakers responds, 'Not to you. Not in your eyes. But what we are doing is important. To us. To us that's progress.
>
> (Deloughrey 1999: 71)

What is stake in this debate over progress is not merely a question of different cultural understandings of history; rather, the Maori community's dynamic vision of history as a spiral temporality provides the ground on which that community resists the neo-colonial ambitions of capitalist development – articulated as progress – and the further dispossession of Maori land.

The resistance of the Maori community to capitalist development in Patricia Grace's *Potiki* exemplifies the way in which much Aboriginal writing is connected to broader struggles against neo-liberal globalization as well as the histories of European colonialism. What this dimension of Aboriginal writing illustrates is that writing concerned with the experience of marginality or subalternity is not only concerned with the politics of representation – a politics which can serve to construct the subaltern as an exotic object for Western readers – but also with broader social movements, such as land claims and political organisation. Moreover, the spiral in *Potiki*, like the heroic myth of Chotti Munda in *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*, the figure of the grandmother in Maria Campell's *Halfbreed* and Jeanette Armstrong's 'breath tracks', is a powerful rhetorical device precisely because it gives voice to subaltern histories in order to persistently question the disempowerment of subaltern peoples in the contemporary era of neo-liberal globalization. Such rhetorical devices exemplify the way in which the aesthetic strategies of many postcolonial texts concerned with marginality are always also connected to a struggle for social and political empowerment.

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Chapter 9

Anthropology and Postcolonialism

Will Rea

The idea that the discourses of postcolonialism and anthropology should sit together in a general reader is both essential and problematic. Anthropology, more than any other of the Western academic disciplines, has been the target of criticism from postcolonial scholars. Yet it is also the discipline that can lay claim to a deep-seated understanding of the most basic and marginal elements of postcolonialism. While historically anthropology has closely reflected the form of the colonial as ideology, governance, and academic modelling, it has, since the latter decades of the twentieth century, seen its disciplinary parameters reshaped and reconstructed, both in the practical politics of decolonization (and the becoming of the postcolonial nation), and by the way 'postcolonial' as a term has come to stand as an intellectual device within the discourses of the metropolitan elite.

To attempt a survey, however, is to run into a whole series of problems around definition. While there may be a common thread in anthropology's engagement with colonialism and the post-colony, deciding which area of anthropology, or what form of theoretical engagement, or what regional study an essay such as this might focus upon is almost impossible. Anthropology today doesn't even suggest a necessary engagement with the colonial except insofar as the postcolonial now effects a common moment that is universal to the world and that we are all participant of. What then links a current anthropology with that historical past? What line of investigation might necessarily be invoked?

Placing anthropology and the postcolonial together within a critical survey inevitably brings forward a series of practical considerations and epistemological complexities at the heart of Western academic engagement with the world. In part, this is because anthropology insists upon a double order of relationship, a relationship that oscillates between, on the one hand, a sitedness within the Western academy and, on the other, a practical engagement with the lives and stories of people in other places. It is an oscillation between practice carried out as ethnography, the collection and storage of other lives at a fieldsite, and the representational forms that make that data intelligible within and for the academy. For the most part, the form of this representation is writing.

At the core of the project is an approach that demands a comparative analysis. This is a constant running through the multiple theoretical models that have been put forward as the structuring paradigms for anthropological understanding, whether these are the deeply problematic evolutionary assumptions of Victorian anthropology or the genuinely held beliefs in the commonality and difference of human sociality or concerns about the penetration of modernity on a global scale.

Because the parameters of the discipline are constructed around the historical discourse between the West and the rest of the world, and because, for the most part, those other places have been consistently located at the global margins and subject to constant inequalities of power, this gives the discipline immediate purchase and also renders it problematic. At the heart of anthropology is the development of the particular forms of European Enlightenment distinctions which came forward at the end of the nineteenth century as a part of the European scientific engagement with the world. As such, a set of tensions lie at the base of the discipline's constitution, that even today offer different versions of what anthropology should or could be. On the one hand, there is the assumption that the purpose of anthropology is to provide understanding pertaining to human thought at a universal scale. On the other, anthropology is viewed as a particular form of practice, a technology even, that places it firmly within the modernist form of collecting and categorizing difference which in the twentieth century, in particular, is related to forms of governance. In its nineteenth century guises, this practice contained an implicit evolutionist racial logic – one that operates upon crude racial classifications, such as skin types and head shapes, and which (in common with archaeology and art history) is always seeking for an elusive point of origin.

The consequences of the ongoing relationship between colonialism, the emergent postcolonial, and anthropology are clearly underlined in the following statement: 'for anthropologists, more than any other type of scholar, colonialism is not an historical object that remains external to the observer. The discipline descends from and is still struggling with techniques of observation and control that emerged from the colonial dialectic of Western governmentality' (Pels 1997: 165).

The disciplinary origins of anthropology undoubtedly lie in the early territorial expansion of Europe. Stocking's (1987) survey of Victorian anthropology argues that an institutional anthropology began within the moral imperatives that became a part of the reaction to the increasing imperial construction of Europe. The roots of this institutional (and British) anthropology, he argues, are to be found in the Aboriginal Protection Society founded in 1838, an offshoot of the anti-slavery movement. These roots have provided anthropology with an undeniable moral seam, one that runs throughout the discipline and is subscribed to by most individual anthropologists. In part, it is a romantic desire towards support for indigenous traditions and peoples that was made manifest, and has become embedded as a continuing moral radicalism among anthropological practitioners (James 1973: 41–71).

This constant moral imperative, however, needs to be read from within the structuring paradigms of anthropology itself. At the heart of anthropological analysis and the discipline lies a constant ambivalence between understanding the relationship of the person and the wider social constructs within which he or she exists. Thus a study of anthropology's relationship to the colonial and postcolonial oscillates between the moral imperatives of the individual practitioner and the way in which the discipline was (and is) embedded in a larger history of colonial practice.

It is perhaps for this reason that the revelation of anthropology's disciplinary relationship with colonialism caused such consternation within anthropology itself. Anthropology (more so than most disciplines) is taught as a series of interventions by individuals. Appropriately, there is a ready genealogy that places James Frazer and E.B. Tylor as grandfather figures, Bronislaw Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown as father figures, and so on (see Hutnyk 2002: 15). What is readily ignored (at least until the last twenty years) is that anthropology's relationship with the practice of individuals is inevitably bound up with the formation of Europe in relation to its colonial others. Bronislaw Malinowski's effective demarcation of the beginning of anthropology – a point zero – as starting with his own fieldwork practice has tended

to deny or at least obscure the subject's position within the wider European Enlightenment, and the ways in which strands of European thought have impacted on the subject.

The lineaments of modern social anthropology were firmly established in the United Kingdom. Other national traditions were of equal importance, especially in America, France, and Germany – but there is little doubt that it was in the United Kingdom that the form and method of the discipline was established. By 1913, the idea of intensive fieldwork was the *sine qua non* of anthropological work. But it was not until 1922, with the publication of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, that Bronislaw Malinowski was to provide British anthropology with a model for action that essentially remained unchanged until the 1970s. Malinowski's work embodies the tensions structuring anthropology. There is his avowed aim, philosophy even, that difference was not so different after all. Yet, it could be argued, it was Malinowski's desperation for the colonial establishment's approval of anthropology that led to the deepest engagement between anthropology and colonialism – an engagement that was predicated on the categorization and use of human difference, particularly in the creation of forms of governance.

A formal relationship between British anthropology and the colonial office did not arise until the 1930s. Desperate for institutional approval and, more pertinently, for money, British anthropology petitioned the government throughout the early years of the twentieth century – suggesting that colonial governance would be better achieved if colonial officers were trained in anthropology. No formal government patronage of anthropology was forthcoming until the 1930s and, even then, the relationship between anthropology and the colonial authorities was one of wariness, scepticism, and distrust. To the colonial administrator, the anthropologist was more likely to be a threat to the hegemony of white colonial society with his tendency to seemingly 'go native', without properly understanding the balance of colonial relations that kept society on an 'even keel'. Joyce Cary's 1933 novel *The American Visitor* is as good an indication of the colonial officers' attitude to 'meddlesome' anthropologists as any government report.

Perhaps the most important moment in the securing of the relationship between the emergent discipline and colonial administration was the formation of the International African Institute. With the IAI, Malinowski finally gained the recognition within the British state that he was so ardent in pursuing. Founded as the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures in 1926 in London, its constitutional writ was to promote 'the understanding of African languages

and social institutions with a view to their protection and use as instruments of education'. The IAI soon took on larger dimensions particularly with the support of the Rockefeller foundation (Salamone 2000: 20). Malinowski's vision was for the development of a practical anthropology, one that would study the problems of culture change around the world through calling on a study of facts and purposes. He went on to embed the idea of practical anthropology in his courses at the London School of Economics (where a course in colonial administration could be taken), and there was a clear thrust towards the establishment of scientific ethnography as a tool and participant in the administration of the colonies. More particularly, the IAI constitutionally eliminated all political activity from its remit. If the colonial office was less than keen to employ anthropological research directly in the administration of the colonies, it was not for a lack of will on the part of the British anthropological community. It is apparent that many of the titles that flowed from the funding of the IAI sought to replace an evolutionist historicism with an emphasis on social structure and cultural life. That the initial explicit aims of the IAI to study social change were quietly ignored stems from a model which sought to ignore history in favour of 'pristine' social form and which held within it a damning contempt for the history of the peoples so surveyed (Sharpe 1986). That the concerns of the colonial situation provided the background to anthropological work is best seen in the titles of the edited volumes produced by the IAI, for example, *African Political Systems* (Evans-Pritchard and Fortes 1940), *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* (A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and D. Forde 1950) and, perhaps most importantly, *The Ethnographic Survey of Africa* conducted under the editorship of Daryll Forde and begun in 1945.

If the role of anthropology for colonial regimes was relatively unimportant, the reverse proposition does not hold. The process of European global imperialism was central to the anthropological task of recording and analysing the ways of life of subject populations. It is not merely that anthropological fieldwork was facilitated by European colonial powers (although this well-known point deserves to be thought about in other than moralistic terms); it is that European power, as discourse and practice, was always an intrinsic part of the reality that anthropologists sought to understand. Paradoxically, the models that anthropologists developed in order to understand the peoples they were confronted with made little or no reference to the realities of European dominance. In short, anthropology in its most functional and structural guises was conducted under a form of historical amnesia and

sociological blindness. As clearly illustrated by Fabian (1983), the models upon which anthropological analysis were based, while aiming at an objective ahistoricism, carried within them more than a trace of the evolutionist assumptions of the nineteenth century in their studies of pristine 'untouched' society, living relics from humanity's past.

