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Post-colonial Creativity: Language, Politics and Aesthetics

Edited by Bill Ashcroft and Katherine E. Russo

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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.

Manuela Coppola

Spelling out Resistance: Dub Poetry and Typographic Creativity

Introduction

The so called 'third wave' of variationist studies scholarship presents a perspective on speaker's use of variables as 'agentic': in this light, speakers are considered "not as passive and stable carriers of dialect, but as stylistic agents, tailoring linguistic styles in ongoing and lifelong projects of self-construction and differentiation".[1] In this light, social variables do not simply reflect social structure, but they also function as a speaker's resource to impact on his or her social world. As Penelope Eckert argues:

> Variation constitutes a social semiotic system capable of expressing the full range of a community's social concerns. And as these concerns continually change, variables cannot be consensual markers of fixed meanings; on the contrary, their central property must be indexical mutability. This mutability is achieved in stylistic practice, as speakers make social-semiotic moves, reinterpreting variables and combining and recombining them in a continual process of bricolage.[2]

Linguistic variants are thus considered as markers of styles, being part of "active-stylistic production of social differentiation".[3] As such, they can be taken into consideration to focus on the value of social meaning, suggesting that variation is not a neutral operation but rather a socially determined choice. As it unearths the connection between linguistic variation and its embedded social meaning, this theoretical approach proves particularly helpful in the investigation of orthographic variation related to the textualization of written Creole both in the Caribbean and in Britain.

Being the point of intersection between "issues of language as a formal object and of language as a social and cultural phenomenon", orthography is inextricably linked to issues of social and national identity as well as of cultural representation.[4] The emergence of an increasing corpus of texts written in Creole, especially in CMC, has revived the problem of representation of English-lexicon Caribbean Creoles for which there is no standard orthography. In Jamaica, the work of linguists and scholars has focused on the use and popularization of a standard orthography devised in the 1960s in order to promote the cause of bilingualism together with a "vernacularization of education".[5] However, in Jamaica as well as in the diaspora, writers tend to use a modified Standard English spelling, for practical as well as for ideological reasons. In Britain, for example, English-lexicon Caribbean creole is gaining prestige among the youth and is being increasingly used in written communication, as the work of Mark Sebba focusing on written code-switching of British-born Caribbeans between a local British English variety and a local

[1] Penelope Eckert, "Three Waves of Variation Study: the Emergence of Meaning in the Study of Sociolinguistic Variation", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 41.87 (2012), 97-98.

[2] Ibid., 94.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Mark Sebba, *Spelling and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6.

[5] See on this Robert B. Le Page, "Problems to Be Faced in the Use of English as the Medium of Education in Four West Indian Territories", in Charles Ferguson, Joshua Fishman and Jyotirindra Dasgupta, eds., *Language Problems of Developing Nations* (New York: Wiley, 1968).

British variety of Jamaican Creole shows. Written British Creole appears primarily in oral-related forms like dub poetry or dialogues in short novels and plays, and is represented by 'respelling' or modifying conventional Standard English spelling. Although it presents several problems of ideological nature such as inconsistency, closeness to the colonial lexifier, and the continuation of an image of a 'corrupt' version of the norm, this etymological orthography is nonetheless a flexible system providing a more suitable model to convey and textually represent the high degree of variability which characterizes the Jamaican creole continuum and diasporic speech communities. By using a sociolinguistic approach to issues of language standardization, the work of Sebba has illustrated the ideological implications of the orthography of Jamaican Creole by British Caribbean writers, and will prove particularly illuminating in analyzing the work of dub poets of Jamaican origin Linton Kwesi Johnson and Jean 'Binta' Breeze.

Writing Jamaican Creole: Between Standardization and Variation

The Jamaican context is characterized by a complex sociolinguistic history that has produced a 'continuum of expression' both oral and written, a linguistic variation characterized by gradient transitions from English as the 'acrolect' through an intermediate range ('mesolect'), to the broadest Creole or 'basilect'. Mesolectal and basilectal forms are used consciously for rhetorical purposes to construct a public persona/identity, or to make a political statement – by people who would clearly have been able to produce the Standard English alternative.[6] The notion of continuum also problematizes the definition of the Jamaican context in terms of diglossia, where Standard English and Jamaican Creole are polarized in different functions; while Standard English is the expected language in schools, law courts, mass media and "in all the other contexts where written language is required",[7] Jamaican Creole is supposed to be the language of oral, informal communication. However, some scholars have argued that "the diglossia of the past is being eroded" by the increasing presence of Jamaican Creole in formal and written contexts, thus steadily appropriating the function of the High Language.[8]

Although it would be inaccurate to consider Jamaican Creole as an exclusively oral language, as research carried out by Lalla and D'Costa demonstrates, it has been increasingly used in written communication – folklore, poetry, informal news and the Internet – since the beginning of the twentieth century.[9] Poetry, in particular, has been the privileged site of the use of written Jamaican Creole. A case in point is the work of Claude McKay (1889-1948), who published the first dialect collections of poems in the Anglophone Caribbean in 1912: *Songs of Jamaica,* published in Kingston, and *Constab Ballads*, published in London.[10] This tentative phase ended with McKay's migration to the States, where he became a major leading voice of the Harlem Renaissance and devoted himself to the sonnet and to prose. The production of Una Marson (1905-1965), feminist activist and writer, is more controversial, contradictorily swinging between a mimicking of

[6] Christian Mair, "Creolisms in an Emerging Standard", *English World-Wide*, 23.1 (2002), 33.

[7] Pauline Christie, *Language in Jamaica* (Kingston: Arawak Press, 2003), 2.

[8] Kathryn Shields-Brodber, "Requiem for English in an 'English-speaking' Community: The Case of Jamaica", in Edgar W. Schneider, ed., *Englishes around the World (2): Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Australasia* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997), 57-69.

[9] Barbara Lalla and Jean D'Costa, *Language in Exile: Three Hundred Years of Jamaican Creole* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1990).

[10] Claude McKay, *Constab Ballads* (London: Watts, 1912); *Songs of Jamaica* (Kingston: Gardner, 1912).

the Romantics and the Georgians and experimental while unconvincing Creole poems.[11] Louise Bennett (1919-2006) has produced ground-breaking work for the extensive use of Creole in poetry and has had a continuing impact on generations of poets. As a middle-class woman who started performing and printing in Jamaican Creole in the early 1940s, Miss Lou – as she was affectionately called – is now acknowledged for her innovative use of Creole and considered as a symbol of Jamaican culture. Moreover, her research on and popularization of folk culture undoubtedly favoured the literary appropriation of Creole, casting her as an inspiring figure for generations encouraged by her use of 'Jamaica Talk'.

The mass migration to England in the 1950s signalled the beginning of the Caribbean literary tradition, and the publication of works by writers such as Derek Walcott, George Lamming and V.S. Naipaul marked the explosion of a Caribbean literature that established Standard English as the language of narration. Despite Sam Selvon's linguistic daring with the publication in 1956 of *The Lonely Londoners,* written in a Creole which sought to recover on the page the rhythm of oral speech, the taboo persisted. Creole in literature was still mainly used for comic purpose or in dialogue, rather than in narrative, and it was clearly marked in the text by a set of paratextual devices which implicitly reproduced the dichotomy and hierarchy between orality and literacy.

The steady improvement of Internet access in Jamaica in the past few years has revitalized the use of written JamC, considerably extending it to the Jamaican diaspora. In fact the Internet has opened up new perspectives for the use of Creoles in writing,[12] bringing about new written text types "marked by higher frequencies of informal language features".[13] Examples of these informal features are code mixing and frequent deviations from standard spelling conventions, thus producing what has been termed a written counterpart to "conversational codeswitching"[14] displaying the use of a vernacular along a standard language in computer mediated communication. An interesting case in point is also the appearance of Creole in quality newspapers articles (and in their online versions) and blogs, further testifying to the full functionality of JamC in written domains.[15]

As a consequence, the increase in number and in geographical distribution of both consumers and producers of written texts in Jamaican Creole has focused the attention of linguists on persistent problems of spelling and standardization. Since the 1960s, the emergent textualization of Creole through oral-related forms such as music, folklore and 'dialect verse', and the concurrent process of cultural nation-building stemming from independence in 1962, has called for a debate on the 'Jamaican vernacular' and its standardisation, focusing in particular on the political implications of orthography. In 1961, the Jamaican linguist Frederick Cassidy devised a phonemic system whose virtue is undoubtedly its internal consistency, with "one symbol or pair of symbols always representing the same sound".[16] However, it is its very regularity and consistency that might prove problematic. Albeit intended to give literary dignity and independence to Jamaican Creole, this system is very likely to be perceived as a further imposition, a norm

[11] See for instance Denise de Caires, *Making Style: Contemporary Caribbean Women's Poetry* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 8-29.

[12] Christian Mair, "Language, Code and Symbol: the Changing Roles of Jamaican Creole in Diaspora Communities", *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 28.2 (2003), 231-248.

[13] Lars Hinrichs, "How to Spell the Vernacular: a Multivariate Study of Jamaican E-mails and Blogs", in Alexandra Jaffe, Jannis Androutsopoulos, Mark Sebba, Sally Johnson, eds., *Orthography as Social Action: Scripts, Spelling, Identity and Power* (Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 325.

[14] See in particular Lars Hinrichs, *Codeswitching on the Web: English and Jamaican Creole in E-Mail Communication* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006).

[15] See for example Carolyn Cooper's column in the *Jamaican Gleaner*.

[16] Carolyn Cooper, *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender, and the "Vulgar" Body of Jamaican Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 12. An important tool for the codification of Jamaican English is also the first *Dictionary of Jamaican English* compiled by Frederick Cassidy and Robert Le Page and published in 1967.

devised and popularized by academics and which requires some efforts in learning on the part of people who are literate in English. As a consequence, although its adoption has been greatly favoured by linguists on the grounds that "[a] genuinely creole orthography will strengthen the structural and psychological identity of the creole",[17] Cassidy's phonemic system has remained largely ignored by writers, both in Jamaica and in the Caribbean diaspora. Despite the ongoing commitment of Jamaican scholars such as Carolyn Cooper and Hubert Devonish to popularize the Cassidy system, writers consistently privilege a modified StE orthography. The alternative to phonemic transcription, etymological orthography, is in fact a system that "uses the conventional spelling of the lexifier for words which identifiably originate from the lexifier. Other words are spelt using the conventions of the lexifier, with modifications if necessary".[18] Although the etymological orthography is perceived and often described by Jamaican scholars as "colonialism inscribed",[19] there are some practical reasons for the popularity of this choice; since for most writers, as well as for their readers, Standard English is their first literacy, they are more familiar with its written conventions; modifying that spelling system is thus easier than adopting a completely different one.

Moreover, while the phonemic system signals a greater ideological distance from the etymological orthographic system of the standard lexifier language, the choice of using a modified StE spelling conveniently marks the proximity between the two codes in writing and in speaking, often coexisting in code-switching.[20] While the phonemic spelling limits the flexibility of a system which relies on the variability of speech through code-switching and ambiguity, the choice of modified StE orthography may also provide further possibilities for representing difference by conveying a 'hidden' code-switching or by fully exploring the potential of an 'open', unfixed spelling system. Since identification of a text as creole must not rest on morphological, syntactic and lexical clues alone,[21] sound is an important creole identifier as a few phonetic spelling variations are necessary to suggest dialect in writing. In this light, some scholars have focused on possible semantic loans in cases in which a word exists both in English and in creole in the same form, but in a completely or partially different meaning.[22] Variation can thus also occur at a more hidden level, exploiting the proximity between the lexicons of SJE and JamC in order to convey a different meaning (covert Creole) through the use of sounds. As a consequence, not only would "standardization … undermine its covert prestige",[23] but it would also heavily limit the potential to 'distance' JamC from the orthography of the standard language.

Textualizing British Creole: The Case of Dub Poetry

Questions concerning the printing poetry produced by the interplay of speech and writing have often been debated, especially in relation to literary canonization and language standardization. The *Savacou* debate is one of such examples. In early 1971, Laurence Breiner published an innovative anthology titled *New Writing*

[17] Marlies Hellinger, "On Writing English-related Creoles in the Caribbean", in Manfred Görlach and John Holm, eds., *Focus on the Caribbean* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1986), 67.

[18] Mark Sebba, *Contact Language: Pidgins and Creoles* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 244.

[19] Cooper, *Noises in the Blood*, 12.

[20] Sebba, "How Do you Spell Patwa?", *Critical Quarterly*, 38.4 (1996), 60-61.

[21] See Hellinger, "On Writing English-related Creoles in the Caribbean".

[22] Mair, "Creolisms in an Emerging Standard", 31-58.

[23] Lars Hinrichs and Jessica White-Sustaíta, "Global Englishes and the Sociolinguistics of Spelling: A Study of Jamaican Blog and Email Writing", *English World-Wide*, 32.1 (2011), 68.

1970 as a double issue of the journal *Savacou*, which featured "overtly political and experimental work with roots in oral and performance poetry".[24] While some stressed the crucial contribution of music in the new poetry, welcoming the fruitful intersections between poetry and musical forms such as reggae and calypso, other critics sharply dismissed the 'new poetry' as 'bad poetry' as opposed to the craft of "the great English poets".[25] As Breiner emphasizes, the question of anthologizing non-standard poetry was in fact specifically informed by issues of values and standards related to "how a poem would look on paper":

> Above all, the *Savacou* debate was about what amounts to the decorum of poetry – a matter of values, standards, the rule of the game.… The critical furor over the *Savacou* anthology was most particularly about what should be printed, and about how a poem should look on paper. No one was fighting about techniques of improvisation, or about what should happen in a poetry reading or on the radio. The discussion was about written texts, and so about the canon created by print: about what should be in an anthology.[26]

Textual representation is thus cast as the real problem, posing the transcription of oral texts performed in Creole as an issue of West Indian identity. As he points out that "[m]uch of the experimentation involved rhetorical and orthographic devices by which features of non-scribal poetry could be appropriated into poetry actually intended for print",[27] Breiner implicitly refers to the problematic use of Creole in published poetry. The crucial question of how the oral performance should be reproduced on the page also involves the typographic representation of a language that does not have an official orthography, thus weaving together issues of literary canons, language and spelling standards and national identities.

Critic and poet Mervyn Morris has addressed similar concerns while editing the work of contemporary Jamaican poets Louise Bennett and Mickey Smith. In his account of the editorial work on Bennett's *Selected Poems* (1982), he emphasizes his efforts for a reader-friendly edition: "We have tried to ensure that the poems are easy to read. The spelling assumes that the reader is accustomed to English and that anyone familiar with Jamaican creole will 'hear' the creole sounds even when the spelling looks like Standard".[28] In this case, the intended reader is someone educated in English whose ear is tuned to the sounds of Creole, in order that he or she can retrieve its rhythm despite its visual proximity to the Standard. Conscious of the possible criticism of "having seduced Miss Bennett towards the regrettable respectability of Standard", Morris contends that despite the inconsistencies of the spelling, his main preoccupation is with accessibility.[29] Readability continues to be his primary concern also in the textualization of dub poet Mickey Smith's work, whose spelling he defined as "erratic" and "puzzling".[30] While helping Smith to "print his performance", Morris seems to have systematically attempted at homogenizing and standardizing the spelling of JamC, striving to represent orality on the page by providing an easily accessible transcript.

However, consistency in transcription is not an easy task, especially when non-

[24] Laurence Breiner, "How to Behave on Paper: the *Savacou* Debate", *Journal of West Indian Literature*, 6.1 (1993), 1. See *Savacou* 3-4 (March 1971).

