Introduction

Bill Ashcroft and Katherine E. Russo

Revolutionaries do not make revolutions.
The revolutionaries are those who know when power
is lying in the street and they can pick it up.
Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*

David Crystal has defined language variation in post-colonial contexts as one of the key factors of what he terms the English "language revolution".[1] In point of fact the use of the English language in post-colonial contexts has triggered one of the most creative language and aesthetic revolutions of all times as a "result of the energies uncovered by the political tension between the idea of a normative code and a variety of regional usages".[2] At a time for both the recollection and projection of the first definition of post-colonial language variation in expressive text types as the "the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages, mark[ing] a separation from the site of colonial privilege",[3] the present issue offers insights on the open-ended and reciprocal relationship between post-colonial language variation and creativity. As Bill Ashcroft notes in the lecture, "Grammars of Appropriation", in which he returns to one of the most central questions of his research,

> … in post-colonial societies language has been the centre of a very material question of struggle. Central to this struggle is the place of language within one's construction of identity. In a globalised world *everybody* is aware of the issues of power and identity tied up in language. But the achievements of post-colonial writing demonstrate something about the agency of subject peoples when they appropriate a language, and it is the example of their experience with language that can offer hope to local communities in an increasingly globalized world. This is because, fundamentally, post-colonial writing demonstrates that cultural identity is not *embedded* in language but, like the subject, is *produced* by language users.[4]

Thus, the title of the issue, "Post-colonial Creativity: Language, Aesthetics and Politics", suggests multiple journeys. If we accept the definition that creativity is the result of the combination of previously unrelated areas of knowledge, what Arthur Koestler calls "bisociation",[5] then due to the contact, conflict and disruption engendered by colonization post-colonial language varieties and aesthetics hold an "epicentric",[6] multilateral and cyclic potential to trigger inventiveness. As Gerhard Leitner notes:

> The inherent dynamism of contact and interaction recycle, so to speak, and the earlier outcomes feed back into the languages and varieties whose development is under way. As contact languages, for instance, are emerging and stabilize, they go on modifying English and indigenous languages and thus create sediments that reflect the period of contact.[7]

[1] David Crystal, *The Language Revolution* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004).

[2] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), 12.

[3] Ibid., 38.

[4] Bill Ashcroft, "Grammars of Appropriation", this issue. See also Bill Ashcroft, *Caliban's Voice: The Transformation of English in Post-Colonial Literatures* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2009).

[5] Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (New York: Penguin Books, 1964), 38.

[6] According to Gerhard Leitner, post-colonial varieties of English have developed into norm-producing epicentres due to their own endonormative standards. Gerhard Leitner, "English as a Pluricentric Language", in Michael Clyne, ed., *Pluricentric Languages: Differing Norms in Different Nations* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), 179-237.

[7] Gerhard Leitner, *Australia's Many Voices: Australian English – The National Language* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004), 22.

Following this line of thought, the central aim of the issue is to explore creativity, both ordinary and extraordinary, as the space of post-colonial realization and agency. Creativity is the act of stepping beyond. As Salman Rushdie puts it: "this is how newness enters the world".[8] One crucial dimension of creativity may be envisaged as the constitutive process of post-colonial language variation accounting for aspects in different styles and genres, the coining of novel lexical items and the creativity inherent in word formation, or phonetic variation in creatively-coined words. Moreover, expressive text types have contributed to the political articulation and affirmation of post-colonial identity through the recording and spreading of post-colonial varieties of English and aesthetics.[9] As Azade Seyhan notes, creative arts "as social documents resist the erasure of geographical, historical, and cultural differences".[10]

The powerful demonstration of agency by postcolonial societies appropriating and transforming language shows how creativity can be stimulated by the kind of conflict that arises under colonial dominance. If we accept the definition that creativity is the result of "the combination of previously unrelated areas of knowledge",[11] what Arthur Koestler calls 'bisociation', then conditions of conflict and disruption engendered by colonization have the potential to enhance creative work. Ultimately creativity is stimulated by the capacity to dream and art and literature provide the ideal location of such dreaming. In the postcolonial situation the dream of literature cannot be detached from the creative appropriation of the tools by which it is produced.