As the subject developed in the twentieth century, and especially the colonial twentieth century, the structuring tension in anthropology between person and society was increasingly resolved in favour of the social. The perceived and actual demands of colonial governance (and here the British model of indirect rule was pre-eminent in the development of the dominant form of anthropology) meant that the model that had become established as the *sine qua non* for anthropological analysis was one that corresponded exactly with the models of governance put in place by colonial regimes. Structural functionalist forms of anthropology which were adhered to were instrumental in the production of a form of colonial governance that, particularly for the British, represented a model upon which colonial rule could be sustained. It was a model that appealed to district officer and anthropologist alike – circumscribing a people, a 'tribe', that would be both orderly to rule and amenable to scientific study.

The modernist theme of governance within the colony was, however, never static. A literal reading of anthropology by its critics seems to suggest that it was only during decolonization that anthropologists suddenly discovered they had been involved in a colonial cover-up. Indeed, according to some readings, the discovery had to wait until 1973 when it took Talal Asad to point out anthropology's complicity with colonial governance. It is clear that a more subtle reading is required. As with many other social sciences, anthropology had been anticipating the regime change for some years before the dismantling of European empires became inevitable.

The 1950s and 1960s saw a reorientation of anthropology, led by writers such as Max Gluckman and Georges Balandier (see Cooper 2005 for a review of Gluckman and Balandier). Gluckman's work was of particular importance as it took as its object of study not the bounded tribal unit but the networks that surrounded the development of the 'urban landscape'. In line with the prevailing economic theories of modernization, there was an increasing realization that the purpose and aims of anthropology needed to be expanded away from a mono-focus on the rural bounded ethnicity towards work which was more fluid and dynamic, and which took cognizance of a growing urban population within the colony. There was also an increasing recognition

that models of analysis might be better derived from Western sociology. While academic surveys may have fed into, and facilitated, colonial governance, there is less evidence of direct practical engagement between anthropologists and the colonial regimes they were supposedly supporting, despite the fact that, by the 1950s, anthropological institutes, such as the Rhodes Livingstone, were being funded by the colonial office in the United Kingdom. Anthropologists themselves tended to make a distinction between applied anthropology and the more important academic study that generated theoretical models. It is notable that for the most part the anthropologists at the forefront of change, particularly the group that came to be known as the Manchester School (Werbner 1998), came from a decidedly left political spectrum. Indeed, by the 1950s, the Colonial Office had cause for concern and several British anthropologists were denied visas to Africa on the grounds of their Communist Party sympathies. Malinowski's prescriptions against political activity were being increasingly ignored by the generation of anthropologists arriving after him. What is also notable is that ethnography – participant fieldwork – remained the primary medium of practice.

Despite the reformulations in anthropology noted above, the dismemberment of empire, and the replacement of direct colonial governance with new postcolonial administrations that drew their power from self-governance, was bound to have a profound effect on the discipline. For many anthropologists, as for many in the West, especially the USA, the demise of imperialism was a welcome event. If Nkrumah demonized the anthropologist, the claim could be made that Jomo Kenyatta instituted a form of Malinowskian functionalism in the governance of Kenya. It could also be argued that, inscribed into certain nationalist movements, even those such as Negritude, was a certain desire for the Africa portrayed in and by the anthropological text (Kuper 1996: 114), and figures such as Leopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire opened *Présence Africaine* to enlightened ethnographic collaboration (see Clifford 1986: 9).

For many in the anthropological community, however, decolonization actually seemed to have little impact – for some, it was a relief that the complicity with imperial governance was no longer required; for others, it meant that one government patron was simply replaced by another. In Western universities, it was a cause of relief and rejoicing but, in the field, the change seemed not to have been noticed. And anthropology continued through the 1960s seemingly as before. Few anthropologists appeared to have noticed what Sembene Ousmane's

film *Xala* (1975) captures in his wry and ironic view of the postcolonial state. His framing of the transfer of power between the colonial government and the new governing elite, his approach to neo-colonialism, and his observation of the stunning interchanges between tradition and modernity, between the urban and the rural, highlight better perhaps than any ethnography the changing circumstances of the post-colony.

The most telling volume of essays on anthropology's relationship with colonialism was *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (Talal Asad 1973). It signalled the emergence of anthropology into the postcolonial, first, in its marking of the distinct temporal shift caused by the achievement of independence, and, second, in its recognition of the ways in which anthropological engagement with the colonial and postcolonial needed to face up to its intervention and participation in the constructions of colonial dialogues. Talal's introduction may properly be regarded as the *j'accuse* moment of an awakening anthropological consciousness but, even within the volume itself, a variety of views emerged which moved between condemning anthropological complicity and defending the subject. For a time in the 1970s, there seemed to be a genuine crisis in what was meant by anthropology or, indeed, what role and space anthropology had, particularly in relation to work carried out in the now post-colony. At the heart of this was a fundamental questioning of the assumptions that lay behind the principles of scientific ethnography – the engagement of the anthropologist with groups of people within the 'field'.

Perhaps most crucial to the rethinking of anthropology was the awareness that the societies in which most anthropologists had worked were not isolated and singular entities, but were part of a dominant global system. In addition, there was a profound rethinking of the position of what scientific ethnography meant within the academy. It is here that the paradoxes embodied by anthropology are most clearly articulated. For a subject that embedded its *raison d'être* in the study of that which is profoundly removed from the academy, anthropology has been remarkably successful in setting institutional boundaries around itself, differentiating itself from other subjects through its continued adherence to the synthesis of object, method, and theory. In response to the postcolonial, however, it was to the academy that anthropology initially retreated. Certainly fieldwork was still carried out – more and more often in Europe – but the practical articulation between the work in the field and forms of policy, governance, and intervention had gone, indeed was viewed with suspicion, particularly

in relation to American anthropologists working in Southeast Asia. Anthropology retreated into itself and back into the study. Yet, in doing so, it gained a space within which it was able to rethink and reassert its position in the world.

What was less certain was what form postcolonial anthropology might take. The seeming loss of object, the social group bounded by a singular identity, reorientated the grounds upon which anthropology conceived of itself but this reorientation was made in terms that were familiar to anthropology itself – it was (and is) conducted as a rethinking of the relationship between society and individual. Two paradigms emerged – a renewed interest in the reintroduction of historical consciousness into the analysis of the social and a reframing of subjectivity in relation to cultural analysis.

The crisis in anthropology caused by the realization of its complicity with a colonial past manifested itself in a number of different ways. The immediate challenge to the establishment came from two separate, but often related, groups – Marxism and feminism. Both drew on the notion that the old model of scientific ethnography had historically marginalized or ignored constituent groups of people within the bounded locale. Structural functionalism had relied in great part upon the models of chieftaincy and leadership (especially in the practical gathering of data), and the institutional dominance of men in the discipline had tended to mean that at least half the population of the societies studied had been ignored. The implications for a model, supposedly based upon the documentation of objective truths by the neutral ethnographer, were clear.

Perhaps the most profound initial reaction to the failures of scientific ethnography, a reaction that took place at the level of academic theory as well as within the methodological principles of ethnographic research, was the reinvigoration of historical studies. The notion of the ethnographic present, the timeless vacuum within which so much ethnography had been created, became a subject of debate. Despite the fact that during the 1960s Evans Pritchard had declared that 'Anthropology is history or it is nothing', the subject had continued in the main with its dogmatic adherence to the notion of the ethnographic present – there was no place for history within its version of sociological science. A postcolonial anthropology could not now ignore the implications of leaving history to one side. Nor could it simply add a historical dimension to the bounded ethnographic accounts of before. A historicized anthropology, especially in the hands of scholars such as Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz in the United States, and

Johannes Fabian and Jonathan Friedman in Europe, was an anthropology that articulated the place of the marginalized, exploited, and powerless in historicized global movements in ways that predated and resembled the Subaltern Studies movement, which was itself to have an effect upon the writing of anthropology in the 1990s.

Various Marxist forms of assessment had been prevalent even in ethnographic writing produced during colonial times. Max Gluckman's formulations, for example, were in large part related to a version of British left Marxism. Nevertheless it was primarily to a French School of ethnography, indebted to Georges Balandier, that anthropology turned in the 1970s. In particular the work of Godelier, Meillassoux, and Terray injected ethnography with a revaluation of social structure as ideological formation masking conditions of dominance, whether these were of kinship, age, or gender. The Marxist intervention also saw the development of a wider theoretical turn in anthropology. Renewed interest in the writings of Marx, in particular his attention to the historical formations of inequality, led to the study of inequality generally as well as within so-called pre-capitalist modes of production (Kahn 1981). A Marxist anthropology was also the well spring for reinvestigation of forms of materiality and material culture (see Pietz 1985 and Miller 2004).

It is generally acknowledged, however, that Marxist anthropology was 'of a moment' (Nugent 1988: 81), and failed to gain a substantive or sustained hold on anthropological theorization. Nevertheless, it is arguable that, through Marxist anthropology, the subject was able to return to a broader comparative analysis that is regional rather than localized. Furthermore, a renewed interest in Marx meant reinvestigating the social dynamics of resistance, and a number of writers began to find that, within colonial hegemony, voices and symbols of resistance were ever present, ranging from the nuances of religious speech (Macgaffey 1978), through rituals of rebellion (J. & J. Comaroff 1991), to armed opposition (Lan 1985).

The feminist turn in anthropology has perhaps managed a much more sustainable presence within the discipline. In part this is due to its engagement with developing feminist movements throughout the postcolonial world. Feminist anthropology was very much linked to the movement towards recognizing the universal subordination of women's rights – the critique being directed against an essentialized notion of women, derived from the simplistic binaries of gender described by Western sexual politics. While currently a model founded upon solidarity through difference may offer some form of restoration

of the feminist paradigm, feminist anthropology went further in altering the ways in which anthropology could be conducted. In shifting the discipline's emphasis away from the public to the domestic, from seeing kinship as political system to kinship as constitutive of local relations and, perhaps most importantly, from the social to a concern with the nature of personhood and subjectivity, feminist anthropology had a profound effect upon the way in which anthropology described its encounter with the world. In part this shift was able to build upon certain antecedents. At the height of British structural functionalism, there were a few anthropologists working within literary genres that subverted the norms of the scientific ethnographic paradigm. Two writers stand out among them – Laura Bohannan and Mary F. Smith who, in their own ways and perhaps ahead of their time, made significant contributions to the form of anthropological writing. Bohannan for recounting her experiences in a novel, *Return to Laughter* (1954), under the name Elenor Bowen, and Smith for her biographical account of the domestic life of a Muslim Hausa woman in *Baba of Karo* (1945). Both books present a revaluation of the way in which ethnographic writing might proceed, and both prefigure the moves in anthropological representation that were to develop in the 1980s.