[25] See, respectively, Gordon Rohlehr, "West Indian Poetry: Some Problems of Assessment I", *Bim*, 54 (1972), 80-88, and Erich Roach, "A Type not Found in All Generations", *Trinidadian Guardian*, 14 July (1971), 6.

[26] Breiner, "How to Behave on Paper", 1-10.

[27] Ibid., 3.

[28] Mervyn Morris, "Louise Bennett in Print", *Caribbean Quarterly*, 28.1-2 (1982), 48. Original emphasis.

[29] Ibid., 49.

[30] Mervyn Morris, "Printing the Performance: Them and Us?", in Gordon Collier, ed., *Us/Them: Translation, Transcription and Identity in Post-Colonial Literary Cultures* (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1992), 245.

standard spelling also bears the burden of conveying the 'sound' to the reader, as is the case of oral-related forms like dub poetry. Dub poetry is in fact the fusion of reggae rhythms with the practice of the spoken word, focusing on the primacy of the voice. The combination of speech and music underlies a subordination of the former to the latter, thus producing a body of poetry "which is *written* to be *performed* to the same kind of musical accompaniment as that used by deejays".[31] Based on "Word, Sound & Power", as it combines music with spoken word performance, dub poetry sums up the tension between writing and orality, between the word as text and the word as sound.[32] Since its performances are based on the interaction with the text, the way it is presented, and the response of the audience, dub poetry offers interesting insights on standardization and textualization of Creole, especially as concerns the work of dub poets of Jamaican origin Linton Kwesi Johnson and Jean 'Binta' Breeze.

Linton Kwesi Johnson is one of the most outstanding dub poets. Born in Jamaica, he moved to England in 1963, at the age of eleven. He joined the British equivalent of the Black Panther Party while he was still a teenager and then studied Sociology at Goldsmiths, coupling writing poetry with political commitment through his involvement with the British Black Panthers and the CAM (Caribbean Artists Movement). A pioneer in the use of Jamaican Creole in a British context, since the 1970s Johnson has toured extensively with his band and has created his own music label. A poet, storyteller, actress and performer, Jean 'Binta' Breeze went to London in the mid-1980s at the invitation of Linton Kwesi Johnson. She has been recognized as the first female dub poet who, fusing reggae rhythms and spoken words, has been able to carve a completely new space for women in a predominantly male field where women were usually confined to the role of back up singers. Unlike DJs, dub poets have print as one of their intended media: both Johnson and Breeze in fact express a concern with 'printing the performance'; Breeze has published several collections of poems, written in a language ranging from the most basilectal forms of Jamaican Creole to Jamaican Standard English, while Johnson, whose first collection dates back to 1974, has been the first living and the only black poet to be published in the Penguin Modern Classics series.[33]

One of the main issues concerning the textualization of dub poetry is the representation of sound and 'riddim' on the page. While Michael Bucknor identifies some print strategies such as "graphic layout, aural structure and spatial arrangement",[34] Susan Gingell complements them with other approaches used by dub poets to incorporate the aural into the scribal form:

> Providing introductions and other explanatory apparatuses; using contextualizing illustrations and other graphics; exploiting the semantic possibilities of unusual placement of words and letters on the page; privileging sound over verbal semantics; using varying fonts and letter sizes, and employing capitals to script differing voices and sound dynamics; deploying non-alphabetic symbols as semantic resources; making allusions to substantive and stylistic aspects of music and other parts of oral tradition

[31] Carolyn Cooper and Hubert Devonish, "A Tale of Two States: Language, Lit/orature and the Two Jamaicas", in Lloyd Brown, ed., *The Pressures of the Text: Orality, Texts and the Telling of Tales* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1995), 70.

[32] Christian Habekost, *Verbal Riddim: the Politics and Aesthetics of African-Caribbean Dub Poetry* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 1.

[33] Linton Kwesi Johnson, *Mi Revalueshanary Fren: Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2002). Henghameh Saroukhani has provided an insightful analysis of Johnson's "penguinization" in "Penguinizing Dub: Paratextual Frames for Transnational Protest in Linton Kwesi Johnson's *Mi Revalueshanary Fren*", *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, published online 11 November 2014.

[34] Michael A. Bucknor, "Body-Vibes: (S)pacing the Performance in Lillian Allen's Dub Poetry", *Thamyris: Mythmaking from Past to Present*, 5.2 (1998), 303.

> to link the written text to the oral and to guide how the text should be vocalized; and paying careful attention to prosody and using non-standard spelling and code-switching in order to convey the riddims and other phonological dimensions of Caribbean English Creoles and dub itself.[35]

The first experiments straddling oral performance and the written medium have been explored by Kamau Brathwaite in his pioneering trilogy *The Arrivants* (1973).[36] By bringing into his poetry and performances the rhythms of African and West Indian drumming and of jazz, Brathwaite has used his performative innovations to develop his concern for "getting poetry off the page".[37] In this light, crossing the borders between oral/aural and visual/graphic, he has given voice to the printed Creole word by employing the devices of computer-generated typography.

However, the interaction between oral performance and the written medium poses problems not just in terms of graphic representations consistent with the reading – line breaks, italics or different typographic characters – but, most of all, of word spelling. Putting Creole in print is to use a sort of "eye dialect", an idiosyncratic or altered spelling which focuses on pronunciation. As Peter Roberts puts it:

> Whereas the standard orthography identifies words or lexical units, eye dialect attempts to give the precise sound of these units by giving the symbols greater phonetic significance than they normally have and by altering the standard spelling, in spite of the fact that the standard spelling is not totally or exclusively phonetic.[38]

Yet, as has been noted, spelling alterations are often the product of deliberate choices creatively deployed by writers in order to reinforce the message conveyed by the use of Creole through an ideological use of orthography.[39] Dub poetry can thus be seen as a very relevant and interesting field of investigation for the role of spelling choices as social action and 'typographic resistance'.

Variation *as* Creativity

The transition from stage to page, combined with the lack of an official orthography of JamC, offers a further possibility for creative experiments with the printed medium. Thriving on the instability of the borders between the page and stage, dub poetry is characterized by the impossibility to provide an identical performance of the same text. Every dub poem in fact boasts a variety of *versions*, thus keeping in line with the *OED* definition of *dub*: "to provide an alternative sound track ... to mix (various sound tracks) into a single track; to impose (additional sounds) on to an existing recording; to transfer (recorded sound) on to a new record".[40] The poems' printed version coexist with that recorded on audio supports, and with the many versions from live performances. Moreover, every text always changes, not only in the variability of oral performances, but also in the various spelling of

[35] Susan Gingell, "'Always a Poem, Once a Book': Motivations and Strategies for Print Textualizing of Caribbean-Canadian Dub and Poetry", *Journal of West Indian Literature*, 14.1-2 (November 2005), 221.

[36] Kamau Brathwaite, *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[37] Laurence Breiner, *An Introduction to West Indian Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 185. Brathwaite's concern is also testified by the fact that *The Arrivants* was first published and then issued as a set of LPs, leading the way for the audio recordings issued by dub poets.

[38] Peter A. Roberts, *West Indians and Their Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 137.

[39] Mark Sebba, "Phonology Meets Ideology: the Meaning Orthographic Practices in British Creole", *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 22.1 (1998), 19-47.

[40] Oxford English Dictionary, www.oed.com. Last updated September 2014.

the written text, as if to constantly dislocate the word. As Mervyn Morris suggests, "just as there are poets who, in reading aloud, eschew variations in the voice so as to approach (they hope) the comparative impersonality of print, so too are there poets who in their transfer from performance into print resist the basic context of that medium".[41] As a consequence, Morris' strife for standardization and consistency of written Creole seems to contradict the embedded inconsistency of oral-related poetry. The possibility of resistance encompassed by dub poetry can be exemplified by Jean Breeze's statement about her commitment to this genre: "I like this space, there are no rules here".[42] Rules can be taken to mean grammar, Standard English, as well as poetic diction, all dispersed in the liberating power of the spoken word which allows for freedom to express and to experiment with language. Variation in fact seems to be an intrinsic feature of Jamaican orthography, which presents a great degree of inconsistency in itself.[43]

Since, as mentioned above, writers in Jamaica as well as in the diaspora are not generally familiar with the rigid system created by Cassidy in 1961, written Creole is usually represented through a 'respelt' or modified Standard English orthography. Phonetic difference in JamC is generally signalled by using, for instance, the plosives /d/, /t/ instead of British English fricatives, as in: *dem, wid, ting, mout*; half-open monophthongal vowels are used in words like *make* (mek), *say* (seh), *go* (goh), *no* (noh), where BrE has diphthongs. The presence of a glide /j/ after velars and /w/ after bilabials, when a low vowel follows: *cyaan/kean*, *bwoy*; loss of final consonant in clusters: *bes'*, *an'*; velar plosives /k, g/ in medial positions where BrE has alveolar /t, d/: *miggle*, *lickle*; the non-pronunciation of postvocalic /r/ (*start*, *turn* and *mother*) is signalled as: *staat*, *tun, maddah* for *start, turn, mother*.[44] However, in the absence of any official orthography for writing Jamaican Creole, standard norms or recognized model, writers are free to experiment. Variations and alterations are thus the result of individual choices producing a high degree of variability and inconsistency, both among writers and even in the same text, where non-Standard English variant spellings deliberately alternate with the Standard English spelling of the same word. The notion of 'orthography' clearly assumes its inherent correctness and normativity; as it implies a set of accepted norms and conventions, orthography refers to a writing system specifically intended for a particular language and proposed for such use.[45] On the contrary, LKJ and Jean Breeze dismiss any claim of 'authenticity' or 'correctness' and resist the notion of a standardized orthography to which they should conform their writing. Focusing on the importance of 'purpose' of writing, Sebba argues that "Creole writers, without intervention from linguists, have developed ways of representing Creole in writing which suit their current purposes".[46]

Recalling Kloss' notions of *Ausbau* and *Abstand*, Sebba argues that in order for a non-standard language variety to improve its status and define itself as a separate entity, "it will be necessary both for it to develop in such a way that it can support high functions (Ausbau) and to establish itself as different from its competitors (Abstand)".[47] Taking the notion of orthography as a set of "cultural practices",

[41] Morris, "Printing the Performance", 242.

[42] Jean Breeze, "Can a Dub Poet Be a Woman?" in Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh, eds., *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature* (London: Routledge, 1996), 500.

[43] This variability is also testified by the fact that the *Dictionary of Jamaican English* provides different spelling variants of the same word in its entries.

[44] Michael Aceto, "Caribbean Englishes", in Braj B. Kachru, Yamuna Kachru, Cecil L. Nelson, eds., *The Handbook of World Englishes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 216-219.

[45] See Sebba, *Spelling and Society*.

[46] Mark Sebba, "Writing Switching in British Creole", in Kathryn Jones and Marilyn Martin-Jones, eds., *Multilingual Literacies: Reading and Writing in Different Worlds* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2000), 185.

[47] Sebba, "Phonology Meets Ideology", 4.

Sebba argues that "the signs carry not only linguistic meaning, but also social meaning at the same time.[48] As a social practice, orthography is thus affected by ideological implications and, in the case of dub poets, is aimed at achieving "maximal differentiation"[49] from the Standard. Moving away from the limitations of standardization, writers thus choose alternative orthographic representations of Creole phonology in order to signal difference from Standard English.

In the case of Linton Kwesi Johnson, although his first published poem, *Five Nights of Bleeding* (1973),[50] displays Standard English syntax and spelling, it is already possible to trace the tension between JamC/JamE and StE. In contrast with the orthographic regimes of highly standardized texts such as published poetry, Johnson makes a consistent use of JamC in his work heavily relying on the flexibility of the modified StE spelling, often adopting a distinctive spelling which strongly marks difference. This is especially the case with words with Standard English source but different from British English in phonemic structure; common examples of words displaying both phonemic and phonetic difference are: "cyan", "dung", "daak", "numbah", or "oppreshan". Moreover, as the table shows, his spelling is not consistent throughout his work:[51]

can't	cyan	kean	
fire	fire	fyar	fyah
going to	gaan	gwan	
nothing	notn	nottin	nofink
victory	victory	victri	vic'try

The wide range of variants testifies to the purpose of asserting "the independence of creole as a separate language from English",[52] and the last word of the table provides an interesting example in this regard. In the 1979 album *Forces of Victory*, the title track was spelled as "Forces of viktry". When the text was included in the poem collection *Inglan is a Bitch* (1980), its title boasted a standard spelling of the word ("Forces of Victory"), while Johnson spells *vict'ri* in other occurrences in the text. On the other hand, the same poem included in the 2002 collection *Mi Revalueshanary Fren* becomes "Forces of Victri", where the poet adopts the same non-standard spelling of the word throughout the poem.

The work of Jean Breeze similarly displays a high degree of spelling variation, combined with more frequent instances of written code switching. She ranges from StE to JamC, including all the mesolectal forms in between; her code switching is present throughout her work as well as in the same poem. This variability arguably derives from the fact that her linguistic choices always reflect the identity of the poetic persona; basilectal forms and African-derived lexicon are in fact more frequently found in poems such as "Riddym Ravings", performed with the voice of a rural Jamaican woman, or "Soun de Abeng fi Nanny", celebrating the legendary Maroon leader Nanny. In the latter poem Breeze describes Nanny following and decoding the sounds of nature in order to hide from her enemies and take them by surprise:

[48] Sebba, *Spelling and Society*, 7.

[49] Ibid., 110.

[50] Republished in Linton Kwesi Johnson, "Five Nights of Bleeding", *Voices of the Living and the Dead* (London: Race Today, 1974).

[51] The corpus for the study of LKJ's work are his *Inglan is a Bitch* (London; Race Today Publications, 1982), and the aforementioned *Mi Revalueshanary Fren*.

[52] Sebba, "How Do you Spell Patwah?", 59.

an er yeye roam crass
ebery mountain pass
an er yeas well tune to de win'
an de cricket an de treefrog
crackle telegram
an she wet er battam lip fi decode.[53]

[53] Jean 'Binta' Breeze, *Riddym Ravings and Other Poems* (London: Race Today, 1988), 45.

The use of sounds as a strategy for resistance and revolt is evident in the very structure of the poem, where every line celebrates the warlike qualities of the cunning warrior, finally urging the audience with the final incitation: "so mek wi soun de abeng/ fi Nanny". The *abeng* evoked in the poem is an ambiguous musical instrument re-signified by the maroons: an African word meaning conch shell, the abeng was the shell or animal horn used by slaveholders to call the slaves to the plantation, but its blowing also called to revolt, since the instrument had been strategically appropriated by runaway slaves to communicate and organize rebellions. For this reason, the language presents several occurrences of a basilectal form of Jamaican Creole with an African-derived lexicon (like "yeye" for eye) used to signify extreme difference and approximate the language spoken by Nanny, the furthest linguistic variety from the acrolect.

As much as she freely exploits the richness of the language continuum according to the meaning she needs to convey, Breeze similarly adopts unstable spelling choices which, however, tend to privilege phonetics in order to facilitate 'correct' pronunciation.[54] Asked how she made her spelling choices, Breeze answers: "I grew up reading Louise Bennett from the page and that would certainly have been my exposure to Jamaican on the page".[55] It is worth noting that Breeze's first collection of poems, *Riddym Ravings* (1988), was edited by Mervyn Morris. In later collections, however, her work seems to display a higher degree of inconsistency, as if testifying to her need to freely experiment with the ways sounds should be written on the page. In her 1992 collection *Spring Cleaning*, for instance, the internal variability of her spelling choices appears more evident:[56]

[54] De Caires, *Making Style*, 116.