The possibility of language revolution arguably exists as soon as a new feature develops and begins to be used alongside an existing one but, as the exergue by Hanna Arendt points out, revolution spreads when it is 'picked up' by a community. Many traditions in the study of language in society have taken the creative negotiable features of human interaction and meaning-production as their point of departure, pointing out that "when communicating people 'choose' from a range of options, they 'select' discourse forms deemed appropriate in the particular context, and they consciously 'plan' the sequential moves, either by choosing to 'follow rules' or by 'flouting' these rules".[12] Accordingly, numerous scholars have argued that during the foundation stage of post-colonial varieties of English speakers defined and expressed a social linguistic identity, an alignment with other individuals and an accommodation of speech behavior through selection from language ecology pools.[13] This has been defined as the characteristic foundation process of accommodation and koinéization, i.e. the mutual adjustment of pronunciation and lexical usage to facilitate understanding.[14] Since then the selection of linguistic features has proceeded through "imperfect replication", both vertically (with an offspring generation copying their parent generation's usage) and horizontally (with speakers who interact with each other continuously influencing each other).[15]

The topicality and liveliness of the debate is confirmed by Edgar Schneider's recent and often contested redefinition of Braj B. Kachru's 'World Englishes'[16] as 'Post-colonial Englishes'. At the heart of Edgar Schneider's adoption of the

[8] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-91* (London: Granta, 1991), 392.

[9] Mary Snell-Hornby, "Communicating in the Global Village: On Language, Translation and Cultural Identity", in Christina Schäffner, ed., *Translation in the Global Village* (Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, 2000).

[10] Azade Seyhan, "Neither Here/Nor There: The Culture of Exile", in *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 58.

[11] Vera John-Steiner, *Notebooks of the Mind: Explorations of Thinking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 186.

[12] Jan Blommaert, "Choice and Determination", in *Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 2005), 98.

[13] See Salikoko S. Mufwene, *The Ecology of Language Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Peter Trudgill, *New Dialect Formation: The Inevitability of Colonial Englishes* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Edgar W. Schneider, *Postcolonial English: Varieties Around the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Oriana Palusci, ed., *English but not Quite: Locating Linguistic Diversity* (Trento: Tangram Edizioni Scientifiche, 2010).

[14] Peter Trudgill, *Dialects in Contact* (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1986), 129-146.

[15] Mufwene, *The Ecology of Language Evolution*.

[16] Braj B. Kachru, *The Alchemy of English: The Spread, Functions and Models of Non-Native Englishes* (London: Pergamon, 1986).

term 'post-colonial' is the redefinition of English and its development into a cyclic series of characteristic phases which are determined by similar parameters of the respective contact situations.[17] However, in his proposal of a systematic approach to the emergence of post-colonial English varieties, he draws upon post-colonial studies to argue that they should also be classified according to the identification of common stages of "identity reconstruction on the side of the parties involved".[18]

As Janet Holmes notes:

> It is not so much that language itself changes, as that speakers and writers change the way they use language. *Speaker innovation* is a more accurate description than language change. Speakers innovate, sometimes spontaneously, but more often by imitating speakers from other communities. If their innovations are adopted by others and diffuse through their local community and beyond into other communities then linguistic change is the result.[19]