Writing Culture and after

While Asad's own contribution to his 1973 edited volume of essays directly accused anthropology of its complicity with colonial regimes, it is Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures*, published in the same year, which had the most profound effect in the critique of anthropology. Geertz developed an anthropology that regarded culture as a system of symbols by which man [*sic*] confers significance upon his own experience. Encompassed by his term 'thick description' – of which his description of the Balinese cock-fight is perhaps the most important example (Geertz 1973) – his is an anthropology reliant upon an interpretative ethnography that shuns formal structures in favour of the anthropologist's self-reflexive voice. Ethnography, no longer conceived of as a scientific operation, is the 'reading' of a cultural text wherein the voice of the interpreter is readily apparent. Thus the interpretation of culture opened the way for what has become generally known as 'textualist' anthropology. Stimulated by Edward Said's revaluation of the way in which Orientalist discourses create the object upon which further Orientalist discourse develops (Said 1978),

a group of scholars, including James Clifford, Paul Rabinow Stephen Tyler and George Marcus, set out to demonstrate that culture operates as a composition of 'seriously contested codes and representations'; that poetics and politics are inseparable; science is part of a historical and linguistic process; written cultural descriptions are 'properly experimental and ethical'; authorial authority is a thing of the past; and that writing is 'always caught up in the invention, not representation of cultures' (Clifford 1986: 2).

The next move was thus one that was already prefigured in American ethnography, that is, to treat anthropology itself as a text, a genre of writing that could, and should, be submitted to the rigour that literary criticism has brought to other texts. The postmodern revolution had reached anthropology, and the participants in the Santa Fe Seminar of 1984 were the vanguard, and the book, *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (1986), became, for a time, one of the most divisive tracts in anthropology's history.

The initial aims of the book were, in retrospect, seemingly innocent, pointing to the fact that one of the major activities that engage anthropologists is writing, and that, within the discipline, there had been little critical analysis of that activity. Underlying this premise was the more significant claim that anthropology was beholden to an ideology that claimed transparency of representation – a truth value legitimated by immediate experience.

To the supporters of the 'textualist' approach, the revaluation of the ethnographic text allowed for a revaluation of the entire discipline, placing it within other, and often more culturally exciting, traditions – surrealism, for instance (which gained its greater expression in Clifford's work) – and giving voice to the literary mode within which ethnographic texts might have been written, and within which they might be written in the future. For the authors in this new approach, it meant recapturing a past that might have been had anthropologists not been so hung up on, or so stuffy about, their 'truth to materials', and their reliance upon the master narratives of Darwin, Marx, Freud and Einstein. What was this truth in any case – if not, poorly understood, representation?

The crux of the debate was the translation of culture as text, and, in this strand of their analysis, the participants of the Sante Fe Seminar were directly located within the hermeneutic tradition of Geertz. Whatever genealogies are called into the service of a new anthropology, at the heart of the Writing Culture project was a challenge to

ethnographic authority, a challenge to the right of translation that was implied within the texts, and the forms of writing the translations took. In particular, it was the inequality of authorial authority in writing that exercised the participants. For them, the inscription of implicit readings upon other cultures was a process symptomatic of a global inequality in access to representation.

The so-called postmodern anthropology inevitably presented a challenge to the social scientific basis upon which anthropology had built itself. Not only did it question the truth value of writing by writers that had been trained within a tradition of so-called value free social science, it described their writing as literature and, with certain exceptions, not very good literature at that. That this has been the case has proved a source of bafflement for a number of writers. Meyer Fortes himself, on being asked why he wasn't a writer, is said to have commented that if he could write he would have no need to be an anthropologist.

Without doubt, the textualist turn reinvigorated anthropological thinking about the status of the other, and about the way in which anthropological representation constructed views of the other. It was a debate that opened, for serious scrutiny, the subjectivity of anthropological writing, and laid the ground for a number of attempts at different forms of writing. These included various hermeneutical experiments (Jackson 1989), sensory anthropologies (Stoller 1997), and, perhaps most successfully, the introduction of autobiographical and biographical ethnography (Okely & Callaway 1992).

Yet in laying open anthropology to a form of cultural critique, textual-based anthropology also opened it to a wider set of disciplinary critiques. In lifting the robes of anthropology's social scientific method, *Writing Culture* exposed the discipline to a ferocious critique from disciplines in the humanities, and anthropology (once again) found itself fending off charges of inequality, dominance, and, in certain instances, racism. In particular, it found itself within the Western academy confronted by a shift to cultural studies, wherein the language of representation, unfettered by a need for so-called objective social facts, seemed better placed to express the concerns of a world of plurality and difference.

Writing Culture caused a great deal of anger within the discipline, especially within an anthropology wedded to the notion of sociological objectivity. The debate around *Writing Culture* also brought back to the fore debates over rationality and relativism which had played a background role throughout the history of anthropology. At the same

time, there was a still a strong sense within the anthropological community that the work of anthropology, the anthropological object, should not become sterile debates about the uses to which anthropologists put their knowledge of the other or, indeed, about the anthropologist, either as a self-reflexive or historical figure. While the textualist debate did highlight the activity of participant observation as a deceptively named activity, one that 'involves only activity that did not contradict the Other society's status vis-a-vis the culture of the anthropologist' (Nugent 1988: 85), it did not, and does not, offer a practical working through of the 'rapidly growing distance between those for whom anthropological knowledge is a legitimate pursuit and those for whom being anthropological objects is an obligation' (Nugent 1988: 89).

Perhaps the *Writing Culture* debates, and what is now the paradigmatic integration of textualist analysis into anthropology, marked a point of divergence in the late 1980s that had been coming since the moment of colonial decoupling. Decisive shifts in thinking mark the fractures prefigured, and always existing, within the discipline between an anthropology that claims practical engagement in a real world (out there) and one engaged in forms of theory and speculation based upon comparative cultural analysis, an anthropology that offers a supposedly practical effect and one that offers commentary (that may or may not be of interest beyond the confines of the academy). As always with anthropology, the two strands are not mutually exclusive, and few anthropologists would subscribe to the view that the text offers a replacement for the observable material reality of people's lives, whatever the ideological assumptions and positions of authority the observer may hold. Nonetheless, through a critical turn, more focus began to be paid to what might be usefully called a dialogic anthropology. Representation, and the representation of representation, was not simply applicable to the representations of anthropologists. Rather a critique of representation was expanded into a much more general field, took on board the anthropologist's position, but also turned to the forms of cultural representation and the (semiotically charged) notion of culture to be found in cultural studies which in turn have informed and been informed by the writing of the postcolonial.

As Apter notes, a crucial shift in recent anthropology has been the development of frameworks for the study of the dialogics of colonial discourse within localized political fields, ranging from studies of critical locutions to the political negotiations of colonial power (Apter 1999). He argues, following Ranger (1983), that much present work

has been orientated toward revealing and understanding the fictions and inventions of colonial power as a social fact, and, importantly, of the ways in which local cultures of resistance and power reacted to that colonial presence. Thus, as recent anthropological work, such as that of Peel (1989, 2000), has demonstrated, local agency did not cease in the face of colonial hegemony, and colonialism was at once a part of people's reality, an obstacle to that reality, and an opportunity within which a series of local issues are resolved or not as the case may be.

At the forefront of this historical revaluation has been the analysis of culture within the postcolonial state. This shift is one in which historicism has been to the fore, but it also incorporates much of the work that exists as cultural critique and analysis of the post-colony by intellectuals from within that post-colony. At the centre of this move is the identification of the historical relationships between forms of modernity as situated within a Western centre and modernity as it appears within the postcolonial state. At the heart of the cultural analysis put forward by the 'multiple modernities' ethnography is an understanding that the cultural forms produced within the non-Western world are not merely repetitions of hegemonic Western capital but derive in multiple and often startling ways from indigenous traditions (themselves developed within the historical context of imperial modernity) which provide their own rationality in the face of the Capitalist world order. Writers as diverse as Chakrabarty (1997), Ong (1999), Geschiere (1997), and the Comaroffs (1993) have documented the striking diversity of cultural responses to the post-colonial/globalized world. It is little wonder that the debates in most recent anthropology have had as their touchstone issues such as hybridity and hegemony, the relationship of the local to the global, and even the comparative nature of commodity- and gift-based economic systems (see Strathern 1999).

The critique of modernity represents a shift in the focus of the subject, a cognizance that the history of the modern has to incorporate a history of the colonial. In its rush away from the implications of the subject's relation with the colonial, anthropology seemingly enforced a form of amnesia upon itself. Even as it failed to understand the implications of the colonial in anthropological discourse, it also failed to understand the colony as being an integrated part of the forms of global modernity. Anthony Appiah's critique of the postmodern (1993) holds true also for anthropology in that the subject, in turning its back upon its colonial legacy, continued to view the history of anthropology and those earlier 'anthropologised societies' in terms that

ignored what their position within the colonial system was. The situation has been changing and more recently anthropologists have begun to turn from a colonial anthropology to an anthropology of the colonial (Apter 1999: 586). In other words, the colonial returns as the subject of analysis, anthropological as well as historical. Subaltern history, the awareness of the fluidity of textual representation, and, in particular, a cultural critique that argues that colonialism itself needs to be regarded as culture (Pels 1997: 167) have combined to ask questions as to how colonial cultures, from the violence of early conquest (see especially Taussig 1980) to settlement, for example, all underpinned forms of colonial governmentality (Thomas 1994). Anthropological analysis is brought to bear on both the spectacle of imperial governance and the domestic form of colonial culture (Callaway 1987), presenting an ethnography of British social life behind the formal façades of power.

Yet this is also a story that colonial culture has told itself. Increasingly the spectacle of Empire in the colony became the story of Empire within the metropolitan centre. Anthropology's complicity in the construction of this story is demonstrated in works such as Coombes' on the form of imperial invention (1994**)**, wherein the display of African culture and its otherness is at the heart of formations of a British identity. More recently, Kasfir's analysis of African art (2007) documents in detail how colonial influence met African creativity in the making of an art world that now stands as both self-representation for the peoples of Nigeria and Kenya and a form of authenticity for a world market in 'tribal' exotica. In its analysis of the colonial, anthropology stands to gain, both in the interrogation of its own participation within the colonial, and in its analysis of the ongoing presence of the colonial in the conditions of governmentality in the postcolonial world.