[55] Breeze quoted in Susanne Mühleisen, "Encoding the Voice: Caribbean Women's Writing and Creole", in Joan Anim-Addo, ed., *Framing the Word: Gender and Genre in Caribbean Women's Writing* (London: Whiting & Brick, 1996), 176.

[56] Jean 'Binta' Breeze, *Spring Cleaning* (London: Virago, 1992). Indicated as *SC* in the text.

can't	kyan (3)	kean (9)	
other	adda (41)	odder (88)	
boy	bway (4)	bwoy (21)	boy (26)

Variability, however, also occurs throughout her work; the spelling of "can't" further varies as "cyan",[57] while the spelling of "first" is "firs" (*SC*, 89) and later "fus" (*AB*, 15). Quite predictably, a wider range of different spellings can be found in the case of words with no Standard English source or with an English source with a distinct grammatical function in Creole. Since their use in Standard English is dissimilar from their use in Creole, there is no standard orthography, as is the case of the preposition /ina/: while Johnson consistently uses "inna", Breeze privileges "eena" and "een".

[57] Jean 'Binta' Breeze, *The Arrival of Brighteye and Other Poems* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 2000), 16 and 28. Indicated as *AB* in the text.

Diasporic poets such as Linton Kwesi Johnson and Jean 'Binta' Breeze are educated, bilingual individuals with a literacy in StE. Deeply conscious of the syntactic, lexical and phonetic differences between StE and JamC, their use of JamC, as well as its interference in StE lines, is always intentional. As Sebba insists, such orthographic variation should not be considered "as simply idiosyncratic", but rather as "wholly or partly conscious attempts [by some writers] to subvert and challenge Standard English spelling".[58] Such conscious deviations from the norm thus represent a precise strategy: on the one hand, "anxious not to be rejected unread", dub poets choose the "compromise" of writing "the vernacular for the eye accustomed to standard English, but with various alterations signalling creole";[59] on the other, as they use "a phonetic rendition of Creole … to indicate the pronunciation", they consciously enact a "defamiliarizing strategy to unsettle the reader's expectations of the printed word in 'English'".[60] It is worth noting, for example, that Johnson significantly respells words such as "labour", "recreation" and "accident" as "laybah", "reckreashan" or "hacksident" – to the detriment of the text's readability – in order to create further ideological distance from the lexifier. In this light, while there are material conditions which bring the poets to adopt a system more easily acceptable for an audience whose first literacy is English (thus favouring publication and legibility), they also perform powerful 'creative interventions' on the conventional orthographic system. Sometimes typographic choices are devised so as to include other meaningful words, as for instance in Johnson's spelling of "*re*value*.shanary*", which reveals its proximity with the language of Rastafari.[61] While the modified StE orthography facilitates understanding for literates in English, Johnson uses a declaredly provocative non-conventional spelling that unsettles the reader's expectations; in this case, the reader's attention is immediately focused on typographic difference and on the poet's creative variation gesturing to a precise cultural identity and resistance. In this light, it is particularly significant that in the early 1980s a British journalist argued that Johnson's language "has wreaked havoc in schools and helped to create a generation of *rioters* and *illiterates*".[62]

Taking Trudgill's model of dialect accommodation according to which one of the most salient features involves phonemic contrast, Sebba postulates that writers should be drawing attention to "surface phonemic contrast"[63] in the respelling of StE words to highlight the difference between the two phonological structures. Yet, while Johnson and Breeze often represent the fricatives θ or ð respectively through the /t/ or /d/ sound (as in *think*/*tink*; *this*/*dis*, etc.), as is usual in JamC, Sebba underlines that even when the pronunciation of StE and Creole words is identical or only features minor differences, the respelling marks such less salient features with orthographic devices.[64] Common examples of non-standard spellings used even for words where the sound in question is not different in Creole are the respelling of "you" as "yuh", "yu" or "y'u". This is also the case of the word "tuff", used by both Johnson and Breeze, which is spelt differently from "tough" although they are homophones. Moreover, both poets also use /k/ rather than

[58] Mark Sebba, "Phonology Meets Ideology", 12.

[59] Morris, "Printing the Performance", 22.

[60] De Caires, *Making Style*, 108.

[61] For the word-making process of Rastafari, see Velma Pollard, *Dread Talk: The Language of Rastafari* (Kingston: Canoe Press and McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000). See also Mickey Smith's clever spelling of "politics" as "politricks" in his famous "Me Cyan Believe it", *It a Come* (London: Race Today, 1986).

[62] Roy Kerridge, "A Poet for Our Time", *The Spectator*, 23 April 1982, 12. Emphasis added.

[63] Sebba, "Writing Switching in British Creole", 176.

[64] Ibid., 175-177.

/c/ even when the change is not functional to signalling a different sound in Creole. As a consequence, writing "catch" as "ketch" is a powerfully symbolic rejection of standard norms rather than just an attempt to visually represent a Creole sound. On this subject, Sebba notes that "[a]t this point, the use of unconventional spellings to write Creole begins to look ideological: symbolising *difference* from Standard English may be more important than signalling *sound*".[65] By respelling even the words which show very small phonetic differences from British English, not only they intend to convey the *sound* of Creole, but they also make an ideological use of unconventional spellings. As a symbol of a subculture seeking to distance itself from mainstream British culture, British Creole thus tends to use non-standard spelling as a mark of difference, calling attention to the grapholect which, through an orthographic variation, marks cultural and ethnic difference, eventually resisting any kind of standardization.

As early as 1986, Marlis Hellinger hypothesised that the introduction and the official support to a Creole orthography based on English conventions was likely to strengthen the notion of Creole as inferior; obscure and eradicate much of Creole's linguistic and phonemic authenticity and, most of all, would prevent creativity, arguing that "in no way would linguistic creativity … receive momentum; a dependent language, whose inferior status is also manifest in 'deviant' spellings, will borrow massively from English rather than exploit its own potentially productive morphological rules".[66] However, the alternative orthographic choices of dub poets seem to contradict her. As they experiment with spelling variations in order to convey difference and create new meanings, Johnson and Breeze testify to and powerfully assess the covert prestige of Jamaican Creole and its creativity in a diasporic context. By strengthening a sense of identity which resists any pressure for standardization, they promote creativity while freely using and deliberately modifying the colonial orthographic standard. Equally aware of the danger of proclaiming a supposed 'standard Creole', they also shun the risks of turning textualization into a tool for fixing the written conventions of Creole. As if to resist any claim of authenticity or 'correctness', dub poets thus constantly displace their text and their voice, moving away from the dangers of standardization like clever tricksters.

[65] Sebba, "How to Spell Patwah?", 57.

[66] Hellinger, "On Writing English-related Creoles in the Caribbean", 53-70.

Shondel Nero

Changing Englishes in the US and Caribbean Paradoxes and Possibilities*

Introduction

It is 2009. I'm sitting in Beth's 11th grade English class in a public high school located in a neighborhood in Brooklyn, a borough in New York City (NYC), heavily populated by Afro-Caribbean immigrants.[1] Beth is a 26-year-old enthusiastic White American teacher who is in her fourth year of teaching and prides herself on giving her class creative writing assignments. Her class is made up entirely of students who were born in the Caribbean or whose parents were born there. In Beth's class is Theresa, a feisty 17-year-old young woman born in Jamaica, an island in the Caribbean where English is the official language, but where the mass vernacular is an English-based Creole, known as Jamaican Creole/Patois. Theresa migrated to the United States at age 5 but has regularly returned to the Caribbean during the summers. Her language is a mix of Jamaican Creole, Jamaican English, Standardized American English, and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) that she has picked up from interacting with her African American friends in New York; she is not shy about being creative with language. Beth gave an assignment to students for homework and she asked students to read aloud their responses in class.

> *Assignment*
> Rewrite Iago's soliloquy [from Shakespeare's *Othello*] in modern English.
> Do not do a direct translation. Make the soliloquy sound real.

Theresa's response begins as follows:

> Yo this nigga is so dum yo. I betta watch how I hang out with him before I be dum. Roderigo dum son, but hey it's kind of fun son; dhis nigga does put a lot of cake in my pocket. And Othello think he some god around here. I hate dhis nigga, he get me so tight. I swear he sleeping with my wifey, but I don't know yo shit really got me bussin my head, but dhis what I think so dhat's what I'm going by.[2]

The most obvious comment to make about Theresa's rendering of the assignment is that it is written in AAVE. By drawing on her own multidialectal repertoire of Englishes, which includes AAVE, Theresa has defied the classroom expectation that 'modern English' (quoting directly from the assignment) might only mean *standardized* modern English. But my focus here is less about the specific features of AAVE in the text, and more about the ensuing exchange between Theresa and Beth about the piece after Theresa volunteered to read it aloud in class.

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[1] The names of the teacher and student are pseudonyms.

[2] Shondel Nero, "Language, Literacy, and Pedagogy of Caribbean Creole English Speakers", in Marcia Farr, Lisya Seloni, and Juyoung Song, eds., *Ethnolinguistic Diversity and Education: Language, Literacy, and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 224.

Below is the beginning of Beth (B) and Theresa's (T) exchange:

1 B: Nice reading. Why did you choose to write your piece in dialect?
2 T: Cause you said, 'make it sound real.' So, I write it, like, real.
3 B: True. What makes it real? Would Iago talk like that?
4 T: Yeah! (emphatically). He was pissed off…the guy was sleeping with his wifey… Hey. I be bussin my head, too. He's NOT gonna say, "Oh, I-am-so-angry-at you" (stating each word slowly and deliberately while shaking her head from side to side). Cho! (Several students laugh; the Caribbean students in the class know that "Cho" is a Jamaican expression of mild dismissiveness)
5 B: Whadda you guys think? (turning to the class)
Students shout out various responses simultaneously: "Cool"; "we like it"; "it's real."
6 B: Yes, Theresa did a good job. And she showed how you can play with the English language.
7 T: Thank you! (making a playful face).

Analysis of Beth and Theresa's Interaction

Beth begins by complimenting Theresa on her reading – "Nice reading" (line 1), but immediately follows by asking her to give a reason for writing her piece in dialect. One might view the intent of Beth's question as her inviting Theresa into a dialogue about her writing, but Beth's question also implied that Theresa has violated an unstated norm, i.e., writing in class is expected to be in standardized American English, and therefore Theresa must give a rationale for not adhering to that norm. This puts Theresa in a kind of one-down position, as she must publicly justify her flouting of the rules to her teacher, the authority figure. Theresa then cleverly references Beth's own instructions as her rationale: "Cause you said, 'make it sound real.' So, I write it like real" (line 2), suggesting that the use of AAVE makes the piece real. This response quickly puts Theresa back on foot, as she deftly uses a quote from the teacher's assignment to show herself to be the good student following the teacher's instructions while simultaneously defending her use of AAVE as an appropriate rendering of the task at hand. Beth is forced to accept the bald truth in Theresa's statement – "True", she says. After all, she did ask students to make the soliloquy "sound real". But she probed further – "What makes it real? Would Iago talk like that?" (line 3), which pushed Theresa to further explain her writing. In a series of short utterances expressed with a mix of emphasis, emotion, facial expression, and body movement – in colloquial English ("Yeah! He was pissed off"), AAVE ("I be bussin my head too"), standardized English ("Oh, I am so angry at you"), and punctuated in Jamaican patois ("Cho!"), Theresa languaged her understanding of the text. What to make of the ensuing laughter by the students? Was it a reaction to the humor in, and performance of, Theresa's statement, including the mild dismissal at the end? (Note that the understanding of "Cho" as dismissive is cultural; it is a Caribbean, specifically Jamaican, reference.) Or, was it to Theresa's seeming one-upping of the teacher by showing off her understanding of the piece through languaging in an unsanctioned register? (The

more likely case.) This is evident when (in line 6) Beth quickly took charge of the exchange again by making an egalitarian move – she solicited the opinion of the class using the informal, everyday language of adolescents ("Whadda you guys think?"). With the class back on her side ("Cool. We like it"), she now had the interactional support to reframe the discussion by refocusing on the text and on agency with language, i.e., she states that Theresa's piece is an example of how we can play with the English language (line 8), while reiterating that Theresa did a good job. In one move, Beth skillfully reasserted her teacher authority, focusing on language, while validating Theresa's efforts. This gives Theresa the space to say a lighthearted "thank you" (using the cue of the playful face), signaling a closure to this exchange, but also having the effect of letting the teacher and other students know that she accepts the validation of her work written and read in *her* language.

The text and subsequent interaction produced as a result of this assignment illustrates how Theresa, a Jamaican-born transnational, who migrated to the United States (US) at an early age, but regularly traveled back and forth to Jamaica, was able to draw on the multidialectal linguistic repertoire and discursive practices she is afforded by her simultaneous participation in several overlapping speech communities – Jamaican, African American, and Public School English Class – to produce a piece of writing that defied unstated rules of classroom written discourse by inserting what Suresh Canagarajah calls "oppositional codes"[3] existing conventions. But this scenario goes beyond testing the boundaries of classroom language conventions; in a larger sense, the exchange between Beth and Theresa brings into bold relief the dynamism of the English language in use today. It is transnationals like Theresa, who, through their participation in multiple English-using communities (real and virtual), geographically distant and not, are propelling rapid changes in the definition and use of, and attitudes and responses towards, English.

[3] A. Suresh Canagarajah, "The Place of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued", *College Composition and Communication*, 57.4 (2006), 599.

Caribbean Migration and Transnationalism

Theresa is one among hundreds of thousands of Caribbean natives who have migrated to the US since the passage of the 1965 Hart-Cellar Immigration Act, which opened up legal migration to the US from countries in the Western Hemisphere. That Act is singularly responsible for the phenomenal increase in legal migration of Caribbean and Latin American natives to the US over the past 50 years. In the case of the Anglophone Caribbean, it is no accident that the significant rise in migration to the US coincided with the postcolonial years, as the number of skilled people seeking social and economic advancement following independence from the UK far outnumbered available jobs.

Although most of the literature on migration to the US in recent decades has focused on the Spanish-speaking populations from Latin America due to their overwhelming numbers in the US, an equally compelling story can be told about immigrants from officially English-speaking countries in the Caribbean (such

as Jamaica, Trinidad, and Barbados) and the mainland South American country of Guyana (where I am from). What makes migration from the Anglophone Caribbean so remarkable is the fact that compared to Spanish-speaking Latin American countries, these are very small nation states in terms of geography and population, yet they have a disproportionately high level of migration to the US, New York City being one of the prime destinations, as shown in the chart below:

But something else is remarkable about these post-1965 migrants – they are

Foreign-born Population by Country of Birth
New York City, 2000 and 2011

	2011			2000			% Change 2000-2011
	Rank	Number	Percent	Rank	Number	Percent	
Total foreign born		**3,066,599**	**100.0**		**2,871,032**	**100.0**	**6.8**
Dominican Republic	**1**	**380,160**	**12.4**	**1**	**369,186**	**12.9**	**3.0**
China*	**2**	**350,231**	**11.4**	**2**	**261,551**	**9.1**	**33.9**
Mexico	**3**	**186,298**	**6.1**	**5**	**122,550**	**4.3**	**52.0**
Jamaica	**4**	**169,235**	**5.5**	**3**	**178,922**	**6.2**	**-5.4**
Guyana	**5**	**139,947**	**4.6**	**4**	**130,647**	**4.6**	**7.1**
Ecuador	**6**	**137,791**	**4.5**	**6**	**114,944**	**4.0**	**19.9**
Haiti	**7**	**94,171**	**3.1**	**7**	**95,580**	**3.3**	**-1.5**
Trinidad and Tobago	**8**	**87,635**	**2.9**	**8**	**88,794**	**3.1**	**-1.3**
India	**9**	**76,493**	**2.5**	**14**	**68,263**	**2.4**	**12.1**
Russia	**10**	**76,264**	**2.5**	**10**	**81,408**	**2.8**	**-6.3**

***Includes the mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan**

Sources:
U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census-Summary file; 2011 American Community Survey Summary File; Population Division-New York City Department of City Planning.

quintessential transnationals. The proximity of the Caribbean to the US (a nonstop flight from the East Coast of the US where most Caribbean immigrants live to the Caribbean is no more than 3-5 hours) makes air travel and communication in general between the Caribbean and the US relatively easy. Thus Caribbean natives are able to participate in life and language in these two places without much difficulty. Vertovec notes correctly that transnationalism has made global patterns of sustained communication commonplace.[4] It must be emphasized, though, that transnational lifestyles do not depend entirely on being born in, or even having visited, the home/heritage country. Rather, as Sánchez theorizes, "transnationalism embodies various systems or relationships that span two or more nations, including sustained and meaningful flows of people, money, labor, goods, information, advice, care, and love".[5] In regard to the Anglophone Caribbean and the US, these transnational relationships are mediated through the contact of varieties of Caribbean English and American English, which simultaneously influence

[4] Steven Vertovec, "Super-diversity and Its Implications", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30.6 (2007), 1024-1054.