Thus, the initial phase of 'speaker innovation' belongs to the linguistic competence that is based on creativity. Speakers have the ability to generate words, sounds and sentences never heard before. Yet communities may or may not start to adopt them. According to Jana Vizmuller-Zocco, the psycholinguistic acquisition phenomena of language variation entails that the speaker uses her/his creative competence to the fullest, but psycholinguistic processes of language creativity are often influenced by sociolinguistic factors since for an accepted creation to occur, psycholinguistic phenomena need to meet conventional expectations.[20] As Braj B. Kachru most notably explained, the power of the English language in post-colonial countries stems from its use as an "in-group" language, which unites speakers across ethnic, religious, and linguistic boundaries. The term "power", in its association to language, is used in an abstract sense "to refer to the control of knowledge and to the prestige a language acquires as a result of its use in certain important domains. The more important a domain is, the more 'powerful' a language becomes".[21] Indeed, critical approaches suggest that property claims over the English language pertain to the realm of discursive representation.[22] Thus, "White English Vernaculars" such as Standard British English, Standard American English and Standard Australian English often continue to act as a 'marker' of correctness.[23] For instance, while today the use and ownership of English by all post-colonial speakers seems a given, education often continues to be a domain in which attitude towards code choice is influenced by colonial discourse. As Shondel Nero demonstrates in the article "Changing Englishes in the US and Caribbean: Paradoxes and Possibilities", although transnational practices between the US and the Caribbean, aided by geographic proximity, technology, and social media, have had an impact on the definition, use, attitudes, and response towards Englishes in both locations, Creole English is still simultaneously celebrated and denigrated in schools.

Recent years have been highly prolific in the dissemination of linguistic studies on 'post-colonial' language variation and change in different domains of use.[24] As Crystal contends, the spread of the English language has been made possible by its preeminent use in domains such as politics, economics, the press, advertising, and

[17] Schneider, *Postcolonial English*, 1-70.

[18] Ibid., 5.

[19] Janet Holmes, "Language Change", in *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2008), 205.

[20] Jana Vizmuller-Zocco, "Linguistic Creativity and Word Formation", *Italica*, 62.4 (1985), 305-310. Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London and New York: Longman, 1989); Alistair Pennycook, *English and the Discourses of Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

[21] Kachru, *The Alchemy of English*, 2.

[22] Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (Longman, London and New York: 1989); Alistair Pennycook, *English and the Discourses of Colonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

[23] Mufwene, *The Ecology of Language Evolution*.

[24] Rita Calabrese, Jack Chambers, Gerhard Leitner, *Variation and Change in Postcolonial Contexts* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, forthcoming).

education.[25] To this end, the present issue offers a study of post-colonial English varieties, through its use in advertising, education, literature, and websites which are interesting case-studies attesting the recording, spreading, and stabilization of local norms. For instance, the issue includes Esterino Adami's article on lexical expansion in South Asian railway discourse. His argument lies in the linguistic as well as cultural processes of transformation that railway vocabulary undergoes in the context of South Asia, where the railways have always played a strategic social and economic role since their introduction during the colonial period in the nineteenth century. Rashmila Maiti instead focusses on the aesthetics, creativity and persuasiveness of advertising in India, taking into account different factors such as the cultural diversity of the country, the demands of the advertising agencies, and the use of Indian English.

As in the aforementioned case studies, the modes of communication include aural, visual, and mixed channels of communication that have a great impact and constrain the variety which is taken into consideration. As Manuela Coppola demonstrates in the article "Spelling out Resistance: Dub Poetry and Typographic Creativity", music, folklore and "dialect verse" have been central to the debate regarding the standardisation of the "Jamaican vernacular". Her analysis explores the relationship between standardization and writing by focusing on the political implications of orthography in Jamaica and in the UK and investigating how different spelling choices signal symbolic difference in the work of dub poets such as Linton Kwesi Johnson and Jean Breeze. Expressive text types have often contributed to campaigns for the recognition and standardization of vernacular languages. In her article, Anna Mongibello focusses on the role of literature as a means to stabilize, diffuse and reclaim Canadian Indigenous varieties of English in the context of a broader push to revitalize, recover and strengthen Indigenous languages. As she notes, in Louise Halfe's poetry the writer adopts Cree English to counteract the imposition of English as an alien language and culture in the Indigenous reservation of Penticton (British Columbia), where Okanagan children were 'deported' to Kamploops, and to claim its property. Arguably, the colonial possessive investment in English is disrupted by Halfe's practices of appropriation,[26] as it demonstrates the inherent alienability of language and media.