That continued presence is evident, for one thing, in the making of the post-colony. According to Achille Mbembe (1992), the form that the post-colony takes is heavily dependent upon the formulations inherited from the colonial state. Importantly while his work brings to the fore the aesthetics of power that the postcolonial nation enforces in the form of state spectacle, it also provides the counter narratives that disrupt the assumptions of state hegemony. Mbembe's work points the way to and is a part of a reinvigorated ethnography, one that is as at home analysing the spectacle of postcolonial state cultures (Apter 2005), the culture of the nation-state's elites, as the popular cultures that sit in relation to but are largely excluded from the elite centres of postcolonial state power.

Increasingly it is in the analysis of popular cultures (see especially Barber 1987 and 1997) that ethnography, if not anthropology, may have found a form of accommodation with itself. Ethnography becomes a specific way of reading through, and working with, the texts, images, and productions of the postcolonial state. While such a way of reading has been suggested for approaching the novels of Soyinka or Achebe, that is, they be read as 'Ur-ethnographies', this has not been a necessarily fruitful mode, denigrating both the novelists' work and the work of ethnography. More usefully it is at the level of the local production of popular cultures, those that have tended to be ignored by the canons of what the Western metropolis regards as postcolonial culture that ethnography becomes the way of reading; interpreting, and understanding the grounds upon which popular cultural production is made as well as providing access to the various readings the popular text invites. Ethnography is the work of revealing the ground against which popular fiction (Newall 2006) or local photography (Pinney 1997) or video (Larkin 1997) emerges into the postcolonial state.

Conclusion

The historically situated fall of colonial regimes – however superficial that moment actually turned out to be in the continuation of the neo-imperial projects of hegemonic capital and culture – could only profoundly affect a subject such as anthropology that self-confessedly based itself within the conditions of colonial dominance. The crisis is then unsurprising and for a moment the discipline shied away from any sense that it might be associated with the places that it was formerly conducted in, turning instead to research in Europe and, ironically, the post-imperial worlds of the former USSR.

Yet as a discipline it survives. Eric Wolf's 1980 prediction (quoted in Nugent 1988: 79) that the failure of anthropology would come from the discipline dissipating into sub-sub-fields has not come to pass, despite the range of specialisms displayed by academics claiming to be anthropologists. Anthropologists by and large are still able to talk to each other, and, despite the pressures of the modern university, the anthropological seminar remains at the root of the subject's academic practice (Spencer 2000). In part it has survived because of its ability, within the modern academic world, to parley its method – participant observation, ethnography – into the formal life of professional social science. The methodology of anthropology, far from being abandoned

in the wake of the decolonizing process, has been brought back home, now a part of a general curriculum and integral, not only to anthropology, but to the professional academy. Participant observation has lost its purchase as the exclusive preserve of the anthropologist and is now a mainstream technique, nowhere more so than in the schools of business that have proliferated throughout university campuses. Yet for anthropology, 'the claim of ethnography, of participant observation, is still the irreducible minimum of professional credentials required' (Ortner 1984). What this has meant is that the local, the fieldsite, remains the central place in anthropological research. More strikingly, that site remains, for the majority of university employed anthropologists, somewhere other than Europe-America.

That this is so should obviously provide a challenge to the discipline. The challenge lies in deciding what the 'post' in postcolonial might actually mean for anthropology. As Hutnyk declares,

> Yet defenders of this kind of eclectic anthropology insist on the term 'post' colonial and proclaim the ethnocentric project of knowing, documenting, observing and analysing 'otherness' has been rendered obsolete in mutual communication. . . . A double movement: anthropology was only tangentially complicit in colonialism, and now recognises its past and is even more anti-ethnocentric now, open to otherness as it never was before. Brilliant. Stop and admire.
>
> (Hutnyk 2002: 25)

Clearly there is a stream of anthropology that relies upon the notion of the 'post' as justifying a return to paradigms of practice – the argument runs that decolonization reasserts an agency and that structures of power lie not with the anthropologist's originating culture but rather within the State of destination. Hutnyk's prescriptions may stand at one end of a radical spectrum. The point, however, is that the spectrum is there. Anthropology still stands within worlds of inequality, and the anthropologist is still, very often despite themselves, representative of the other in those worlds.

Another reason that anthropology persists is due to its eclectic nature, its unfailing ability to adapt to its own needs the theories and discourses of other disciplines – postcolonialism included. What, after all, does anthropology base itself upon now other than many of the issues integral to postcolonial research? The themes of identity, ethnicity, subjectivity and agency are all active research areas within anthropology and there is no doubt that critique from postcolonial writing, in particular on forms of representation, has offered a stimulus

to the anthropological narrative. What remains of anthropological practice is then a technique of communication, one that often provides a route whereby knowledge that would often stay upon postcolonial margins finds its way into a metropolitan centre, and occasionally back again. Of course, people have no need to talk to anthropologists – what is remarkable is that they still do. Here perhaps is a testament to anthropology – it now (finally) understands that it is people who make and live within social relations, and the anthropologist is only allowed into those relations inasmuch as the agency of relationship allows.

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Chapter 10

Publishing Histories

Gail Low

Both book history and postcolonial literary studies are scholarly disciplines that have come into their own over the past three decades; yet, until recently, they have occupied somewhat parallel worlds. If national and regional literatures – their production, emergence, and dissemination in the colonial and postcolonial periods – are topics of interest to book historians, then how the printing press arrived on the local scene, how print culture moved away from a predominantly colonial network, how book production and reception fit into national cultural histories within an increasingly globalized and transnational republic of letters are all key areas of inquiry in postcolonial studies. Additionally, many of the questions which motivate the national histories of the book project(s) – what did people read in these different countries, what kinds of books were available, how and why – detail the material conditions underpinning the production of postcolonial literatures. Accordingly, if postcolonial scholars address literature as imaginative signifiers within a scriptural economy (de Certeau 1974) and interpretive framework, they should also be aware of literature as an institutional network of interlocking aesthetic, cultural, social, economic and discursive relationships. Book history's foundational essays by, for example, Roger Darnton (Darnton 1990), Thomas R. Adams and Nicolas Barker (Barker 2001), Jerome McGann (McGann 1991), D.F. McKenzie (McKenzie 1984) and Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1993) thus have much to offer postcolonial literary scholars, and we ignore these to our disadvantage. As books make the complicated

journey from private idea to the public spaces of print in all their variant forms,[1] the connections between publishing, cultural, educational and literary institutions – and individuals – are all crucial to understanding the processes of textuality and authorship.

In the necessarily selective sketch that follows, and using specific examples from anglophone West Africa and anglophone Caribbean from the periods of decolonization and independence, I show that exploring the ways in which books are produced and disseminated constitute a valuable and necessary undertaking. Who were the local and international publishers of English language writing from West Africa and the Caribbean before and after political independence? Were there significant networks of social, cultural, and literary relationships that helped to disseminate the work of now established West African and Caribbean writers? What were the terms of metropolitan support for such writing? In dealing with these questions, my argument will be to draw attention to the interface between literary and journalistic publishing, popular and educational publishing, and treatment of these print fields as autonomous and discrete fields. Given the paucity of archival material and the difficulties of access, my approach will be highly selective in its coverage of publishing and marketing. But literary criticism that does not pay attention to the ways in which texts are produced and circulate is criticism that blinds itself to the ways that books are socially and materially significant.

I.R. Willison has argued that a 'colonial club culture' characterizes the beginnings of English language print circulation in colonies and protectorates of the British empire (Willison 1996: 102). Newspapers, magazines, journals, maps, official documents, almanacs and other ephemera were often imported from Britain or started by colonial elites who looked to London as the 'main publishing base'. Printing presses were put into commission in Jamaica, Barbados and Antigua, Dominica and Grenada in the eighteenth century. In his survey of early print and book trade history in the West Indies, Roderick Cave observes that official documents, newspapers, periodicals and other ephemera, learned writing of a medical or scientific nature and planter manuals form the bulk of materials that were printed locally (Willison 1996: 17–24). A similar range of scientific and quasi-writing on medicine, travel narratives, ethnography and history also dominates early anglophone writing from Sierra Leone and Liberia, British and American settlements on the West coast of Africa established to repatriate freed slaves after abolition and emancipation. Early publishing in West Africa was fostered by Christian missionary societies who brought with

them printing presses, translated and published devotional writing, hymn books, evangelical and biblical texts in local languages (Peters 1993: 10; Kotei 1975: 174–9). Local people were trained to publish copies of bible stories, catechism, and educational material in vernacular languages and in English. In 1859, *Iwe-irohin*, the first indigenous language newspaper to be published in Nigeria, was produced by Reverend Henry Townsend of the Christian Missionary Society, and included notice of births and deaths, religious affairs and parish activities, news about the colonial administration, and local and regional affairs. Appearing initially as a Yoruba fortnightly, an English language edition was soon added (Salawu 2004: 99). Educational materials, linguistic texts, grammars and readers, official publications, documents, pamphlets and local newspapers were also printed to support the maintenance of a colonial government and a literate anglophone readership. Robert Campbell, a Jamaican printer who published the *Anglo-African,* travelled to Abeokuta, and settled with his family in Lagos in 1862, bringing a printing press with him. Affiliated with missionary efforts, the *Anglo-African* appeared in 1865 motivated by the ideological conviction that English civilization, commerce, and culture would be beneficial for the African nation as a whole, and good for the moral and educational self-improvement of the individual African. The *Anglo-African* contained local and international news, keeping readers abreast of developments in Europe, America, and the Caribbean; significantly, it provided an outlet for local literary efforts by publishing poems, short stories, and serial instalments of novels (Blackett 1979: 379). The inclusion of literary material in newspapers, and the association of newspapers with literary ventures, was not unusual. In the anglophone Caribbean, poetry and reviews were included within newspaper and journalistic broadsheets, for example, John Singleton's verse, 'A General Description of the West Indian Islands' appeared in the *Barbados Mercury* in 1777 and William Sherrington's poems appeared in the *Antigua Gazette* around the same time (Tiffin 2001: 58). In West Africa, Lagos newspapers included literary offerings; as Bernth Lindfors notes, by the 1930s 'nationalist newspapers' frequently included a special 'Poet's Nook' or 'Poet's Corner' by which 'patriots and politicians could write their loftiest thoughts in rigidly metrical rhyme' (451).