[5] Patricia Sanchez, "Urban Immigrant Students: How Transnationalism Shapes their World Learning", *The Urban Review*, 39.5 (2007), 493.

each other and create new translanguaged varieties as in Theresa's exchange with Beth. Each time a Caribbean native migrates to New York City or elsewhere in the US through the system of family sponsorship, s/he brings fresh varieties of Caribbean English into the immigrant household, and each time s/he returns, new varieties of US-based English are taken to the Caribbean. But as noted above, the transnational's language does not have to be physically transported. It is engaged on the telephone, on Facebook, Twitter, emails, and so forth, in virtual contact zones. It is in these contact zones, in these transnational spaces, real and virtual, where Englishes are being changed, redefined, appropriated, and resisted. Classrooms are, of course, contact zones – social spaces where, according to Mary Louise Pratt, "cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power",[6] the greater power and authority almost always granted to the teacher. Yet, Theresa negotiated that power dynamic through her writing and verbal exchange with her teacher; she used one of the varieties of English in her repertoire, AAVE, to take ownership of a classroom assignment that presumed only a particular standardized variety of American English was legitimate for the task at hand. Furthermore, she mounted an oral defense of her choice of written language to her teacher by drawing on her multiplicity of Englishes, an act that in itself was creatively redefining or changing what is permissible English in the classroom context, thereby reclaiming authority in a linguistic sense.

[6] Mary Louise Pratt, "The Arts of the Contact Zone", *Professions*, 91 (1991), 34.

Englishes in US Classrooms

My research over the past 20 years has taken me into US classrooms with many students like Theresa – classrooms populated with not only immigrant students from the Anglophone Caribbean, but also students who hail from a plethora of linguistic and cultural backgrounds and who claim, identify with, and use English in their own fashion, thereby redefining what counts as English in general, but specifically what we mean by American English. In NYC, for example, of its 8.3 million residents, 40% of the population is foreign-born (The Newest New Yorkers, 2013),[7] and within that population we find a wide range of linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic, religious, and educational backgrounds, characterized by Vertovec as "super-diversity",[8] which translates to high levels of linguistic diversity among children in the city's public schools, including diverse and hybrid varieties of English. But lest we get carried away by a kind of celebratory linguistic euphoria, it should be noted that changes in the use of English in the US have been mired in a set of paradoxes that are at once self-reinforcing and transformative, and are palpably manifested in schools.

[7] New York City Department of City Planning, *The Newest New Yorkers Characteristics of the City's Foreign-born Population* (2013).

[8] Vertovec, "Superdiversity and Its Implications".

Paradoxes Surrounding English

The first paradox – that English is both monolithic and pluralistic – has been noted by scholars like Tom McArthur.[9] There is an intuitive sense that there is a 'thing' called and understood to be English that is different from a thing called 'Spanish'. After all, we have an international organization called TESOL

[9] Thomas McArthur, *The English Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

dedicated to the teaching of something called 'English'. But, as this thing called English, or specifically American English, is practiced in pluralistic ways, as we see all around us, including in classrooms, it seems to call up an urgency to circle the wagons around a supposed monolithic English to save it from its putative decline. This is old news, of course – the perpetual worry that the English language is in decline because of a general loosening up (or creativity, depending on how you see it) of how it is used in public and formal domains.[10] And it is a futile worry – for transnationalism, social media, and the entire virtual world have ensured that the thing called English will be kept alive, precisely because of its dynamic, pluralistic use among people in real and virtual interactions.

In classrooms in the US, Matsuda has challenged what he calls "the myth of linguistic homogeneity", the notion that linguistic homogeneity is both normal and desirable. Classrooms,[11] being as they are microcosms of the society at large, are exhibit A for debunking this myth. You'd be hard pressed to find a classroom anywhere in the US today where English is the primary language of all the students. In fact, in large metropolitan areas like New York or Los Angeles, and increasingly in suburban and pockets of rural areas, English is not the primary language of the majority of students. Yet, English is very much in use in classrooms by speakers who selectively use combinations of varieties of English (eg. Midwest US English, AAVE, Caribbean Creole English) as a primary language, as an additional language, or hybrid varieties such as Tex Mex, a mixture of Texan English and Texan and Mexican Spanish heavily used along the Texas-Mexican border.

Matsuda laments the attempt to "contain"[12] this linguistic diversity by rejecting the Englishes used by various subgroups in classrooms (e.g., African Americans, immigrants, international students) as marked or not legitimate for the academy. The most obvious culprit of this "linguistic containment policy"[13] in schools is the widespread use of standardized testing as a major form of assessment. The last fifteen years have witnessed a plethora of education policies in the US aimed at raising standards and enforcing accountability – e.g. No Child Left Behind (Bush administration), Race to the Top (Obama administration), and most recently The Common Core State Standards (state governors' initiative) – but which have all had the unintended consequence of becoming de facto language education policy, as they are all premised on high stakes testing based on a narrowly defined standardized American English. As these policies have taken root in curriculum and instructional practices in US schools and colleges, instructors find themselves feeling pressured to teach to the test, which is to say teaching to the 'language' of the test. This is particularly the case in written assignments, as the majority of high stakes assessment whether in the classroom or large-scale tests are written. Consequently, a second paradox has emerged – English in schools is hybridized and standardized at the same time. It seems as though the more diverse English becomes, the more we try to contain it or standardize it. I don't mean to suggest that the culture of standardized testing is unique to the US. Far from it; standardized testing is a fact of life around the world. What is striking in the US

[10] John H. McWhorter, *Doing Our Own Thing: The Degradation of Language and Music, and Why We Should, Like, Care* (New York: Gotham Books, 2003).

[11] Paul Kei Matsuda, "The Myth of Linguistic Homogeneity in US College Composition", *College English*, 68.6 (2006), 637-651.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

is the rapidly increasing super-diversity of English in classrooms (which mirrors the same in the population) that is paralleled by a fiercely intentional privileging of a particular type of standardized English in school. Here are a few examples of words/phrases reflecting transnationalism and super-diversity that are changing English in the US:

1. Cho! – a term of mild dismissal of someone or of a situation (source: Jamaican English)
2. Jerk – a way of preparing and cooking meat native to Jamaica using a hot spicy mixture (source: Jamaican English).
3. Taco – a tortilla folded around a filling of meat, vegetable and or cheese (source: Mexican Spanish)
4. Selfie – a picture taken of oneself usually on an iPhone (source: international/social media English)

These words come from a range of sources, but have all been incorporated into the fabric of US English. They can be heard and understood broadly ('selfie') or narrowly ('Cho!'). It is noteworthy, however, that there is a kind of superficial, celebratory attitude towards linguistic diversity in the US (call it twenty-first century political correctness), as it makes one appear tolerant or even 'cool'. It is 'cool' to be able to take a 'selfie' while ordering 'jerk chicken and waffles' at a local restaurant. It shows one has a kind of urbane sophistication. But this positive attitude towards linguistic diversity seems to stop at the school door, and this leads to a third paradox – we celebrate linguistic diversity in theory but require English homogeneity in schools. This is why Theresa's writing was questioned by her teacher. She was writing in a variety of English (AAVE) that is widely used in American popular culture, but frowned upon in schools, and certainly in writing. Such is the politics of language. Theresa's writing, then, held up a mirror to the paradox, but became a transformative moment, as both she and Beth were drawn into a discursive dance, as they grappled with how to define English, or specifically modern English.

Changing English in the Anglophone Caribbean

The paradoxes surrounding the changing nature of English are not confined to the US. In the Anglophone Caribbean, where Caribbean Creole English (CCE) is the mass vernacular, but English is the official language, attitudes towards both CCE and standard English are ambivalent at best, paradoxical at worst. Although in actuality there is no pure separation of CCE and standardized English in day-to-day language use (the reality is a seamless integration of the two), the colonial legacy in the Caribbean has historically stigmatized CCE, framing it as the language that indexes low socioeconomic status and poor education. Standardized English, by contrast, is linked to the middle and upper classes, a marker of good education and upbringing, and most Anglophone Caribbean natives self-identify as native

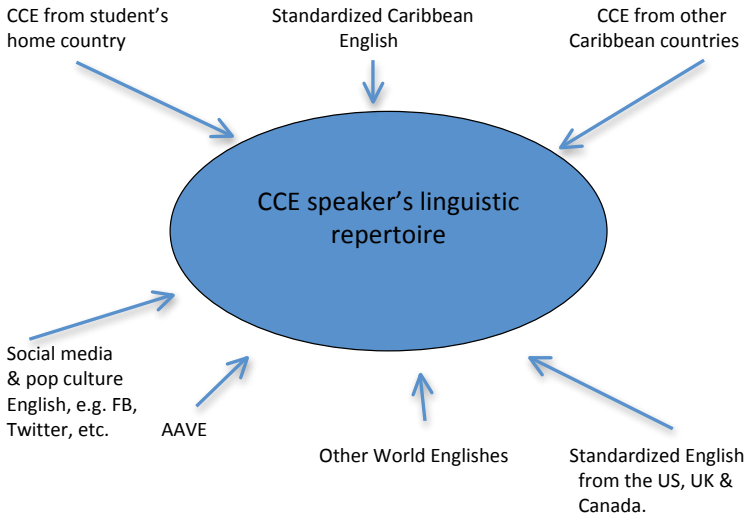
speakers of English, even if they are predominantly Creole speakers. Traditionally, the framework for describing Caribbean language has been the *creole continuum*, a continuous bidirectional spectrum of speech varieties ranging from the basilect (the most conservative creole) to the mesolect (a mixture of Creole and English) to the acrolect (standardized Caribbean English). See diagram below:

<<----------->>

Basilect	**Mesolect**	**Acrolect**
Creole (Patois)	Creole English	Standard English
Im bruk im foot	E bruk he foot	He broke his leg

Today, however, the dynamic language repertoire of someone from the Caribbean, influenced by transnational flows of language might be better captured as follows:

So, an expansive definition and understanding of English takes place in the



Caribbean and is selectively validated. Despite the changing and wider use of CCE in the public sphere and in formal domains as a mark of true Caribbean identity in the post-colonial era, particularly in Jamaica,[14] Anglophone Caribbean natives continue to decry the use of Creole, especially in schools, and often do so, paradoxically, in Creole! An example from Jamaica – Di picknee dem chat bad (The children are speaking badly, meaning speaking in Creole). So there is a simultaneous celebration and denigration of Creole. Kachru and Nelson characterize this contradictory stance as "attitudinal schizophrenia".[15]

During my recent Fulbright fellowship to research language education policy implementation in Jamaica, I witnessed this paradoxical attitude towards Jamaican Creole on full display in the classrooms I observed. All of the six English teachers that I studied claimed in interviews that their language of instruction is English; many of them lamented the widespread use of Creole, yet there were four

[14] Jamaican Language Unit, University of the West Indies, *Language Attitude Survey of Jamaica* (Mona, Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies, 2005).

[15] Braj B. Kachru and Cecil L. Nelson, "World Englishes", in Anne Burns and Caroline Coffin, eds., *Analysing English in a Global Context* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 14.

situations when the teachers consistently used Creole in interactions with students: (1) to scold/discipline a student; (2) to mock a student; (3) to be affectionate with the student; (4) to explain a difficult concept. The students, on the other hand, particularly in the schools with predominantly Creole speakers, would claim an identity as English speakers but would only use English in class to respond to the teacher and to discuss academic content. Whenever they spoke standardized English they would routinely perform it with what they perceived to be an American (Yankee) accent, peppered with popular American phrases (like 'awesome' or 'what a jerk') and cultural references that they picked up from the steady stream of American shows on Jamaican TV, the internet, social media, and relatives who live in the US but travel back and forth to the Caribbean. English was thus intuitively claimed and familiar as a linguistic identity (because to claim Creole is to self-denigrate) but publicly performed as a foreign communicative mode (another paradox – English is familiar and foreign at the same time). These performances in English by Jamaican students were representative of the changing nature of English in Jamaica and the Anglophone Caribbean generally, as they seamlessly integrated Jamaican Creole English and aspects of American English readily available through the transnational flow of people and language between the US and the Caribbean.

Challenges around Changing Englishes

The foregoing paradoxes around the changing nature of English present both challenges and possibilities for research and pedagogy. For most of the twentieth century, we were locked into a monolingualist (one person-one language) paradigm of language, or even if someone were bi/multilingual or bi/multidialectal, which is the case in most of the world, s/he was framed as a kind of two monolinguals in one, i.e., each language/dialect was treated separately as its own entity. But what we've come to understand is that language use in our current century is much more integrated and fluid; one is not simply researching a particular variety of English (US or Caribbean – the World Englishes paradigm), but rather a set of language practices in which multiple dialects and/or varieties of English and even other languages are integrated, owing to high levels of contact. So we are challenged to rethink or expand our units of analysis. We are now challenged to research English language use and development with an English that is much more pluralistic, an English in motion, an English that long ago stopped belonging to the Brits or to Americans, but an English that is transnational. This forces us to break the nation-state-language-paradigm on how we imagine English or any language for that matter. A few years ago, I gave a plenary address at the TESOL Convention in New York City entitled "Languages without Borders: TESOL in a Transient World" in which I discussed the deterritorialization of languages on account of globalization, transnationalism, and social media and the consequences for TESOL both as a field and as an organization. I argued that while varieties of English may predominate in certain geographic spaces (e.g., Jamaican English in Jamaica), they are

not absolute, and never really were. Varieties of English are changing and emerging with remarkable speed and fluidity as language users engage in complex discursive practices across physical and virtual space. So, we might find fruitful research in examining the nature of changing Englishes in actual language practice.This bodes well for corpus linguistics.

The paradox of hybridized and standardized English in schools speaks to a powerful ideology about language, which Rosina Lippi-Green refers to as standard language ideology (SLI), defined as "the pervasive belief in the superiority of an abstracted and idealized form of language, based on the spoken language of the upper middle classes – the 'standard language'".[16] Schools are the primary custodians of this ideology, especially in the form of standardized assessment, but the hybrid language practices by super-diverse populations in schools today is steadily testing this ideology. We saw in the examples of Theresa's writing and her exchange with Beth how she challenged standard language ideology, which forced Beth to rethink her conception of modern English or more to the point what kind of English is acceptable in classrooms. Thus the paradox of a hybridized and standardized English; of an English that is heterogeneous in practice but homogenous in schooling (at least in intent) is challenging us to consider different approaches to language pedagogy, approaches that reframe language in less static and more dynamic ways. It calls for a new classroom aesthetic.