Popular culture also provides a space for the exploration of post-colonial creativity. In the article "Creative Indigenous Self-Representation in Humorous Australian Popular Culture as a Vital Communication Channel for Refiguring Public Opinion", Jan Alber and Natalie Churn highlight the vital importance of popular culture in contesting and reshaping colonial and racist discourses. More specifically, they analyse the creative use of humour in the Chooky Dancers' video "Zorba the Greek Yolngu Style", as well as their 2009 performance at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival and the internationally-selling mockumentary *Bush Mechanics* (2001). Chandani Lokuge further explores the ways in which expressive text types reconfigure or reinstate the static objectivity of discourse by discussing the ways in which Martin Wickramasinghe aestheticizes political and cultural

[25] Crystal, *The Language Revolution*.

[26] See Bill Ashcroft, *Caliban's Voice*; Katherine E. Russo, *Practices of Proximity: The Appropriation of English in Australian Indigenous Literature* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010).

discourse in his classic novels, *Gamperaliya* and *Viragaya*. In the article, "Generic Discontinuity and the Aesthetics of Postcolonial Fiction", Alexander Fyfe attempts to bridge the gap between the political and the aesthetic in post-colonial studies through an interrogation of the nation state and established literary genres.[27] He does so by arguing that in novels such as Salman Rushdie's *Shame* and Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* "the nation state continues to shape the creative choices of postcolonial writers".

As the articles in the issue demonstrate, the relationship between postcolonial language variation and creativity runs deep as postcolonial aesthetics may be envisaged as a transcultural space of meaning. New or 'trans' media have also recently been used to call for an aesthetic and political reassessment of the colonial archive. As Jenny Fraser notes, "Trans Media, Inter-Art or Interdisciplinary Artwork specifically describes a process that engages more than one single art form, either between different art forms or collaborations involving cultural and artistic differences".[28] As Brenda L. Croft's *Irrisistable/irresistible* (2000), and *Don't Go Kissing at the Garden Gate* (1998)[29] demonstrate, signifiers are material phenomena and their multimodal signifying potential cannot be exhausted by any one system of contrasting features for making and analyzing meaning.[30] Croft works through and across the archive's social practice of severing layers of semiotic labour to create a space of material and political efficacy for the appropriation of invisible discourses, the voice of doxa and common sense.[31] On the other side, Jenny Fraser in "name that movie",[32] uses digital beta cutting video devices to write back to colonial discourses in mainstream movies, extending semiotic resources for the production of interactive meanings. Fraser employs new media techniques to re-produce scenes in order to fill in and name the often unsaid and inferable taken-for-granted knowledge, assumptions and inferences of mainstream movies. In the aforementioned polysemiotic texts, images and words constrain and expand each other's meaning. The verbal mode supplies textual elements, and labels, which by supplying information and knowledge continue to reiterate, take on and assign new meanings to the archival images of neo/colonization.

Ultimately, 'Revolution' has two meanings: it is not simply a revolt but a revolving, a spiral into the future. Seeing this, we can understand that the belief in the future doesn't stop with revolution: it remains part of the continuous spiraling of hope in postcolonial societies. Even if democracy comes, and hope, at least for some, has still been disappointed, creative work continues to spiral into the future, continues the revolution. That movement into the future must first be a movement of the imagination and this is why creativity is so crucial to the ongoing production of cultural identity.

[27] See, for example, Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London: Routledge, 2004) and Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[28] See Jenny Fraser, "The Digital Dreamtime: A Shining Light in the Culture War", *Te Kaharoa*, 5 (2012), 105-114.

[29] The artwork is reproduced by kind permission of the artist on the homepage cover of this issue of *Anglistica AION*. Brenda L. Croft, *Irrisistable/irresistible*, 2000. Fuji crystal archive print on lexan 75 x 52 cm, edition of 15. © Brenda L. Croft. Courtesy of the artist. Brenda L. Croft, *Don't Go Kissing at the Garden Gate*, 1998. From *ColourB(l)ind*, Ilfochrome print 49 x 75cm, edition of 10. © Brenda L. Croft. Courtesy of the artist.

[30] Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, *Multimodal Discourse* (London: Arnold, 2001); Gunther Kress, *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

[31] Hubert J. M. Hermans, "Introduction: the Dialogical Self in a Global and Digital Age", *Identity*, 4.4 (2004), 297-320.

[32] *Name that Movie* (2007) may be accessed at http://vimeo.com/18043105.