Newspapers, magazines, and journals were particularly important in the development of a distinct local readership and in fostering a print culture away from the metropolis. In West Africa, the *Sierra Leone Gazette* was the first English language newspaper to be published, followed

closely by *The Gold Coast Gazette* in Ghana, and *Iwe-irohin* in Nigeria (Dorward and Butler 2006: 2; Gadzekpo 2005: 292). Local newspapers reported news from the 'home' country, often reproducing the items with comment or recasting them in relation to regional needs and interests, thereby making an important distinction between local and metropolitan readerships. In West Africa, the work of individuals, such as Samuel Ajayi Crowther, Alexander Crummell, J.E. Casely Hayford, James Johnson, J.A.B. Horton and Edward Blyden, offer good examples of a 'direct dialectical tradition' where what is published locally is caught up in a larger imperial or colonial print culture web (Tiffin 2001: 59). Gareth Griffiths notes that the writing of these men were at first directed at countering prejudices about Africa among the European and American audiences that provided financial support for their projects and, later, at 'persuading' authorities to rethink colonial policies on Africa and African development (Griffiths 2000: 26–9). Nevertheless, reliance on colonial and metropolitan patronage had a direct impact on the work produced. Crowther's writing reflects the tension between the championing of African education and 'equal partnership' in the development of the region on the one hand and a desire to pacify his sponsors who were increasingly alarmed by his positive stance towards African culture and customs. His work was subject to both self-censorship and direct censorship by the Christian Missionary Society which, sponsoring his travels, could choose to publish or to ignore his reports (Griffiths 2000: 53). In general, Blyden, Crowther, and Johnson urged respect for African institutions and culture despite their admiration of Western culture; the late nineteenth century 'cultural renaissance' in West Africa in turn influenced the production of regional and tribal histories in contemporary historiography (Ayandele 1971: 697). If at times such writing seems 'complicit' with the rhetoric of the civilizing mission, their distinctively modern form of 'double vision' also laid the foundations for the nationalist discourse of a later generation (Griffiths 2000: 29).

Book trade in the colonies was initially dependent on metropolitan publishers for their wares, either in the form of imported and expensive editions, or cheaper colonial editions, or pirated copies of what were available in the metropolis. As commentators have noted, bookselling was, arguably, more important than publishing in the early days of the colony. Colonial editions of books already published in Britain, and intended for major colonial markets, were usually (but not always) produced in smaller formats, bound in 'cheaper colonial cloth', and sold at significantly reduced prices when compared with metropolitan

editions. Large discounts were also available for colonial booksellers in return for bulk orders and steady sales (Lyons 2001: 23). Typically, colonial editions provided British publishers with a method of recuperating the costs of publishing the first print run of new books. The production of colonial editions, and the significantly larger discount offered to colonial booksellers, enabled metropolitan publishers to dominate the colonial marketplace. The paucity of local publishing outlets to support book production, coupled with the comparatively higher status of metropolitan publishers, were factors that encouraged local writers to seek publication abroad. Local writing was thus exported and re-imported for metropolitan profit; the colonial relationship between Britain and her colonies is thus mirrored in such publishing practices, encouraging the view that real authors were metropolitan writers or local writers whose work was issued by metropolitan publishing houses. As late as 1960, George Lamming was to complain of the 'lonely desert of mass indifference and educated middle-class treachery' that characterized the comparable lack of interest in local writers in the Caribbean (Lamming 1960: 27). But there were important exceptions and interventions in the colonial monopoly of book production.

Newspapers and magazines provide one significant local alternative to book publishing, and connections between newspaper publishing, journalism, and literary enterprise were important interventions in the creation of a national literary culture. In the anglophone Caribbean, Thomas Henry MacDermot's ventures into publishing Jamaican writing for a local audience were an attempt to break with the maintenance of a colonial cartel. MacDermot, who edited the *Jamaican Times* from 1904, argued for the distinctiveness of Jamaican identity and for literature to reflect island concerns. He urged writers to be 'as native as they felt it in them to be, both in manner and matter' (Roberts 1951: 96), encouraged poets such as W. Adolphe Roberts, published Herbert de Lisser's early essays and Claude McKay's dialect poems. MacDermot is perhaps best known for the creation of the 'All Jamaica Library' which published poetry, fiction, history and essays 'dealing directly with Jamaica and Jamaicans, and written by Jamaicans' (Morris 1972: 47). Each book was sold for the price of one shilling, a price MacDermot argued was fair but 'so small as to make each publication generally purchasable' (Morris 1972: 47). In his preface to his own novel, *One Brown Girl And –*, MacDermot conceded that, despite having access to the *Jamaica Times* printery for his publishing ventures, the money made from sales of the books he published was not remotely comparable to

the monetary rewards that would accompany 'moderate success abroad' (Redcam 1904: i). If the success of the print run of the first book as laid out in MacDermot's preface in the series is to be believed – one thousand copies of *Becka's Bukra Baby* were sold and two subsequent printings of five hundred copies ordered – even such small success was not to last. Having issued four books (including two of MacDermot's own novels published under the pseudonym 'Tom Redcam'), 'All Jamaica Library' folded. MacDermot's experiments were repeated by Herbert de Lisser, editor of the *Gleaner* in Jamaica and A.R.F. Webber of the Guyanese *Daily Chronicle*. Webber's *Those That Be in Bondage – a Tale of Indian Indentures and Sunlit Western Waters* was published by the *Daily Chronicle* printing press in 1917. De Lisser's first novel, *Jane's Career* (1914), was serialized in the *Gleaner* and his subsequent nine novels appeared in the *Planter's Punch*, an annual he founded. De Lisser's first two novels were published in book form with Methuen in London, and colonial editions were available in Jamaica. However, his third novel, *Triumphant Squalitone*, was first published by the *Gleaner*; and the manuscript was then sold to the local firm of Fred L. Myers and Son, and published at 'fully 50 percent below its cost of production' so as to build an audience for local writing (De Lisser 1917: 'Author's Note'). Again the financial rewards from publishing abroad is all too evident. De Lisser's next novel was produced locally as was his final novel which appeared posthumously with Pioneer Press. Despite his desire to encourage local publishing, the difficulties of financing the enterprise made de Lisser turn to the London firm of E. Benn for most of his other books.

Newspapers, magazines (little magazines, in particular), literary columns and broadcast journalism provided publishing opportunities in other interesting and significant ways. Early Ghanaian newspapers carried women's columns, allowed women to represent themselves as readers and writers, and fostered a distinctively feminized discursive space within the confines of what was then deemed appropriate for 'the polite taste of women' (Gadzekpo 2005: 283–6). Mabel Dove-Danquah, a pioneering woman writer and precursor of the independence generation of women writers, such as Flora Nwapa and Ama Ata Aidoo, published her short stories in *The Times of West Africa* in her 'Ladies Corner' column. Una Marson, the Jamaican poet and playwright, utilised other media forms. She created *The Cosmopolitan*, a monthly magazine for women, in 1928. It was Jamaican in orientation and carried the work of Jamaican writers, particularly that of its Poetry League members, an organization promoting poetry through lectures,

discussions, and publications. It was a magazine which reflected progressive ideas, setting out to air boldly 'feminist views, literary and cultural topics and a range of social issues' (Jarrett-Macauley 1998: 30). Marson's publishing and literary ambitions did not stop there. She brought out at her own expense three volumes of her poetry and, later, worked for the BBC 'Caribbean Voices'. Marson also secured funding from the *Gleaner* to establish the Pioneer Press in 1949, the object being to issue Caribbean creative writing, works of natural history, biographies and autobiographies. While the quality of its output was uneven, Pioneer Press provided a much-needed outlet for local writers (Jarrett-Macauley 1998: 187–9), and included among its publications fiction and poetry for younger readers, an autobiography by J.A. Somerville, a posthumous volume of MacDermot's poetry, and a volume of Louise Bennett's dialect verse.

The 1930s saw the rise of important little magazines and reviews, such as *Trinidad, Picong, Callaloo, Forum Quarterly, The Beacon*. Many of these were short-lived, to be followed by others in the 1940s, such as *The Forum Magazine, Bim, Kyk-over-al* and *Focus*. Publishing a range of poetry, fiction, playscripts, reviews and essays, these little magazines enabled a critical forum for a range of political, social, and aesthetic issues and their contributions towards the growth and development of anglophone literature cannot be overestimated. The circulation figures were small, and the finances difficult to sustain, but, as Reinhard Sander records, that there was an audience for them cannot be disputed. For example, the sales figure for *Trinidad* was put at around 1,000 copies while *The Beacon* sold between 1,500 and 5,000 copies between 1931 and 1933 (Sander 1978: 2). The economic depression and labour unrest of the 1930s fanned the flames of cultural nationalism and many of these magazines were informed by a desire to stimulate thinking about the nature of Caribbean art in general, and distinctive regional practices in particular. Sander notes that, although *Trinidad* only published two volumes, it issued benchmarks for literary contributions that were to be echoed by many of the magazines that followed. As editors of *Trinidad*, Alfred Mendes and C.L.R. James were adamant that West Indian writing should be true to 'West Indian settings, speech, characters, situations and conflicts' and should not be written in imitation of foreign writing (Sander 1979: 50). *Trinidad* was the product of a loose network of writers and intellectuals who met to exchange ideas, to read each other's work, and to engage in political debates. Albert Gomes, recalling these meetings later in life, spoke of it as 'a tiny oasis of artistic appreciation' in an otherwise indifferent

Trinidadian society (Gomes 1996: 166). But Gomes also felt that the group lacked social and political engagement, and, with help from James, Mendes, and R.A.C. De Boissiere, set up *The Beacon* as successor to *Trinidad*. The magazine galvanized its own left-leaning circle, many of whom contributed articles, poems or fiction. Gomes remembered *The Beacon* as a radical magazine by 'Trinidad's angry young men of the Thirties' that served to rid a complacent middle-class Trinidad of its 'torpor', 'smugness', and 'hypocrisy' (Gomes 1996: 168). The magazine was partly funded by advertising but its radical nature made financing it through these channels difficult. As Gomes remarked, 'during the magazine's brief and turbulent life, these businessmen [sponsors] were under considerable pressure from various groups in the community, who feared the rising popularity of a magazine that so unequivocally and irreverently opposed their cherished convictions' (Gomes 1996: 167). *The Beacon* relied also on its circle of activists, writers, and intellectuals to keep it afloat; it was a wide-ranging magazine and published not only literary and critical items but articles on history, politics, films and music. Like its predecessor, *The Beacon* encouraged indigenous writing that was faithful to the cultures from which it sprang, arguing in an editorial that it was exceedingly 'difficult to write well of persons and things beyond one's ken' (Sander 1978: 27). Defending James's short story, 'Triumph', it insisted that local writers should not be 'aping another man's culture'; instead they should 'break away as far as possible from the English tradition' as it was 'incongruous' with the 'West Indian scene and spirit' (Sander 1978: 3). Both *Trinidad* and *The Beacon* inspired socially conscious realist fiction which deals with Trinidad's working-class and 'barrack-yards', for which the novels of Mendes and James are well known. Yet the brief if brilliant run of these magazines in anglophone publishing history highlighted the relative lack of publishing opportunities in the Caribbean, and the difficulties of making a living as a writer. James left for London in 1932; his first novel, *Minty Alley*, was published by the London publishers, Secker and Warburg.