[16] Rosina Lippi-Green, *English with an Accent* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 64.

But this requires an attitude shift, and we know that attitudes are the hardest and slowest to change. In fact, it is SLI that is one of the contributing factors to the denigration of Creole in the Caribbean (the others are colonization and racism). The same attitude obtains with respect to AAVE in the US. Thus the attitude shift that is required to address changing English is one that rejects the monolingualist paradigm and SLI, that starts with English diversity and hybridity as the norm, that confronts the paradoxes around English as starting points for critical engagement with language.

Possibilities for Research and Pedagogy

These challenges can be turned around and reframed as rich possibilities for research and informed pedagogy. In language research, we might consider different units of analysis. For example, what if we examined the variables in transnationalism and super-diversity that might have the greatest impact on English language change? What about conducting more critical ethnographies of language practices in schools? How are these practices evolving in a global world? To what degree do practices shape and are shaped by ideologies? What is the effect of technology on language attitudes, especially with respect to English? How can we design appropriate assessments to align with current language practices? How might we encourage and even reward linguistic creativity of the kind displayed by Theresa? And there is still a lot of unfinished business in language and identity work.

Changing Englishes can also be used to enhance language teacher training. A pluralistic rather than monolingualist paradigm in language teacher training is likely to better prepare teachers for the realities of language practices in the twenty-first century. This is a matter of changing dispositions. Teachers' own language attitudes and socialization should be critically examined as part of training. Linguistic autobiographies are a good starting point for this. Teachers can be introduced to more corpora of English in use as preparation for pedagogy and appropriate assessment. Finally, teachers in their own classrooms can encourage their students to research changing Englishes in the latter's communities and others' communities.

In short, changing Englishes offer fertile ground for research and pedagogy. Going back to our example with Theresa, we see how a simple classroom scenario centered around language can give us a great deal to examine about the changing nature of Englishes in the US and Caribbean, about language teaching and learning, about standard language ideology, about transnationalism, about participation in multiple linguistic communities, about language practices in real time. If Theresa's defense of her version of modern English is our starting point, then we are well on our way to a critical and fruitful engagement with language.

Esterino Adami

Post-colonial Creativity in Language and Cultural Constructions: Railway Discourse in South Asian Englishes

Introduction

The article investigates the effects of post-colonial creativity on language use, especially at lexico-morphological and metaphorical levels, by focusing on railway discourse in South Asian Englishes, with special reference to Indian English and Pakistani English. The 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, in connecting communities and individuals, thus favouring contacts and relations. Given this complex, multicultural scenario, railway discourse and its communicative dimensions constitute a significant domain. New items, constructions and devices emerge as a result of various creative processes in order to accommodate and mediate specialized lexis and convey local cultural connotations that express a sense of identity, rather than merely adopting and assimilating the constraints of technical language.

The focus of the article is on creativity in railway discourse realised via English, a language regularly employed in education, commerce and science (i.e. specialized contexts and domains) in many post-colonial settings. In particular, the label 'South Asian Englishes' is adopted in the pluralised form as an umbrella term to refer to the network of English varieties spoken in the area.

After a short historical introduction to the railways in South Asia, the article will discuss the notions of (specialized) discourse vis-à-vis creativity against the backdrop of specialized terminology and metaphorical effects, considering in particular the category of "railway register" introduced by Seetha Jayaraman.[1] The article will subsequently look at examples of railways discourse from various published and web-based sources in which post-colonial creativity operates, with reference to the processes that sustain language variation, such as vocabulary fossilisation, lexical shift and semantic expansion. Among the non fictional sources the paper will also refer to Monisha Rajesh's *Around India in 80 Trains*,[2] a recently published travelogue that documents the experience of riding along the extensive Indian Railways network by a young UK-based Indian journalist, who comes across trains as diverse as the luxurious Indian Maharaja-Deccan Odyssey, narrow-gauge trains, overcrowded suburban local services and even a unique hospital train that provides help and care for the sick who cannot afford other treatment. In the second part of the paper, the research scope will broaden and briefly take into consideration creative stylistic aspects of railway discourse

[1] Seetha Jayaraman, *Railway Register – A Sociolinguistic Study* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2010); subsequent in-text references to this work are inserted parenthetically with abbreviation RR and page number.

[2] Monisha Rajesh, *Around India in 80 Trains* (New Delhi: Lotus Collection, 2012); subsequent in-text references to this work are inserted parenthetically with abbreviation AIT and page number.

in some literary texts with metaphorical and evocative references to the image of the train as an important, often ambiguous, sociocultural symbol of mobility and 'modernity' in South Asia.[3]

Some Historical Background

The history of the railways in South Asia is complex, but given the limited space available here the article will only take into account the realities of India and Pakistan, which of course were one huge territory during the Raj.

In India, Victorian engineers started building a railway system in 1853 with a line from Bombay to Thane, and many other ramifications and new lines were subsequently added, as for example the Bombay-Calcutta line, which opened in 1870. Several train firms were operational then, but they eventually merged into a single body, and by 1946 the entire network was government-controlled. Currently the system covers 115,000 km with 7,500 stations all over the country. Owned and managed by the state, Indian Railways (abbreviated as IR, भारतीय रेल in Hindi)[4] is now one of the largest train companies in the world and includes several Zonal Railways, e.g. Central with Mumbai as its headquarters, or South Central, with Secunderabad as its base. IR operates passenger and freight services, and manages connections with neighbouring countries such as Nepal or Bangladesh.

[3] Marian Aguiar, *Tracking Modernity: India's Railway and the Culture of Mobility* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); subsequent in-text references to this work are inserted parenthetically with abbreviation TM and page number.

[4] See *Indian Railways* http://www.indianrailways.gov.in, 12 March 2014, and *Indian Rail,* http://www.indianrail.gov.in, 12 March 2014.

Fig. 1: Stefano Piano, *Train in Tamil Nadu*, 1987, courtesy of the artist.

Fig. 2: Stefano Piano, *Station in Tamil Nadu*, 1987, courtesy of the artist.

Railways in Pakistan were first introduced in 1861 with the opening of the Karachi-Kotri line (169 km), followed by other routes, sometimes in mountainous areas and through passes and deserts, managed by different train companies. After Independence and the turbulent period of Partition, the various railway branches were joined together, but a part of the system had to be transferred to India. The current official name of the company is Pakistan Railways (with abbreviation PA, in Urdu پاکستان ریلویز).[5] Like many public services in the country, the organisation suffers from infrastructural weakness and shortage, a situation further worsened by serious accidents and bribery scandals, although plans for track improvement and partial privatisation are currently under discussion.

Creativity and (Specialized) Discourse: The Case of Railspeak

Not only do the two railway companies provide vital transport services in South Asia, but they also have a chief social and cultural role, as they serve and draw together huge communities and large numbers of individuals. Moreover, they elaborate forms of communication, in which it is possible to identify elements of post-colonial imagination at work, such as language variation and transformation in a range of texts and speech events.

It is probably an obvious consideration, but one worth repeating: language holds a pragmatic, effective function to communicate identities and conceptualise the world we live in, and in Bill Ashcroft's words it "has meaning in people's ordinary lives as discourse because it is intimately involved in their social experience".[6] Consequently, 'railspeak', the language of the railways, to a certain extent mirrors wide social and geographical contexts, which in turn are affected by local cultural practices and political actions. Incidentially, it is interesting to note how the pervasiveness of railway discourse is lexically productive even in areas such as swearing words and impoliteness strategies through hybrid constructions endowed with socio-emotional force.[7]

I will mainly refer to the extensive notion of railway discourse, which is related to the lexical, semantic and cultural areas of use in communication pertaining to trains, railways and all its other components, also considering fictional texts with their instances of figurative language, tropes and narrative patterns.

Jayaraman suggests the slightly narrower concept of "railway register" to define the different communicative manifestations centred on the world of the railways, for example written documents like letters, bulletins, signs or even oral messages like public announcements and communication between train drivers and station managers (RR 15-16). However, the more inclusive idea of railway discourse allows

[5] See *Pakistani Railways*, http://pakrail.com/, 13 March 2014.

[6] Bill Ashcroft, *Caliban's Voice: The Transformation of English in Post-Colonial Literatures* (Abingdon: Routledge 2009), 5.

[7] See for example the Hindi taboo expression 'teri ma ki station' (literally meaning 'your mother's station'), which embeds very vulgar connotations and is used as a strong insult, sometimes with variants such as 'teri bahin ki station' ('your sister's station'). I am indebted to my colleague Gianni Pellegrini (University of Turin) for this piece of information.

examples of semi-technical language and figurative uses, which may be important in fictional works, and therefore I will use this notion to sustain my argumentation.

In the Indian subcontinent, the presence of English in the railway field is naturally linked to historical and political contexts, and in the nineteenth century it was used along with Hindustani, whilst independence from Britain and the creation of two separate states (India and Pakistan) in 1947 respectively sanctioned the use of Hindi (written in the Devanagari script) and Urdu (written in the Nastaleeq script). In particular, in India the 1963 Official Languages Act authorised the use of both Hindi and English as national languages for official communication, with the latter planned to be gradually dismissed over the years, an action that never took place in reality. The question of language use and official communication thus is crucial and concerns aspects of language policy at different levels, which are also endowed with sociocultural and sociolinguistic implications.

As Rajendra Aklekar maintains, "advertisements, announcements, information signs, cautioning remarks within the compartments … and so many other areas of contact within and outside the train and in the railway station have been presented in the dominant language and script of the region".[8] Moreover, today English serves as a global lingua franca and as such holds a strategic position in many national and international sectors, which in turn determine linguistic attitudes and trends.[9]

The phenomenon of creativity has frequently been associated with immaterial, 'high' culture and observed in relation to verbal arts and humanities, in genres like literature, theatre or cinema, as a driving force underlying cultural and intellectual productions.[10] In this regard, Braj B. Kachru has lengthily highlighted the innovative power of creativity in post-colonial literatures, in particular when postcolonial writers appropriate and transform languages, styles and traditions.[11] However, from a Cultural Studies perspective, creativity can also be observed in material culture, i.e. that 'thingness' or 'material habitus' tied to the sense of concreteness of life, as objects and commodities acquire important social and cultural functions and connotations.

According to Catherine Belsey, "creativity is the project of culture"[12] and this view can be applied to a range of diverse manifestations and fields, including specialized discourses. Furthermore, it is worth noticing that in recent times the attention of researchers working within the linguistics field and related disciplines has shifted to other areas and now includes aspects of Anglophone world popular culture (e.g. music, advertising or food discourse), which represents a flowering phenomenon in South Asia.[13]

In general, the scholarly approach to specialized discourse usually emphasizes its technical or scientific nature and analyses a series of macro- and microlinguistic features such as monoreferentiality, lack of emotion, precision, transparency, conciseness and conservatism,[14] which are aimed at easing specialized communication in professional communities. Unsurprisingly, railway discourse adheres to these formal features and draws upon specific templates and styles. As Jayaraman notes, "most of the railway correspondence (at least 85%) is of a routine nature, for which

[8] Rajendra Aklekar, "Devanagari in Indian Railways", *Language in India,* 1.10 (2002), http://www.languageinindia.com/feb2002/railway.html, 27 July 2013.

[9] See Maurizio Gotti, "English across Communities and Domains: Globalising Trends and Intercultural Conflicts", in Marina Bondi and Nick Maxwell, eds., *Cross-Cultural Encounters: Linguistic Perspectives* (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 2005), 9-32.

[10] See for example Wimal Dissanayake, "Towards a Decolonised English: South Asian Creativity in Fiction", *World Englishes,* 4.2 (1985), 233-242, or Kingsley Bolton, "Creativity and World Englishes", *World Englishes,* 29.4 (2010), 455-466.

[11] See Braj B. Kachru, *Asian Englishes: Beyond the Canon* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005); Braj B. Kachru, "Asian Englishes in the Asian Age: Contexts and Challenges", in Kumiko Murata and Jennifer Jenkins, eds., *Global Englishes in Asian Contexts: Current and Future Debates* (Houndmills Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 175-193.

[12] Catherine Belsey, *Culture and the Real* (London: Routledge, 2005), 71.

[13] See for example Jamie Shinhee Lee and Andrew Moody, "Sociolinguistics and the Study of English in Asian Popular Culture", in Jamie Shinhee Lee and Andrew Moody, eds., *English in Asian Popular Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 1-11.

[14] See Maurizio Gotti, *Investigating Specialized Discourse* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005); Alessia Oppizzi, *Compounding in Specialized Languages* (Trento: Editrice Uni Service, 2006).

patented models exist" (RR, 15). At the same time, railway discourse in South Asian Englishes displays a certain propensity towards linguistic and stylistic innovation via for example lexical expansion or inventive word-formation.

The question of the intelligibility of global English is central to the agenda of international and intercultural communication and often generates heated debates, nonetheless it is not possible to ignore the impact of local environments and attitudes on the 'macrosystem' of English, encompassing questions and frictions about standard and diatopic varieties: for Kachru the process of nativisation of English in South Asia concerns microlects and restricted codes too, and as a consequence "in developing ESP we must adopt a pluralistic approach since English functions in pluralistic sociolinguistic contexts".[15] In other words, even in the case of specialized communication various forms of post-colonial creativity allow a reshaping of linguistic features and textual boundaries and constraints, thus ultimately expressing local values and identities.

[15] Kachru, "Asian Englishes in the Asian Age", 133.

Creativity at Work: Railway Discourse and Railway Register in Non-Literary Contexts

It has been noted that "there is substantial creativity in Indian English lexis"[16] but this characteristic holds true for many South Asian English varieties. One of the first elements of creativity in the language of railways concerns the naming of specific trains: whilst some passenger services do not have a distinctive name, but are defined by more generic categories such as suburban or express trains, or even 'locals' (shortened form for 'local trains'), and sometimes by a geographical reference (e.g. Decca Express, Panchavati Super Fast Express or Chennai Mail) and a train number,[17] others are defined by names that are semantically evocative. The following table concerns available train services, based on the IR website:

[16] Pingali Sailaja, *Indian English* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 66; subsequent in-text references to this work are inserted parenthetically with abbreviation IE and page number.

[17] For an example of how the complex number reference system works for Indian Railways see Rajesh (AIT, 199).

Name of train	Etymology	Notes
Special	---	running only for particular initiatives such as pilgrimages, festivities or other events
Mail / Express / Superfast	---	intercity trains
Luxury	---	ritzy trains such as Palace on Wheel, Heritage on Wheel or the steam train called The Fairy Queen
Rajdhani	Hindi for 'capital city'	trains running between Delhi and other important cities
Shatabdi	Sanskrit/Hindi for 'centenary'	the fastest trains in India, introduced in 1988
Janshatabdi	Jan (Hindi for 'common people') + shatabdi	a less expensive type of shatabdi express train
Garibrath / Yuva	Garibrath: Hindi for 'poor man's chariot'; Yuva: Hindi for 'Youth'	trains with economy berths
Duronto	Hindi for 'rebel' or 'rebellious' (with positive connotations)[18]	non-stop trains covering long distances
Tourist	---	addressed to tourists and foreign travellers to places such as Darjeeling or Simla
Special Hill	---	bound to the mountainous destinations like Simla, Ooty or Darjeeling

[18] In contrast, Rajesh for Duronto provides the definition 'quick' in Bengali (AIT, 82).

Even through a cursory look at this table, it is possible to see how post-colonial creativity affects railways discourse, specifically the lexical level with Hindi (or Sanskrit) and English hybrid compounds. However, to fully appreciate the lexico-morphological transformations that occur in this context, we need to take a top-down approach and consider the characteristics of railway register.

Jayaraman elaborates on the idea of railway register in relation to written correspondence (records, notes, letters) in India, focusing in particular on the Secunderabad-based South Central Railway. The analysed materials and patterns are distinctive of a specific railway zone of India (for the division of Indian railways see above), but they are representative of the documentation (and the language) employed across the entire train network. The characteristics and elements of the railway lexis elaborated by Jayaraman are attested and confirmed by other sources such as dictionaries, glossaries and tourist guides. Furthermore, Jayaraman's enquiry into railway register can be seen as suitable for all South Asian Englishes, since it captures some shared linguistic characteristics and processes, which are present in these and other local post-colonial varieties of English.

The first class taken into consideration by Jayaraman regards words with acquired meaning, i.e. lexical items that are used to define concepts that differ from their original semantic value. An example is the noun 'detention', which in this area does not mean 'imprisonment' but rather "delay in the departure and arrival of trains" (RR, 28), or the particles 'up' and 'down', which are respectively used to refer to "the direction of the train and tracks" and to "the direction of the train away from destination" (RR, 33-34). Here other varieties of English like British English or American English show a preference for expressions such as outward/outbound and inward/inbound.

The second category includes words with extended meaning, that is, words whose semantic hues go beyond their denotational sense and that often behave in metonymic and integrated ways, so that for example the word 'rail' coincides with 'train'. The meaning of 'sleeper' for instance is not what can be commonly found in generic dictionaries, but "the wooden or the concrete log supporting the rails of a track" (RR, 44). The case of 'bogie', a very specific technical term, is similar, as it increases its meaning to refer to a railway coach, a railway carriage or sometimes even a goods train in both India and Pakistan.[19]

Another significant example that Jayaraman provides is the term 'rake', whose extended definition reads "a sequential arrangement of railway compartments without the engine" (RR, 42). This is also registered by Nihalani *et alii* with the following entry:

> Where the reference is to steam or diesel, this word means a line of coupled wagons or coaches; with the addition of a locomotive, a rake becomes a train. It can also mean a complete electric train, with all the coaches including the driver's. It may have originated in the Northern English dialect form for carts or animals in file. (IBE, 146)

[19] See Paroo Nihalani et al., *Indian and British English* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 36-37; subsequent in-text references to this work are inserted parenthetically with abbreviation IBE and page number. See also Jayaraman, RR, 58-59, and Mubina Talaat, "Lexical Variation in Pakistani English", in Robert J. Baumgardner, ed., *The English Language in Pakistan* (Oxford and Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 56.

Interestingly, the possible etymological origin of the word can be interpreted as a phenomenon of lexical fossilisation of regional forms of English introduced in these territories during the Victorian era: it thus represents the survival of items that are now old-fashioned, rare or even unacceptable in standard English. As a consequence, style in Indian English is often described as "archaic and formal" (IE, 93).

The next examined categories are 'compounds' and 'code-mixing', which emerge as typical characteristics and strategies of both Indian English and Pakistani English, and more generally of South Asian Englishes,[20] in combining and blending various language resources and codes to organise and construct localised references and meanings. An example of compounding available in Nihalani *et alii* is the expression 'retiring room', as opposed to the standard form 'waiting room', which here designates the station premises where passengers can spend the night while waiting for their train and therefore has semantic and conceptual motivations since it "reflects the vast distances covered by the railways in India" (IBE, 152). The expression is also attested in Rajesh (AIT, 170). Code-mixing, on the other hand, is grounded upon the combination of different linguistic elements, usually an English premodifier (with adjectival or defining function) with a Hindi word in the head position, as in the case of 'rail niwas' ('railway resthouse'), presented by Jayaraman (RR, 74), or 'rail rooko', literally meaning 'stop the train' and by conceptual extension "agitation in which trains are stopped by protestors" (IE, 75). Aklekar also provides related examples which display the local linguistic influence on the compound expression, as in the case of 'bada-fast' ('bada' is a Hindi term for 'fast')[21] whilst Rajesh (2012) mentions the Himsagar Express a train with the "hybrid name of 'Himalayas' and 'sagar' – the Sanskrit word for 'sea'" (AIT, 15) that runs for 70 hours serving between 60 and 70 stations.

Jayaraman also takes into consideration other categories, namely the use of codes and the proliferation of abbreviations and acronyms, which are productive in many domains of South Asian Englishes, especially in Indian English (IE, 82-3). According to Jayaraman, "railway register is rich in the inventory of codes in the correspondence" (RR, 67) as they belong to different subcategories, such as designation codes (with hierarchical professional positions like JC for 'junior clerk' or CRB for 'chairman railway board') and station codes, which stand for specific stations across the network (for instance: NDLS for New Delhi, BSB for Varanasi, MAQ for Mandalore). Other general abbreviations and clipped forms include TTE (train ticket examiner), WT (a traveller without a ticket), or AC/non-AC (air-conditioned/non air-conditioned), and veg/nonveg (vegetarian/non-vegetarian) referring to meals served onboard.[22]

Creativity at Work: Railway Discourse and Railway Register in Literary Texts

Considering the paramount social and cultural role of the railways in the South Asian area and following Yamuna Kachru and Larry Smith's contention that post-

[20] See for example Talaat, "Lexical Variation in Pakistani English"; Kachru, A*sian Englishes;* Yamuna Kachru and Larry E. Smith, *Cultures, Contexts and World Englishes* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Sailaja, Indian English.

[21] Aklekar, "Devanagari in Indian Railways".

[22] See Shinie Antony et al., *Indian English. Language and Culture* (Hawthorn, Victoria: Lonely Planet Publication, 2008), 95.

colonial literary works in English "are a valuable source of sociocultural knowledge not easily recoverable from grammars, dictionaries and textbooks",[23] I will now turn to literary texts to see how railway discourse is organised and used not simply as a narrative setting, but as an apt device for the representation of local cultures and societies vis-à-vis the condition of modernity and its aftermaths. In literary texts, railway discourse is realised by means of semi-specialized lexicon, but at the same time it develops and acquires figurative meanings and metaphorical values, which somehow might echo the almost identical rhetorical mottos of both Indian Railways and Pakistan Railways, respectively "the lifeline to the nation" and "the life line of the country" (see IR's and PR's websites).

As a matter of fact, the notable presence of railway discourse in literary texts further demonstrates the sociocultural importance of the railways in the area and concerns both colonial literature and post-colonial fiction, spanning from Kipling's stories to recent South Asian novels in English. Therefore, railway discourse appears as an important literary theme or functional element. The number of narrative texts pivoting around or featuring railway discourse is huge in reality, as shown for example by the anthology *The Penguin Book of Indian Railway Stories,*[24] collected by Ruskin Bond, an Indian writer of British descent, which includes a selection of short stories and extracts from novels written by Indian authors before and after 1947, the year of the Indian independence. Sometimes railway discourse is signalled in the very title, for example in *Bhowani Junction* (1954) by the Anglo-Indian author John Masters, or Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), which deals with the ferocious communal riots between Muslims and Hindus in the Partition period. In other cases it is distantly evoked, for example with Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* (1936), a term of Indian origin that typically identifies "a porter at a railway station" (IBE, 56).

The following analysis will focus on a restricted group of recent texts (published during the 2000s) due to space limits: *Ladies Coupé* by Anita Nair (2003), *The Boyfriend* by Raj Rao (2003) and *The Radiance of Ashes* by Cyrus Mistry (2005).[25] These three novels provide vivid insights into contemporary Indian society, and its complexities and contradictions, as they introduce and re-invent the potentialities of railway discourse.

Railway references in South Asian literary texts are often used as deictic elements to anchor locations and stories and convey specific meanings and connotations. They also exhibit social and cultural links when we consider the transformation of place names that has occurred in India in recent decades. For example one of Mumbai's busiest stations, Victoria Terminus (opened in 1887) was renamed Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus after the founder of the Marathi empire, in 1996, and as a consequence its code is now CSTM. But, in fictional texts, railway discourse can also highlight the complex multicultural scenario of South Asia: in an extract from *The Colour of Nothingness* by Pakistani writer Intizar Husain, a character called Shujat Ali affirms that "[a] train is a whole city in miniature. Hundreds of people get in or get off at every stop. You are bound to rub shoulders with all sorts

[23] Kachru and Smith, *Cultures, Contexts and World Englishes*, 168.

[24] Ruskin Bond, ed., *The Penguin Book of Indian Railway Stories* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1994); subsequent in-text references to this work are inserted parenthetically with abbreviation PBIRS and page number.

[25] Anita Nair, *Ladies Coupé* (London: Vintage, 2003); subsequent in-text references to this work are inserted parenthetically with abbreviation LC and page number. R. Raj Rao, *The Boyfriend* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2003); subsequent in-text references to this work are inserted parenthetically with abbreviation TB and page number. Cyrus Mistry, *The Radiance of Ashes* (London: Picador, 2005); subsequent in-text references to this work are inserted parenthetically with abbreviation RA and page number.

of people in the crowd" (collected in PBIRS, 127). It is interesting to note that the author employs the American term railroad, which brings the question of separate inheritance to the fore. Lexical duplication in different places and times is attested through the opposition between 'railway' and 'railroad', two words which originally were used as synonyms before being adopted by British and American Englishes respectively.[26]

In other cases railway discourse does not have an explicit role but filters through paratextual elements: Aravind Adiga's recent novel *Last Man in Tower* (2011) for example adopts multimodal strategies of representation through a map of Mumbai's suburban railway network as well as a dedication to train travellers: "To my fellow commuters on the Santa Cruz-Churchgate local line".[27] Such devices sustain narration in visual and evocative terms and also establish connections between reality and fiction in order to catch the readers' attention. In the literary context trains reach important cities and run through 'mofussil stations' (the Hindi word meaning 'provincial, small'), as the narrator of a short story titled "The Intimate Demon" by Manoj Das says (collected in PBIRS, 122). Generally, in fictional texts, we do not come across the specialized railway lexicon used for official communication presented by Jayaraman and others, although of course a part of it filters in the plot. Such is the case of Manojit Mitra's story "99 UP" (collected in PBIRS, 178-184), whose synthetic title indicates a particular type of train, running from Calcutta to Seulia (see the above reference to the definition of 'up' trains).

In order to tackle the thorny issue of gender relations and the role of women in Indian society, Anita Nair treats railway discourse as a framing device to arrange the plot of her novel: the protagonist Akila decides to break her repetitive life and travel by train from Bangalore to Kanyakumari. But due to the unavailability of AC sleeper or first-class tickets, she has to take a ladies coupé and share her compartment with other women from very different backgrounds. This gendered space eventually becomes a site of confrontation and reflection, as the ladies coupé, a dated compound expression referring to women-only sleeping cars, brings to the fore the loaded question of separation of public spaces based on gender difference and female seclusion, as regulated by the notions of *zenana* and *purdah* in Indian culture. The introduction of expensive special carriages for women in 1870 followed the traditional customs of means of transport for women, such as the covered palanquin carried by attendants, but it also brought significant social and cultural repercussions because "the way that the train marked lower-class women who could not afford the *zenana* ticket made them more vulnerable than they would have been because they were exposed and therefore perceived as sexually available" (TM, 136).

Railway references, however, also evoke the sensation of movement and freedom, especially for marginalised subjects such as women in traditional societies, as we read in the opening of the text: "the smell of a railway platform at night fills Akila with a sense of escape" (LC, 1). Apparently the ladies coupé symbolises

[26] Gunnel Melchers and Philip Shaw, *World English* (London: Arnold, 2003), 23.

[27] Aravind Adiga, *Last Man in Tower* (London: Atlantic Books, 2011), dedication page.

a form of female segregation, but the writer appropriates this context and turns it into an intimate milieu in which it is possible to address and discuss the role of woman in society against prescriptions and traditions, and eventually cement bonds and relations. From a narratological perspective, the idea of grouping characters in a restricted space to favour storytelling and interaction is certainly not original, but Nair cleverly manages to give prominence to and problematize female voices as the train travels across the country.

Naturally, railspeak surfaces in typical descriptive passages to provide details, yet it also constitutes a trigger for a series of sociocultural references in depicting the Indian context, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

> All railway platforms look alike. The puddles of water near the occasional dripping tap. The passengers with clenched faces and feverish eyes. The piled up suitcases. The occupied benches. The porters. The vendors with coffee and tea urns, packets of biscuits and glossy magazines. The garbage bins stuffed with litter. The cigarette butts. A crumpled plastic coffee cup. A chocolate wrapper. A banana peel. The pink and green plastic bags caught between the railway tracks, ballooning with the breeze, deflating in stillness. The once white but now silvery-grey stakes fencing the station in. (LC, 175-6)

Through the power of visual description, which almost adopts a 'photographic' style, the passage and several other parts of the novel hint at the rootedness of the railways in Indian society not only as a key infrastructural system, but also as a cultural framework for various aspects of life, a means to connect individuals with their plethora of stories, histories, memories and knowledge.

Railway discourse can be exploited for exploring aspects of other sensitive issues, such as the stigmatised themes of homosexuality, or the caste system with regard to the Dalit (outcaste) identity that author and activist R. Raj Rao represents in his 2003 'scandalous' novel. Trains are a daily part of the protagonist's life as he regularly commutes to and from Mumbai, and again it is possible to consider them in symbolic and cultural terms because they entail a sense of movement and freedom that restricted communities are often deprived of in traditional societies. Moreover, railway discourse reminds the reader of the context in which different languages are used for multilingual communication, for example when the protagonist is at Churchgate Station (a terminus train station opened by the British in 1855) and listens to train information: "There was an announcement. 'Owing to signalling failure between Matunga and Mahim, all up and down trains are running twenty to thirty minutes late'. The announcement was repeated in Hindi and Marathi" (TB, 17-8). In a nutshell, the quotation illustrates the main sociolinguistic scenario of communication in (urban) India, which is usually structured around three main languages (Hindi, English and a local language).[28]

Through apparently 'small' rail references the author can also illustrate the tensions arising out of complex local circumstances, for example considering the impact of religious practices on everyday life when masses of pilgrims travel by

[28] Incidentally, I would like to add that my investigation into the creative shapes of railway discourse is based on texts in the written mode, but it might as well consider spoken messages, for instance railway announcements (largely available in video format, for example on the YouTube website), which present particular stylistic and rhetorical characteristics. Here are some examples: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sS1D-D0hdPY, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfJ-iaYgNTs, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3tnkHBiqVA , 8 August 2013.

train to visit a shrine or attend a ceremony, and in turn generate various social repercussions and reactions:

> It was Haji Deewar Mastan, the notorious smuggler, who introduced the concept of free train travel on this day. Any Dalit who wished to go to Chaitya Bhoomi, even from faraway Nagpur, could board a train without a ticket. The practice continued for twenty long years. The railways incurred huge losses in the bargain, but didn't know how to put an end to it without the government of the day losing out on votes. Trains in Maharashtra were known to be packed to capacity throughout the first week of December, as men, women and children, wearing badges with pictures of Ambedkar on them, clambered for a toe-hold. (TB, 173)

The 'material', mundane aspects of railway discourse in reality are particularly useful for handling an array of social, cultural and political themes, including for example the mention of marginal hierarchical-constructed communities, e.g. the Dalit one, which is frequently discriminated and marginalised. Rail references, therefore, contribute to a larger cultural and linguistic landscape and, in this light, they can also be seen as dynamic semiotic resources (such as trainboards, coachboards and other types of signs) that for Pennycook evoke and question the sense of locality, mobility and language in fruitful processes of cultural contacts.[29]

[29] See Alastair Pennycook, *Language and Mobility* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2012).