The nationalist impulse gathered pace in the 1940s, and between them little magazines, such as *Bim*, *Kyk-over-al* and *Focus*, would publish many of the now established names in the Caribbean canon, for example, Derek Walcott, George Lamming, Sam Selvon, Wilson Harris and Martin Carter. As the editor of *Kyk-over-al* was to note, 'self-definition and self-discovery' was in the air (Morris 1984: 4). *Focus* was a Jamaican journal edited by Edna Manley whose foreword to the first volume located the magazine as part of an effort to explore

a process of decolonization within the arts. In a 1981 interview, Manley remarked of the writers associated with the magazine, 'you had on the one side people who were determined to break Jamaican poetry out of the Wordsworth tradition, then you had the people who felt there was this need to give Jamaica a new image . . . all this was totally new thinking for Jamaica' (Morris 1984: 7). With its links to the Little Theatre Movement, *Focus* also published short plays in addition to poetry and fiction. *Kyk-over-al* was based in Guyana and was started as a publication of the British Guiana Writers Association and British Guiana Union of cultural clubs. It was edited by the poet, critic, and (of necessity) publisher, A.J. Seymour, who declared that the journal's aim was to be 'an instrument to help forge a Guyanese people, make them conscious of their intellectual and spiritual possibilities' (Seymour 1986: 6). *Kyk-over-al* helped initiate a tradition of literary theory and criticism that addressed the aesthetic practices of the West Indies as a region, and Seymour himself published sixteen small volumes of poetry by West Indian writers, not including volumes of his own verse. *Bim* based in Barbados, and edited by Frank Claymore, is perhaps the most important magazine of the group. It was, as Lamming remarked, 'the one thing alone [that] kept us going . . . a kind of oasis in that lonely desert of mass indifference, and educated middle-class treachery' (Lamming 1960: 41). Lamming's remarks were upheld by many others. Edward Baugh, for example, has commented that '[f]or the fact that we can now speak of a West Indian literature, we owe much to *Bim*' (Wickham 1977: v).

Starting life as a regional magazine, *Bim* took material from across the English-speaking Caribbean as it developed. Furthermore, its connections with the BBC 'Caribbean Voices' resulted in a fruitful exchange of material between the two institutions where what was broadcast in the latter would appear in print in the former, and vice versa. The friendship between Collymore and Henry Swanzy, then editor of 'Caribbean Voices', meant that their respective recommendations for publication, either in the magazine or on air, were taken seriously. Collymore often wrote to Swanzy about helping the writers who were migrating to Britain to obtain work. He also solicited advice about getting particular poets published, the most famous case being a young Derek Walcott, whose volume of poetry, *In a Green Night*, was to appear in 1962 with Jonathan Cape. The drift of writers abroad was in large measure due to the difficulties of sustaining a career as a writer in the West Indies. George Lamming, who journeyed to London to establish himself as a writer in 1950, remarked that, given the colonial forms

of education, the 'greater mystery is that there should be any West Indian writers at all. For a writer cannot function; and indeed, he has no function as a writer if those who read and teach reading in his society have started their education by questioning his very right to write' (Lamming 1960: 27). There was of course a tradition of self-publication, and Una Marson, Derek Walcott, and Arthur Seymour were among those who published some of their own work. Nevertheless, in 1948, the editor of the English little magazine, *Life and Letters*, could be heard to mourn the absence of Jamaica book publishers: 'There are Jamaican authors and have been for long . . . If a Jamaican poet wishes to produce his slim volume he has to do so at his own expense . . . Until books can be published there can hardly be expected to be readers. A poet may write on a desert isle . . . but readers can't read or develop reading without books' (Ramchand 1983: 63). Herring's comments concerning the lack of general book publishers, as opposed to newspaper or educational publishing, held true for the anglophone Caribbean even in the two decades to follow.

If little magazines constitute one lifeline for anglophone writers in the Caribbean in the 1940s and 1950s, the BBC's *Caribbean Voices* constitutes another. This radio programme marks the emergence of Caribbean writing in London, a period of publishing history that was to lead Ramchand to observe, somewhat provocatively, that London 'was indisputably the West Indian literary capital' (Ramchand 1983: 63). The brainchild of Una Marson, *Caribbean Voices* was first aired on 11 March 1943 as a twenty-five minute broadcast put out by the BBC's Overseas Service (Jarrett-Macauley 1998: 158). It functioned as a literary and educational programme, featuring work by West Indian novelists, poets, and critics. It encouraged and built an audience for the literary output of the region, and provided a public forum to debate the nature and aesthetic of new anglophone Caribbean writing (Ball 2004: 102–3; Nanton 1998: 14–17). Under Henry Swanzy, the programme's editor from 1946, and later V.S. Naipaul, the BBC collected and edited previously unpublished creative work from the islands via the local BBC agent, commissioned reviews and criticism from London and the Caribbean, and employed resident West Indians to read work in its London studios; material also came from Caribbean little magazines. In this way, 'Caribbean Voices' acted like a transnational publishing house, canvassing and paying for original material to be broadcast back to the West Indies. It generated contacts and interest among writers, and contributed to the nurturing of a literary culture, albeit in a somewhat paternalistic manner (Ball 2004: 103).

The programme's *raison d'être* was, as Swanzy wrote to the English poet Roy Fuller, to 'build up some kind of contemporary tradition by the exchange of writings between the Islands' (Low 2002: 30). Swanzy cast himself as a caretaker to the region's literary output but he was also sensitive to the contradictions of producing a metropolitan broadcast programme for an indigenous population in the West Indies. It is clear from the correspondence files that Swanzy was acutely conscious of the charge that what he was doing was tantamount to the imposition of foreign standards (Ball 2004: 105; Low 2002: 30; Nanton 1999: 'Whose Programme was it anyway?'). However, he felt that the relationship was necessarily a temporary one and a more properly indigenous enterprise would in time emerge – possibly, so he predicted, with the creation of the University of the West Indies.

Like the little magazines of the time, Swanzy championed a regional writing that had a Caribbean reference or outlook, and rejected items that lacked 'local colour', which he himself did not define except in very general terms. The injunction to write with a feeling for the local setting and scenery may also have its drawbacks, for Swanzy complained to the BBC agent based in Jamaica, Gladys Lindo, that some of the submissions seemed formulaic, almost as if they were 'written to order [because] the BBC likes local colour' (Low 2002: 31). Local colour could also have meant material that contained a greater attention to folk cultures, for there were complaints that the programme was including too much low life (Low 2002: 30–1, Nanton 1999: 'Whose Programme?'). In view of Beryl Gilroy's charge that the camaraderie of male writers, publishers, and their advisers did not extend easily to women (Gilroy 1998: 211–13), Swanzy's handling of his task as editor needs further investigation. There is, for example, the programme's under-representation of women writers: out of nearly four hundred contributors to the series they comprised a little less than twenty percent. In addition, the programme reflected Swanzy's tastes. He clearly disliked the domestic and romantic biases of some of the material received, describing them as 'sweetly pretty poems by . . . spinster ladies, probably teachers . . .' (Low 2001: 31), and, as was to be expected, Lindo selected material according to what she saw to be Swanzy's preferences; in a letter dated 29 June 1948, she refers jokingly to a Mrs Hutton who represented 'one of the tuneful ladies whom . . . [he] so much abhor[red]' (Low 2002: 31).

Caribbean Voices also enabled a network of connections among writers, publishers, reviewers, and readers employed by publishing houses in London. Naipaul, Lamming, Sam Selvon, Wilson Harris, Andrew

Salkey, John Figueroa, Edward Kamau Brathwaite and others came in search of educational and publishing opportunities. Swanzy, and later Salkey and Brathwaite, acted as mentors to the circle of exiled Caribbean writers in London. Such an informal network is important to examining the process by which manuscripts are transformed into published books. Examples are: Arthur Calder-Marshall and Walter Allen's role in encouraging and promoting Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*, William Plomer and Alan Ross's support of Walcott's poetry, and Salkey and Charles Montieth's positive responses to Wilson Harris' work which led to Faber and Faber deciding to take on the author. Sympathetic reviewers and publishers' readers in the literary establishment of the time, such as Alan Ross, the editor of the *London Magazine*, Roy Fuller, Colin MacInnes, James Burns Singer, Dan Jones, Anthony Rhodes and Anthony Cronin, who all wrote extensively for *The Times Literary Supplement*, kept Caribbean writing in the literary limelight for a time. As David Dabydeen has observed, West Indian writing was 'reviewed . . . on an immediate and regular basis' (Dabydeen 2000: 70). Such enthusiasm was to fade in the later 1960s in Britain but from the 1950s to the mid-1960s, anglophone Caribbean writing was seen to be a literary force to be reckoned with in London.