Let us now take into account Cyrus Mistry's *The Radiance of Ashes*, which is rather different from the other novels as it follows the adventures of Jingo, an aspiring writer who has to deal with everyday preoccupations and goes on a quest for literary inspirations, often watching the world from the window of a train compartment. In a crescendo of darkening clues the railway domain eventually functions as a symbol for the representation of violence and conflicts, specifically the communal riots and destruction of the Babri Masjid, an antique mosque in Ayodhya, in 1992. In bringing to mind the effects of intolerance and brutality that break up the Hindu and Muslim communities, the text re-appropriates the image of the train linked to carnage previously used by other writers, filmmakers and artists representing the themes of cruelty and intolerance. Among them, we find Kushwant Singh, the author of the historical novel *Train to Pakistan,* which tackles the fierce violence of the Partition and the spread of its horrors as 'ghost' trains, in their physical hybridity similar to "a cross between a crowd and a machine" (TM, 89), are full of slaughtered bodies and become frightful moving images of dramatic changes.

A similar atmosphere of threat and fear is described in the novel by Cyrus Mistry when the railways become dangerous for Muslim passengers since "gangs of thugs roamed the suburban trains tormenting women, at least all those dressed in shalwaar-kameez" (RA, 389). Actually the riots involve various groups and take place in or near stations too, whilst people try to flee from urban centres to their own villages: "Now the train didn't stop at Ghatkopar, either. It just sliced through the crowds gathered on either side of the platform. There were violent crowds, waiting to attack. When it was clear the train wouldn't stop, they pelted it with stones" (RA, 393). Thus, also in this work railway discourse is creatively

manipulated in a meaning-making process which foregrounds some of the sensitive issues and contemporary anxieties of South Asia: in metaphorical terms the trains become mute witnesses to the outburst of violence that fiercely kills people, because "these were horrific times" (RA, 393), and then carry their load of memories, knowledge and histories. Imaginatively they construct panic and even allude to, or anticipate, contemporary forms of global terror, with attacks to trains and stations, for example with the episode of the 2006 Mumbai bombings, which caused more than 200 casualties in the capital of Maharashtra.

Concluding Remarks: Post-Colonial Creativity in Railway Discourse

In this article I have tried to cast light on the phenomenon of post-colonial creativity in a range of non-literary and literary texts dealing with railway discourse in South Asian Englishes, focusing in particular on language and narrative constructions. Seemingly, the railway domain exemplifies the restricted area of specialized discourse, with its constraints, systematization and technicalities, but in reality it is able to express local cultures and voices in a wide array of contexts. As a matter of fact, in both its formal and fictional aspects, railway discourse innovatively operates on different levels. With non-literary texts, it exhibits the hybridization of English in South Asia through strategies such as code-mixing, lexical fossilization and compounding. In the case of literature, railway discourse is not a mere embellishment or an element of detailed description, nor is it addressed solely to rail enthusiasts, but rather it notably contributes to the creation of a larger thematic structure that articulates the writer's style and intention to convey meaning.

Given the fact that this is a vast field, spanning Bollywood cinema as well (see for example TM, 130-148), of course my analysis is limited and should be considered as a first approach to the topic. However, what is particularly important is the interdisciplinary perspective that we need to adopt in order to investigate the sphere of post-colonial creativity. Discussing the role of English in the Indian subcontinent, Krishnaswamy and Burde argue that "linguistics, cultural anthropology, sociology and historical studies must come together to study how users change or manipulate communicability of languages in the modern world".[30] In this interconnection of domains and themes lies the core of creativity that post-colonial civilisations pursue in different modalities and shapes when languages undergo the phases of translation and transformation expressed by Bill Ashcroft.[31] As the examples considered here have shown, railway discourse follows the routes of creativity and testifies to the cultural processes of expression and reformulation that constantly take place in South Asia.

[30] Natesan Krishnaswamy and Archana S. Burde, *The Politics of Indians' English* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 157.

[31] See Bill Ashcroft, *Caliban's Voice*.

Rashmila Maiti

"Utterly Butterly": Language and Culture in Indian Advertisements

Advertising and marketing are often evaluated according to negative assumptions regarding consumerism and capitalism. The debate on advertising in post-colonial India has often focused on the dichotomy of "global consumerism and postcolonial nationalistic patriotism",[1] often defining Indian advertisements as emulations of British advertising traditions or postcolonial mimicry, which is understood as "antagonism, irony, and alterity in emulation".[2] The general assumption regarding advertising is that it is a necessary evil – the consumer needs it to be informed but the producer needs it for business and profit. Numerous studies on advertising text types in different post-colonial countries have called for a consideration of the following questions: What is the advertisement trying to sell the hapless consumer? What is the argument in the visuals? How is the caption appealing to the emotions, attitude and demographics of the target audience? Nevertheless, the aesthetics, the creativity and persuasive language of advertisements make them an extremely appealing and attractive genre to study. Yet Lynne Ciochetto, in "Advertising and Globalization in India", observes that "[a]dvertising lies at the juncture where culture and the economy interact: its primary purpose is to sell products and services by stimulating purchasing behavior and it does this by using strategies that rework culture, creating aspirations and new desires for products".[3] Therefore, apart from its transactional and trading elements, advertising is also an important element of popular culture and figures prominently in TV series and movies. (Apart from the extremely popular American series, *Mad Men*, Victoria Leigh Miller, recipient of the 2011 Yahoo Contributor Award for Entertainment and Y!CA Contributor of the Year 2012, has compiled a list of TV series and movies that features ad agencies: *Bosom Buddies* [1980-1982], *Bewitched* [1964-1972], *Kramer vs. Kramer* [1979], *Melrose Place* [1992-1999], *Who's The Boss* [1984- 1992], *Mr. Mom* [1983], *Don Rickles Show* [1972], *On Our Own* [1977], *What Women Want* [2000], and *Full House* [1987-1995].)[4] Advertising provides a glimpse not only into contemporary times and cultural practices, but represents and commodifies the values that people hold important, their desires, expectations, disappointments, and social roles. The aim of the article is to map advertisements in post-colonial India through a consideration of the cultural diversity of the country, the demands of the advertising agencies, and the language used in these which is a mixture of the English language and regional languages.

The history of Indian advertising may be seen as "an enquiry into how many of the cultural symbols that we now see as 'Indian' came about".[5] The history of professional advertising in India initially followed the trends in Britain. As outlined by Anand Halve, co-founder and Director of Chlorophyll Brand and Communications Consultancy (Mumbai, India) and Anita Sarkar in *Adkatha: The Story Of Indian Advertising*,[6] when

[1] Manu Madan, "'It's not just Cricket!' World Series Cricket: Race, Nation, and Diasporic Indian Identity", *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 24.1 (2000), 24-35.

[2] Rohit Varma, Juilen Cayla and S. Hari, "Mimicry and Postcolonial Advertising" (Abstract), *Advances in Consumer Research - European Conference Proceedings*, 9 (2011), 544-544.

[3] Lynne Ciochetto, "Advertising and Globalization in India", *SASNET (Swedish South Asian Studies Network)*, 14 (June 2004), 1, http://www.sasnet.lu.e/EASASpapers/7LynneCiochetto.pdf, 30 October 2013.

[4] Victoria Leigh Miller, "Ad Men: 10 Movies and TV Shows About Advertising Agencies", *Yahoo Voices,* July 8, 2011 http://voices.yahoo.com/ad-men-10-movies-tv-shows-advertising-agencies-8761689.html?cat=2, 30 November 2013.

[5] Ajit Balakrishnan, "Utterly Butterly Indian Ads", *Business Standard*, May 3, 2012, http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/ajit-balakrishnan-utterly-butterly-indian-ads-112050300069_1.html, 30 November 2013.

B. Duttaram set up his agency in Mumbai in 1905, it clearly targeted Anglo-Indian society. As Halve and Sarkar observe, the advertisements in the 1930s and 1940s "often had a quaintly British, almost Wodehousian, flavor – surprisingly, because the medium catered largely to the Indian elites, who took their cues from the British. The ads were therefore often filled with contemporary English slang and Latin quotations".[7] An example of this is the Horlicks The Original Malted milk ad.

Fig 1. J. Walter Thomson, *Horlicks The Original Malted Milk*, Print, *The Times of India Annual*, 1930, in the public domain.

Some exceptions did exist, as in the case of Larry Stronach, a commercial artist in the Mumbai office of Alliance Advertising, set up to serve the British India Corporation after the end of World War I, who wanted to gain a better understanding of the Indian market did exist.[8] Stronach took a year off, and "buying himself a specially designed Standard Saloon car to negotiate the rough roads, he drove 7,500 miles from Peshwar [in modern-day Pakistan] to Tuticorin [also known as Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu, India], and from Quetta [capital of Balochistan province in Pakistan] to Kolkata".[9] This was the first market research study ever done in India.

Yet, shortly after advertising began in India, it reflected the "preferences and aspirations of the Indian society as opposed to the Anglo-Indian society".[10] Today, as Ciochetto has found, "[t]he National Council for Applied Economic Research has identified the 'very rich and consuming classes' in India as part of an international class with similar lifestyles and consumption habits. This group is educated, travels, owns houses, cars, consumer appliances, and in India has household helps. Advertising in certain media, especially magazines, is likely to target this group".[11] With the opening of the Indian economy in the 1990s through liberalization, foreign multinationals have realized the huge potential market of India.[12] Leela Fernandes argues that "[a]dvertising and media images have contributed to the creation of an image of a 'new' Indian middle class, one that has left behind its dependence on austerity and state protection and has embraced an open India that is at ease with broader processes of globalization".[13]

Companies usually apply local ideas to global products since there is a basic difference between the consumer profiles of India and the West, "[t]he Indian

[6] Anand Halve and Anita Sarkar, *Adkatha: the Story of Indian Advertising* (Goa: Centrum Charitable Trust, 2011).

[7] Ibid., 47.

[8] Halve and Sarkar, *Adkatha*, 39 and 41.

[9] Ibid., 41.

[10] Arun Chauduri, *Indian Advertising: 1780 to 1950* (New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill, 2007).

[11] Ciochetto, "Advertising and Globalization", 7.

[12] Indian advertising has gained international recognition. The Gunn Report for Media (http://www.gunnreport.com/), the global evaluation of creativity in media agencies launched in 2004 shows that India ranked at No. 3 in Country of the Year with 181 points and was preceded by the United States and the United Kingdom. The previous year, India was ranked at number five. The Gunn Report is based in London and combines the winners' lists from all of the world's most important award contests.

[13] Leela Fernandes, "Restructuring the New Middle Class in Liberalizing India", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 20.1-2 (2000), 90.

consumer profile differs from profiles in the West, being very needs driven".[14] Thus, a key challenge "for foreign markets in India has been called 'decommodification', changing the pattern of consumer buying from traditional unbranded products to branded products".[15] By way of example, McDonald's Happy Price Menu' ads feature past actors of the Hindi film industry to show the low prices of the menu and a girl agreeing to see a prospective groom while getting lost in the burger.[16]

As noted by Salikoko Mufwene, McDonald's ads countervene common assumptions about the globalization of English, by employing local varieties of English and vernaculars.[17] William O'Barr reasons the success of McDonald's expansion in India as

> (1) successfully adapting the menu to local culture and food preference, (2) respecting the feelings and taboos concerning certain meats as well as India's strong vegetarian tradition, (3) placing Indians in ownership and top management positions, (4) demonstrating its concern for environmental issues both in the restaurants and in the communities where restaurants are located, (5) participating in sport-related and educational programs in the communities, and (6) adhering to its global strategy of thinking globally, acting locally.[18]

McDonald's has successfully used language and certain cultural assumptions to create a brand that is welcoming, pocket-friendly, and innovative. Some examples include the 'paisa vasool' idea of getting the most for the money spent, and love in arranged marriage.[19]

A similar example is the Nike ad by J.W. Thomson that features a group of boys playing cricket on top of buses and rooftops when traffic grinds to a standstill. William M. O'Barr in "Advertising in India" corroborates that "Nike, which had never targeted the cricket market previously … [made] a commercial for the 2007 Cricket World Cup".[20] The ad features two Indian cricketers, Zaheer Khan and S. Sreesnath as onlookers.[21] Cricket, despite being a remnant from the British colonizers, has been successfully appropriated by independent India. Cricket, especially, is a part of growing up for most boys, irrespective of locations, cultures, religions, and financial standing.

Thus advertisements in India reflect the changes that the country has gone through. William Mazzarella, in *Shoveling Smoke: Advertising and Globalization in Contemporary India*, notes: "As an academic interface of postcolonial capitalism the everyday practice of advertising constantly calls into question the conceptual alignments that ground business discourse: local and global, culture and capital, particular and universal, content and form".[22] A brilliant example of the dilemma of post-colonial capitalism is the 2009 Famous House of Animation advertisement of the Indian version of Sulekha.com,[23] a website for online classifieds and Yellow Pages, similar to Craig's List but catering to the Indian diaspora community in the US and Canada as well the locals in India. The ad shows an ancient warrior whose chariot breaks down.

However, to complete the errand, he shoots an arrow in the sky, possibly hinting at an exchange through Sulekha.com, and gets himself a motorcycle instead to complete the errands of his beloved. He then buys numerous things for himself, his

[14] Ciochetto, *Advertising and Globalization in India*, 3.

[15] Fernandes, "Restructuring the New Middle Class in Liberalizing India", 8.

[16] "McDonald's Happy Price Menu", 2004, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvjK5FJJjrQ, McDonald's Corporation, 17 November 2013.

[17] Salikoko Mufwene, *Language Evolution: Contact, Competition and Change* (London: Continuum, 2008), 210 and 240.

[18] William M. O'Barr, "Advertising in India", *Advertising and Society Review*, 9.3 (2008), 7.

[19] See "Paisa Vasool" (2005), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qjtADutfNc, 20 July 2014; and "Arranged Marriage" (2012), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqWhBD-TLfE, 17 November 2013.

[20] O'Barr, "Advertising in India", 8.

[21] Nike World Cup Cricket Campaign (2007), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvJPTbFssZo, 17 November 2013.

[22] William Mazzarella, *Shoveling Smoke: Advertising and Globalization in Contemporary India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 4.

[23] "Arjuna the Archer", 2008, Sulekha.com, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ppxQdNueJY, 17 November 2013.

beloved, and his family like furniture, jewelry, house, food, and even hires a priest to perform his wedding, the underlying idea being that Sulekha.com provided for everything. The protagonist looks like Arjun, one of the Pandavas in Mahabharata, an important Hindu epic, who was famous for his brilliant archery skills. The whole ad is an animation in a traditional Indian style with modern motifs.

The problem of diverse needs often leads to the solution of appealing to only a specific section of society and adding in the information required to understand the ad for the audience outside that particular section and language. This has been a problem since the early days of Indian advertising. As in the case of the founder of JWT, J. Walter Thomson, who arrived in India in 1929, the dilemma was, "the sheer complexity and size of the country, and the profusion of languages it had to work with".[24] Peter Fielden, the head of JWT in India, recalled that they had a team of language copywriters covering every major language but they wondered how they could make sure that the translations were accurate. They set up a system whereby one person would translate the line into an Indian language and a different person would translate it in English, later checking both.[25]

An example of this complexity is the *Times of India*'s ad, "A Day in the Life of Chennai", which is rooted in the regional sentiments, language and demography of the southern metropolitan city yet has managed to be a big hit with the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, winning a Gold Lion in 2008.[26] The city is known for its movies, "for the state's superstar chief Minister (Jayalalitha) and … the Oscar-winning composer A. R. Rahman".[27] Further, "from zero to hero – anything can happen in Chennai, throbbing, pulsating with energy. Local color, local idiom – all you need to do is catch the beat".[28] So someone from Chennai will instantly understand the jokes and the references but there is enough information added in that someone from outside Chennai can also understand the advertisement. The advertisement caters to an international audience but often there are some inside references and jokes that only a certain section of the readers, usually form the Indian subcontinent, will understand.