In Nigeria in the 1950s, many of the campus publications and magazines associated with the newly emerging university colleges provided early publishing opportunities for West African writers, such as John Pepper Clark, Wole Soyinka, and Christopher Okigbo. (Lindfors 1974; Okunoye 1999). Of particular importance was *The Horn*, based at University College, Ibadan, and with editors such as Clark himself, Abiola Irele, Dapo Adelugba and Omolara Ogundipe. Appearing between 1957 and 1964, and self-funding, its contents included poems, essays, and theatre reviews. Poetry from *The Horn* was collected and appeared under the Ibadan University Press imprint as *Nigerian Student Verse*, and was appropriated for several anthologies of African verse in the 1960s, including the seminal *Modern Poetry from Africa*, edited by Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier for Penguin Press in 1963 (Stevenson 1975). Beier also co-edited with Janheinz Jahn the influential little magazine, *Black Orpheus*, funded first by the Western Nigerian Ministry of Education until 1963, and then by Longmans on a non-profit making basis. The inaugural issue, subtitled *'A Journal of African and Afro-American Literature'*, set the tone for the journal's ambitious undertaking: to provide a platform for literary exchange between African writers and writers of African descent, and to create an audience for the arts of Africa (Editorial, *Black Orpheus* 1957). Production values were high with

etchings and screen-prints by Suzanne Wenger and Tayo Aiyebusi. *Black Orpheus* generated much needed publicity for its writers and caught the eye of publishers, such as Alan Hill of Heinemann Educational Books who later founded the African Writers Series. It was integrated into the work of the Mbari Writers' and Artists' Club at the heart of the lively arts scene that characterized Ibadan in this period. Not only was the Club 'a major cultural institution' (Okunoye 1999: 108) but Mbari Publications, its print outlet, published some thirty books between 1961 and 1965. Some titles were subsequently re-issued and some writing collected by metropolitan presses. Moore and Beier's *Modern Poetry From Africa*, for example, contained many poets and poems that appeared both in *Black Orpheus* and Mbari Publications, and Wole Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers*, *The Strong Breed*, and *The Trials of Brother Jero*, collected for Mbari's *Three Plays* in 1963, was re-issued with Oxford University Press' Three Crown Series. Alex La Guma's novella, *A Walk in the Night*, appearing also under the local Mbari imprint, was re-issued with both William Heinemann and the African Writers Series. The divide between literary or 'trade' and educational publishing for schools and colleges was occasionally blurred in the years up to independence and in the decade after.

Export sales were of growing significance to book trade in Britain throughout the twentieth century. The percentage of export sales in relation to total sales of the British book trade rose from 30 per cent in 1939 to a peak of 47 per cent in 1969 (Mumby and Norrie 1974: 223). With the end of paper rationing and other difficulties related to wartime publishing, the two decades following 1945 are generally seen to be a boom time, with a rapid turnover in books and the emergence of newer independent companies (Sutherland 1978; Mumby and Norrie 1974). This surge was to abate slowly in the mid-1960s. In the face of increasing anxieties about book selling, and a keen awareness of American competition, new anglophone territories outside Europe and America were targeted. Africa became an especially lucrative market to focus upon in the scramble for new markets. Nigeria and Kenya already had colonial literature bureaus, created to encourage literacy in African languages and European languages, and to provide written material and books for schools, and 'general reading materials for a wider population'. Their existence and operations alerted 'commercial companies to the existence of a potential educational market in Africa' (Griffiths 2000: 74–6). Companies, such as Nelson, Longmans, Macmillan and Oxford University Press, adopted an aggressive marketing and distribution approach in contrast to the more gentlemanly

approach that characterized trade publishers in Britain. They sent travellers and agents on overseas tours to scout for new writing talent and new readers, and lobbied local examination boards to put their texts on the prescribed list. Some, like Macmillan, entered into an agreement with Ghana to produce state-sponsored textbooks. Others, such as Longmans, Oxford University Press, and Heinemann Educational Books, established local branches that distributed and/or commissioned and published educational textbooks and local reading material. Two educational series that published literary and creative writing emerged in 1962: Heinemann Educational Books' African Writers Series and Oxford University Press' Three Crowns Series. While the former was the more important, both had a significant role in the narrative of West African literary publishing.

Heinemann's African Writers Series was launched in 1962 as a bold experiment but was conceived as early as 1959. Alan Hill, as director of Heinemann Educational Books, was quick to see that the postwar education boom, coupled with the growth of English Language education in former British colonies, spelt huge financial gains for venture capitalism. West Africa in particular was singled out for special consideration.[2] In his memoirs, *In Pursuit of Publishing*, Hill observed that a 'new intellectual dimension in the life of West Africa' was emerging, and that investing in local publishing and writers was a way to contribute to and profit from a modernizing nation. Nationalism could be turned into a profitable venture with the demand for more school books to be locally written and produced (Hill 1988: 122–3). The African Writers Series comprised mostly fiction, published as paperbacks that were produced and marketed from London, and distributed through a local educational network in Africa. The first six titles – *Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease, Burning Grass, Zambia Shall be Free, People of the City* and *Mine Boy* – were reprints since, to begin with, the Series was conceived of as an educational list published by an educational publisher. With the decision to issue a first novel, *Weep Not Child*, by a then unpublished novelist, Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo, the Series entered a new phase. As a cheap imprint, African Writers Series acquired the paperback rights of hardback titles; but, with the decision to accept new and original work, an attempt was made to enter into a partnership with its sister company, the trade publishers, William Heinemann. Thus Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo's novels emerged first as William Heinemann hardbacks before appearing under the HEB AWS imprint. Two major reasons lay behind the decision to issue books as hardbacks. The first related to the higher royalties offered for hardbacks. As Hill wrote to

Charles Pick of William Heinemann late in 1963, $7^1/_2$ per cent royalties was the maximum that could be offered on the Series paperback which sold predominantly in Africa in the early life of the Series. However, Heinemann Education Books felt that cloth-bound editions with world sales, full promotion, and a royalty of not less than 10 per cent was needed (and expected) in order to obtain and keep the best new African writers.[3] The second reason had much to do with the postwar conventions of publishing and distribution, where only cloth-bound editions would be reviewed in the quality presses and magazines as serious literary projects. Both had to do with the prestige of publishing 'literature' rather than educational textbooks.

Such was the urgency for new books to appear between boards that Heinemann Educational Books undertook to issue its own hardback imprints when the manuscripts it sent its sister company were rejected as unsuitable. When Timothy Aluko's *One Man, One Matchet* was rejected by William Heinemann as undistinguished, Keith Sambrook wrote to Hill to insist on launching it as a hardback publication. Consequently, *One Man, One Matchet* appeared under a deliberately amorphous Heinemann imprint: without the usual Heinemann Educational Books or William Heinemann initials (HEB or WH), which would have marked the imprint as educational or general, but including the windmill colophon and the word 'Heinemann'. The ambiguity was deliberate and served to place these hardbacks within the Heinemann Group without identifying it as issued by its educational wing. Very early in the life of the Series, Hill and Sambrook had understood that the intense competition for new African writing meant that writers in Africa were beginning to recognize their cultural and commercial value, and expected to be treated on terms similar to their counterparts in Europe. Sambrook wrote to Hill that the scramble for creative writing extended to other educational publishers, such as Longmans and Oxford University Press, both of which were not initially keen to develop this area but were now actively seeking new writers.[4] Sambrook observed that new writers were interested in a 'trade edition', publication in the African Writers Series was not deemed sufficiently prestigious, and that if HEB was to hold its place as a leading publisher of African writing, it would have to offer new authors trade editions.[5] The Series entered into a loose partnership with the parent company whereby hardbacks would be issued with William Heinemann or under the amorphous Heinemann imprint, and marketed by the William Heinemann group, and then later reissued as paperbacks in the AWS format. Achebe was appointed an editor of the Series; Aig

Higo was the manager of HEB's Nigerian office; and he and Achebe also acted as talent scouts and readers for the Series.

At the outset Hill was very sure that the African Writers Series had a natural home in Heinemann Education as *educational* books as opposed to *literary* or *general* material. The rationale given for this position had to do with pricing policies and the nature of the anglophone book trade in Africa. To trade effectively and profitably, it was felt that one had to enter at the level of the educational market, and to adopt its patterns of sales and distribution:

> the plan was to start a paperback series, confined to black African authors; the books were to be attractively designed with high quality production, and sold at a very cheap price – as low as 25p at the outset. This price was achieved by giving educational discounts. Since the African bookshops sold nothing but educational books, the mass market outlets were already there on these terms. Outside Africa, the books would sell at the normal trade paperback terms.
>
> (Hill 1988: 123)

The African Writers Series was available in Britain; that the individual items were not generally stocked in bookshops till the autumn of 1969 would seem to fit broadly with the above assertion.[6] The big names in the Series – Achebe, Ngũgĩ, for example – subsidized other lesser known writers so that there was 'enough margin to experiment with new writers' (Petersen 1991: 159). Selection was in the hands not only of London but Ibadan and, later, Nairobi. Achebe's involvement in the early history of the Series cannot be underestimated, and Hill, van Milne, Sambrook and Currey all credit his presence as being responsible for the success of the venture. Currey, in particular, asserts that Achebe's influence meant that the Series, rather than being simply educational and textbook material, had literary pretensions (Currey 1993: 6).

The creation and evolution of Oxford University Press' Three Crowns is broadly similar to the African Writers Series. Three Crowns was conceived by Rex Collings and published out of the Overseas Editorial Department as a paperback general series that would offer educated Africans reading material.[7] While the series produced some general interest books on topics African, such as *Famine: Its Prevention and Relief*, *Chief Albert Lutuli of South Africa*, and *Travellers in Ethiopia*, it was as the publisher of African drama that Three Crowns made its name. Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests, The Lion and the Jewel, The Road* and *Kongi's Harvest*, Clark's *Three Plays* and *Odizi*, Joe de Graft's *Sons and Daughters*,

Athol Fugard's *Boesman and Lena, Hello and Goodbye*, and *People are Living here*, among others, all appeared under the imprint. Poetry by Oswald Mtshali and Leopold Senghor, and short stories by Obi Egbuna and Barbara Kimenye, were also included.[8] Exchanges between Collings and the head of the Overseas Education Department, D.M. Neale, testify to Collings' struggle to overcome hesitation within the Press to take on the publication of creative literature. Collings argued that the Press was already known for publishing series of literary works, such as World's Classics and The Oxford Library of Italian Classics. It also issued volumes of new poetry. More importantly, the Press had the infrastructure and distribution facilities to produce and sell new writing. Collings' initial target market was not school sales but an adult audience and general market.[9] Asserting that a significant overlap already existed between the educational and general brief in the Press' own publishing history, Collings clinched his argument with the pointed observation that publishing new writing was politically expedient:

> I am convinced also that there is still a place for us in African publishing if we can plainly show that we are not in fact only interested in selling enormous quantities of primary school books by expatriate authors. This is quite commonly felt and believed although it is not altogether true. Politically therefore it is also important that we should publish. If we don't I think we will have missed the bus.
>
> (Davis 2005: 227)

Three Crowns and the African Writers Series entered into publishing original work on the strength of the writing that was then coming out of Africa (albeit West Africa in the main); and this gave both publishing houses much symbolic capital. A policy review document in July 1966 observed that the name of Three Crowns was frequently cited and unsolicited manuscripts seemed to have been sent to Oxford University Press for consideration under the specific imprint.[10] A similar situation characterized the reception of the African Writers Series in Africa; as Currey was to remark, the Series 'gave Heinemann a presence which seemed far greater than the real size and strength of the firm' and became a 'key factor in enabling Heinemann to seize educational contracts from under the noses of established companies with a far longer presence than upstart Heinemann' (Currey 1985: 11). Both Three Crowns and the African Writers Series had to earn their keep in the world of educational publishing, however, and both lobbied to have their writers put on regional exam boards' prescribed lists to aid sales. Of the two, Three Crowns was less successful than

its rival, and was continually called upon to defend its sales or lack of sales. Arguably, the decision to foreclose on publishing novels and the concentration on drama made it rely more on an educational market than a general one; also, the larger and more rigid organizational structure of Oxford University Press drove the series relentlessly towards the niche market of prescribed school textbooks and made Three Crowns a more conservative and less risk-taking imprint. Three Crowns was certainly less long-lived than the African Writers Series, ending its publishing life in 1976; however, OUP branches abroad were allowed to continue to use the Three Crowns identity for their local publishing. The African Writers Series, on the other hand, went from strength to strength till the mid-1970s, launching the Caribbean Writers Series in 1970 which, if ultimately less successful, nonetheless made available reprints of important works by established Caribbean writers. Despite its diminished capacity from the mid-1980s onwards, the African Writers Series continued to publish until 2003, issuing a total of 359 volumes of prose fiction, poetry, drama, memoirs, reportage, and folk tales.[11]

The publishing history of Three Crowns and African Writers Series shows that in newly independent countries, such as Nigeria, the borders between educational and literary publishing are less rigid than is the case in metropolitan countries, such as Britain. While literary publishing is a more prestigious form of book publishing, it is a much smaller sector in comparison to the trade in educational books. The latter still forms the largest sector of the book trade in West Africa and in the anglophone Caribbean where the majority of the population cannot always afford to purchase books for leisure purposes (Altbach 1998; Global Publishing Information 2002). Literary material was and remains a relative 'luxury'. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, published by William Heinemann in 1958 and priced at 18 shillings, or Amos Tutola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, published by Faber in 1952 and priced at 10 shillings and 6 pence, was priced outside the pockets of most Nigerians. Even recently, as Wendy Griswold points out, Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, published by Jonathan Cape, was beyond the purchase ability of all but the wealthy when it was available in Nigeria only in hardback form the year after it won the Booker Prize. In the period of Griswold's study, 1952 to 1992, literary publishing, where it existed, was deemed 'a classy but unprofitable appendix to textbook publishing' and reading was 'a habit recently acquired and easily broken' (Griswold 2000: 70).

Popular publishing, however, did have a small but significant presence in Nigerian publishing history. The most famous of local

ventures into popular publishing, the Onitsha market literature, thrived in the decade before the Nigerian civil war (1967–1970) as a local entrepreneurial effort, printing novelettes, self-help programmes, romances and educational material, the subjects of which encompassed learning languages and how to write love letters (Griswold 2000: 66–67; Newell 2002). Manuscripts were bought outright from writers for small sums of money and taken to printers, and sold to the public for between 2 to 5 shillings. Operating outside the conventional distribution network, pamphlets, mostly ephemeral in nature, went through several print runs, some of which reached an average run of 6,000 copies, and were sold by street vendors at small market stalls (Dodson 2002: 45). Cyprian Ekwensi's first novel, *When Love Whispers*, appeared in 1947 with Chuks Press in just such a manner. The Onitsha market collapsed at the time of the civil war but others emerge to take its place in popular pamphleteering. Later, British companies such as Macmillan and Longmans entered the scene, publishing less 'literary' or educational material but more popular genres, such as thrillers, romances, and detective fiction. Macmillan's Pacesetters Series, written to house formulation by local authors, printed in Hong Kong and re-imported to African bookshops, was created to cater to a young urban audience for leisure reading. Defending the series, Elizabeth Paren, the Macmillan editor, observed that the publication and marketing of such popular fiction not only filled a perceived gap in the marketplace but could cultivate a better book culture for Africa and 'encourage creative writing generally' (Griswold 2000: 64). Pacesetters folded when Macmillan deemed the local market unprofitable with the collapse of oil prices in the 1980s. Heinemann and Longmans whose market for the African Writers Series and Drumbeat was by this time less dependent on the African market for sales, rode out the storm by selling more in anglophone markets elsewhere (Griswold 2000: 65).

Publishing is an industry that turns ideas into commodities. That the English language is global is due to the impact and legacy of British imperialism and the status of the United States as a dominant superpower. Publishing as a business concern operates via a 'system of territorial rights' which establishes what could be published and sold within each sector; for much of the twentieth century, anglophone world markets have been carved up by established metropolitan publishers into British Commonwealth and North American territories (Thompson 2005: 74). Between 1947 and 1976, Britain and Commonwealth countries were treated co-extensively as a single market, and the United States functioned as its counterpart. Publishers acquiring

rights to publish and sell books operated exclusively on the basis of these divisions. Hence British publishers who sold the rights to their books to American publishers would keep British and Commonwealth territorial rights, and British publishers who obtained rights from American publishers would do so not only for Britain but for the entire Commonwealth (Featherstone 1988: 220; Thompson 2005: 74). Local publishers could hold out for local rights to books they published, or enter into a co-publishing effort with metropolitan publishers who generally have better sales and distribution, or sell their rights to metropolitan publishers when books went out of print. Such actions have encouraged writers to seek out metropolitan publishers for larger audiences and better returns for their intellectual efforts; they have also led to accusations of perpetuating a neo-colonial system of exploiting local resources for metropolitan profits (Armah 2006). A notable instance is Graham Huggan's *The Postcolonial Exotic*. A provocative critique of the metropolitan marketing of the margins, it explores the processes by which metropolitan publishers and multi-national conglomerates have turned cultural difference into a commodity through their packaging of writing from Africa and the developing world as literary exotica (Huggan 2001). Certainly, there is a long history of such processes at work, as, for example, in Faber's editing of the manuscript of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* which sought to preserve – and even embellish – the linguistic quirks of Amos Tutuola's narrative to heighten its 'exotic' qualities (Rowland 1997; Low 2006). Published in 1952, Tutuola's first novel provoked controversy for its episodic rendering of Yoruba folktales in non-standard English. Some reviewers waxed lyrical about what they took to be an instance of naïve or primitive art, echoing some of the views Tutuola's own publisher expressed when they first read the handwritten manuscript; others held that Tutuola possessed 'the vision of the pagan bushman setting down the ancient sagas of his people with his own additions' (Swan 1954: 94); yet others poured scorn on what they saw to be the book's ungrammatical use of English and its simple retelling of Yoruba folk tales. In Hill's view, Achebe's work, in contrast to the 'linguistic virtuosity or plain illiteracy' of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, seemed adept at rendering 'traditional tribal society' in terms that 'the Western-educated reader could understand', and the African Writers Series was cast in reaction to the style and content of African writing that was associated with Tutuola (Hill 1988: 121).

A broader understanding of texts as material artefacts necessitates unearthing the processes of production and distribution; even in this

necessarily brief and selective account, one can see books cannot be taken to be unproblematic and self-evident objects; they constitute an important component of print culture, operating differentially within social and culturally significant networks of meaning. Recent critical work on publishing history, and on consumption and production in projects associated with national histories of the book or individual presses produced in areas such as India, Australia, Canada and New Zealand,[12] offer postcolonial studies new paradigmatic ways of understanding the reasons why texts and books might be said to matter.

Notes

1 The phrase is adapted from Finkelstein and McCleery, *The Book History Reader* (Finkelstein and McCleery 2006: 3).
2 Internal memo, William Heinemann Ltd Educational Dept, 'The Future', Box 11, Reviews 1959; Heinemann Educational Archives, University of Reading Publishing Archives.
3 Alan Hill, undated internal memo. HEB 4/11: Correspondence relating to the publication of *Weep Not Child* by Ngugi (RUL MS 3221).
4 Keith Sambrook to Alan Hill 17/11/63; Box 83: Letters/Reports (Unsorted); HEB Archives, University of Reading Publishing Archives.
5 Sambrook to Tony Beal and Alan Hill 10/11/63; Box 83: Letters/Reports (Unsorted); HEB Archives, University of Reading Publishing Archives.
6 Information gleaned from a talk by Hill given in London in 1969, *AWS* 10th Anniversary Box 103; Heinemann Educational Books Archives, University of Reading Publishing Archives.
7 Letter, D.M. Neale to F.L. Cannon, 31 January 1963. Three Crowns General Files LG29/221(1).
8 The decision not to publish novels (but to publish poetry) is put down – rather contradictorily – to the fact that Oxford University Press was (and is) primarily an educational publisher with a poetry list.
9 Rex Collings to D.M. Neale, 4/7/62; OP11/008149, Oxford University Press Archives.
10 Memo, 'Towards a Definition of policy: A draft for discussion with Nigerian and East African Branches' 27 July 1966. Three Crowns series, Oxford University Press General Files LG29/221(1).
11 For a history of the series and an account of the publishing of key writers, see James Currey, *Africa Writes Back*: *The African Writers Series and the Launch of African Literature*. Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008.
12 For Australia, New Zealand, and Canada see Martyn Lyons and John Arnold (eds), *A History of the Book in Australia 1891–1945: A national culture in a colonised market*. University of Queensland Press 2001; Penny Griffith, Peter

Hughes and Alan Loney (eds), *Book in the Hand: Essays on the History of the Book in New Zealand*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2000; Patricia Lockhart Fleming, Gilles Gallichan, and Yvan Lamonde, *History: The Book in Canada, Volume 1: Beginnings to 1840.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004; Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona A. Black (eds), *History: The Book in Canada, Volume 2: 1840–1918*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005; Carole Gerson and Jacques Michon (eds), *History: The Book in Canada, Volume 3: 1918–1980.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. For India, see individual titles such as Priya Joshi, *In Another Country: Colonialism, culture and the English novel in India*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002; and Rimi B. Chatterjee, *Empires of the Minds: A history of the Oxford University Press in India under the Raj*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.

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