A further problem that ad agencies face in India is how to appeal to a wide demographic because what is amusing in one part of the country may be completely offensive and stereotypical to the other. This can be traced back to colonialism when, as Boehmer asserts, "depending on context and imperial interest, certain categories of people or cultures were deemed to be closer to the European self than others".[29] This hierarchy and othering has resulted in stereotypes corresponding to the geographical regions in the country. The MD and CEO of Futurebrands India Ltd., author of *Mother Pious Lady: Making Sense of Everyday India* and columnist of "City City Bang Bang" in *The Times of India*, Santosh Desai states that "[t]he great North-South debate rages" and the resulting stereotypes are often exploited to appeal to particular audiences. As Desai notes, "[t]he North thought of all of South India as Madrasis … stereotyping their attire, accent and personality. All Madrasis were mild … conservative and overly concerned with religion. The South thought of the North as a place full of crude hustlers, intent on loud display of material

[24] Halve and Sarkar, *Adkatha*, 45.

[25] Ibid., 45.

[26] Sentil Kumar, "A Day in the Life of Chennai", 2008, *The Times of India*, JWT Chennai, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEU_qyiQmYQ, 15 November 2013.

[27] Halve and Sarkar, *Adkatha,* 187.

[28] Ibid., 199.

[29] Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 82.

wealth, lacking refinement and culture".[30] Desai further argues that the South has been described "as the lesser other – a strange being from another world, to be looked at with patronizing curiosity and to be referred to in broad brushstrokes of crude humor" because of the "stranglehold the North has had on national politics as well as national modes of popular representation (cinema and hence music)".[31] In fact the colors, noise, and chaos which is often associated with India is largely due to a North Indian construct where, "[t]he North Indian way of life, particularly that of the Punjabi persuasion is a pervasive force that colors the Indian imagination".[32]

As O'Barr notes, "[i]n managing brands and targeting consumers, advertising must understand and contend with the social and cultural diversity of India. Thus, if advertising is to reflect society, the question in India becomes: Which India? The contrast between what is manufactured at home (and thus, Indian) and what is imported (and thus, global) touches the very heart of Indian national identity".[33] Nevertheless, some emotions and situations are shared by all Indian communities. An example is the Coca Cola Campaign (2002) featuring Aamir Khan, a famous Hindi film actor. He disguises himself impersonating different roles, loosely corresponding to different communities through clothes and mannerisms. The ads were favorably received since everyone could arguably identify with the communities which were portrayed through cultural markers and Bollywood usually acts as a great equalizer across regions except the South that has its own different film industries.

A similar case may be the 2001 advertising campaign for Fevicol, a type of super-strong glue that can bind almost all surfaces. The ad features a load of passengers who have been glued to the truck, hence appealing to a shared experience.[34] The slogan is "Fevicol – the ultimate adhesive", winning a "Golden lion at the ad fest in Cannes in 2001".[35] The concept of space is somewhat alien in India. The psychological space is missing because of strong family ties where children are smothered with love and affection. The physical space is absent because of the burgeoning population with overcrowded public transport, long queues, and a sea of humanity everywhere. So, this advertisement where people are all over a bus that has an ad for Fevicol painted on its sides resonated with people, who face this over-crowding every day in different forms. Fevicol's other ads also feature rural population, craftsmen and laborers, and Indian values, like marriage, the joint family held together, and children.

Another study by Arpita Khare, Marketing Professor at Indian Institute of Management, Rohtak, India, "Impact of Indian Cultural Values and Lifestyles on Meaning of Branded Products: Study on University Students in India", suggests that "Indian consumers give high relevance to family values and traditions when choosing brands. The brand connotes family values, group values, status, self-identity, and personal values. Group and family acceptance are significant when selecting brands, and it is supposed to fulfill their social needs for group conformance and self-identity. Self-identity is affected by group approval".[36] She gives the examples of "Nestle, Dulux Paints, Unilever, PespsiCo, Coca Cola, Nokia, McDonald's, and Britannia" that "endorse these values, and their brand

[30] Santosh Desai, "The Great North-South Debate Rages", *The Times of India*, 14 April 2008, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/The-great-North-South-debate-rages/articleshow/2949925.cms?referral=PM, 3 December 2013.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

[33] O'Barr, "Advertising in India".

[34] "Fevicol – the Ultimate Adhesive" (2001), http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuGa0kqnVu0, 15 November 2013.

[35] Halve and Sarkar, *Adkatha*, 157.

[36] Arpita Khare, "Impact of Indian Cultural Values and Lifestyles on Meaning of Branded Products: Study on University Students in India", *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 23 (2011), 370.

identity reflects family and group values. The brands that personify strong Indian values are considered a part of the Indian system. The youths may appear to endorse Western values, but Indian cultural values still play a significant role in their lifestyle and brand meanings. Their lifestyle and values are governed by family traditions and group norms".[37]

A significant example of long-lasting globalization is Lux soaps, developed by Unilever. Michael H. Anderson, in *Madison Avenue in Asia: Politics and Transnational Advertising*, endorses for "great sensitivity on the part of the admen for India with its wide range of social, economic, religious, linguistic, and regional differences".[38] Lux ads had to follow the transnational advertising guidelines, formalized by Unilever and JWT headquarters decades ago. In India, and elsewhere, Lux is sold by the film-star endorsement theme, and Hindustan Thompson uses at least thirty stars to reach various regional audiences. In addition to English, any Lux ad must be implemented by ten different major Indian languages. The stars have to be carefully chosen to conform to regional popularity. For example, a star who is popular in Kerala State by virtue of her work in Malayalam-language cinema may not be known in Tamil Nadu where Tamil is spoken.[39]

O'Barr states that "Lux soap went on sale in India in 1929" and the "advertising style for Lux was used in England, America, Australia, South Africa, and India".[40] For Lux's seventy-fifth year anniversary in India, JWT came up with an innovative twist by which a famous Bollywood male superstar, Shahrukh Khan, "was placed in a large bath filled with flower petals and surrounded by four actresses who had previously endorsed Lux in ads…. Khan … [repeated] the famous tagline, 'Lux is the secret of my beauty'".[41]

The different kinds of language used in the advertisements testify to the 'chutnification' of the English language in India. English is still the preferred language of discourse in the public sphere. A majority is also trilingual as they have to learn the local language for interacting with people on a regular basis. This is especially true for people who move out of their home states for work or education. The common person selling vegetables or gas may not know English leading some people to learn a third language. What the majority of the people speak is a mixture of at least two languages. The reasons behind speaking Hinglish, Tanglish or Minglish are ease or convenience where sometime the correct word(s) in the native language are lost or unknown, and the combination of words act as shorthand for status and comprehension. As O'Barr argues, "English is the only common language throughout all of India, but it is unknown in many sectors of the population. Television, radio, and newspapers rely on more than two dozen languages, thus limiting the communicative reach of many advertisements to certain geographic regions or some sectors of society. When addressing India's elite, advertising uses English".[42]

Aradhna Krishna and Rohini Ahluwalia, in "Language Choice in Advertising to Bilinguals: Asymmetric Effects for Multinationals versus Local Firms", have traced the geography and frequency of bilingualism:

[37] Ibid., 374.

[38] Michael H. Anderson, *Madison Avenue in Asia: Politics and Transnational Advertising* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), 123.

[39] Ibid., 374.

[40] O'Barr, "Advertising in India".

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

> several countries in Southeast Asia (e.g., Singapore, Japan, and India), Europe (e.g., Holland, Belgium, and many Western European nations), North America (e.g., United States), and North Africa (e.g., Morocco, Algeria, Chad, and Tunisia) have bilingual populations. Many of these populations are fairly fluent in a 'foreign' language (typically English or French) as well as at least one local or native language.[43]

Krishna and Ahluwalia also emphasize the complexity of the problem of which language to use for advertising and outline the options, "the ads could be in either one of the primary languages or could have a bilingual format containing a mixture of the two languages (e.g., Spanglish, Hinglish, or Singlish, which combine English with Spanish, Hindi, and Malay/Cantonese, respectively)".[44] This is a significant dilemma for multinational corporations because they "need to weigh the advantages of single language use (i.e. English) across markets versus the complexities of communicating their message in the local language or a mixed language ad".[45] On the other hand Arvind Rajagopal, in "Advertising, Politics, and the Sentimental Education of the Indian Consumer", argues that "whereas most domestic companies have chosen to use translators to convert English language campaigns, newly entering multinationals have commissioned vernacular copy, and carried out consumer research on dialectal idiom for use in campaigns, departing to some extent from prevailing Anglophone biases".[46] In this question of translation, Halve and Sarkar ask the question of how puns translate when a campaign has to run in several languages; the answer is, "it doesn't have to. Original ads, as catchy and with the same underlying message, were developed [in the 80s] in Indian languages".[47] Nevertheless, as Rekha Nigam argues in "Lost in Translation", "the breach between those who spoke and wrote in English [the copywriters], and those who did not, served mainly to widen the gap between the advertiser and the consumer, on a national scale".[48] Consequently, hybrid languages such as Hinglish are an ulterior option for advertising which, as Boehmer emphasizes, "crosses, fragments, and parodies different narrative styles and perspectives. Local contexts are reflected in the inclusion of pidgin English, untranslated words, obscure proverbs …. A similar effect is created where a work cites cultural information – jokes, fragments of oral epic, indigenous film, vernacular histories – which cannot be deciphered without background knowledge".[49]

Hinglish and other hybrid languages can also be seen as "the *mélange* which has resulted from immigration – the fragmented and mixed-up histories, the *khichri* or goulash of languages".[50] It is difficult to navigate this *khichri* of languages and both companies and advertising firms constantly face the problem of which language to use to appeal to consumers. Krishna and Ahluwalia have identified two important factors "of language choice on persuasion … the country of origin of the company and the product category of the brand".[51] Moreover, they point out that in advertising "in urban India, even when the ad language is Hindi or mixed (Hindi and English), the written script is typically roman for both languages".[52] Their research showed that "there may be a higher level of belongingness associated with Hindi, while English may symbolize sophistication and modernity in India".[53] Their

[43] Aradhna Krishna and Rohini Ahluwalia, "Language Choice in Advertising to Bilinguals: Asymmetric Effects for Multinationals versus Local Firms", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35.4 (2008), 692.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Arvind Rajagopal, "Advertising, Politics, and the Sentimental Education of the Indian Consumer", *Visual Anthropology Review*, 14.2 (1998), 20.

[47] Halve and Sarkar, *Adkatha*, 140.

[48] Nigam, "Lost in Translation", 254.

[49] Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 206.

[50] Ibid., 235.

[51] Krishna and Ahluwalia, "Language Choice in Advertising to Bilinguals", 693.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

other finding was that "the Hindi language is associated with belongingness (close, personal, friendly, and family), whereas English is associated with sophistication (global, cosmopolitan, urban, and upper class)".[54]

Krishna and Ahluwalia assert that "in most bilingual societies, expectations regarding language use are based on perceptions of the speaker's background …. For a foreign company, English is the expected language since it is the dominant language of communication with foreigners and is also the formal language in urban India".[55] Language in any society has different meanings and associations whereby certain words and phrases act as codes and meanings:

> Hindi is associated with the family and with being close and friendly, or in other words, a sense of belongingness; therefore, Hindi would be more relevant for evaluating necessities, as discussed above. In contrast, the sophistication, upper class, and exclusivity associations of English … are relevant for the evaluation of luxury products. In other words, the associations of the English language are likely to be relevant for evaluating luxury products, while the associations elicited by Hindi are relevant in judgments relating to the necessity type of products. Note that we focus on belongingness and sophistication associations of language and not of products. In other words, it is not essential that all necessities (e.g., detergents) have a strong association with belongingness; it is just proposed that belongingness (e.g., as conveyed via language) is likely to be an important criterion when consumers evaluate necessities.[56]

Their finding is important for multinational corporations who use mixed language ads as these ads "might be the most feasible (and low risk) option, if a product does not clearly fall in the luxury/necessity distinction, since they are likely to elicit relevant and favorable associations for both languages".[57] Two examples of these are the slogan for Domino's Pizza, "Hungry *Kya*?" that translates as 'Are you hungry?' but in a more colloquial tone because of the juxtaposition of the two words form two different languages and McDonald's "What your *bahana* is?" that translates into 'What is your reason (to eat at McDonald's)?' Perhaps the mixing of languages may be seen as fun, colloquial, pedestrian, rather than formal or serious. It can be seen as a failing on the part of the speaker who has to use words form an alien language as he cannot come up with the equivalents of those words in his native language. Hinglish became the choice for a new generation in the 1990s, "Hinglish, Hindi/English communication Indian *ishtyle* [Indianised style], had arrived".[58]

An example of lexical expansion through suffixation deriving from the creativity of Indian advertising in English is Amul brand's commentary on contemporary events in India and the globe. Amul specializes in butter and other dairy products and was a result of the White Revolution in India. This was the result of Operation Flood project started by Dr. V Kurien as a means to financially support the villages through the production of milk. India became self-sufficient in the production of milk and was the largest producer as of 2010-11. In the Amul ads, the 'utterly butterly' girl has been a familiar figure for decades. She has been the spokesperson for India on numerous subjects and turned fifty years old in 2012. She has spoken on politics, sports, society, law, feminism, popular culture and controversies. An

[54] Ibid., 696.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid., 697.

[57] Ibid., 703.

[58] Halve and Sarkar, *Adkatha*, 154.

archive of the advertisements can be found on the Amul website. Interestingly, "'Utterly Butterly' was initially ridiculed for being ungrammatical. Except for Dr. Kurien who remarked to me [Sylvester da Cunha, the creator]: 'You're mad. But go ahead, if you think it'll work.' And that is how the blooper 'butterly' entered English".[59] In conclusion, as the latter example demonstrates, Indian advertisements largely draw on tradition and history often keeping the contemporary situation in mind. Cultural and regional stereotypes are avoided, yet Hinglish is preferred as a medium, especially for multinational corporations to reach a wider urban and educated audience.

[59] Sylvester da Cunha, "The Utterly Butterly Story", *Business Standard*, September 12, 2012, http://www.business-standard.com/article/management/the-utterly-butterly-story-112091200663_1.html, 17 November 2013.

Anna Mongibello

Language Has Memory: Cre(e)ativity and Transformation in Louise Halfe's *Bear Bones and Feathers*

The indigenization of "the enemy's language"[1] in Louise Halfe's poetry may be exemplified by the video-performance by contemporary Cree and Métis artist from Canada Cheryl L'Hirondelle. *Mocikihtatan e-nehiyawiyak* is the Cree title of the performance presented for the first time at Western Front (Vancouver, British Columbia) in 2009. L'Hirondelle chooses not to translate the title in English, thus creating a distance between her work and the audience, but also suggesting the centrality of her first language in her performance. At the beginning, the performer is tied by a rope. Her body has been immobilized. Very slowly, almost imperceptibly, she starts to move, swinging as her voice breaks the silence of the white tent with an old song in Cree language. As the words grow into a warrior song, her voice gets stronger and she gains more freedom: suddenly, her struggle to resist immobility turns into a dance of shadows, with the smooth movements of her body following the rhythm of the drums. The violence of the rope is defeated through the intensity of her Cree voice. However, as soon as she frees herself, another rope begins to mortify her body. While fighting it, her resistance breaks the tent that finally collapses on itself.[2]

The ceremony of liberation that the performer enacts throughout the video-installation is deeply connected to her use of the Cree language; moreover it highlights the relationship between language and power, as well as between language and empowerment. The rope immobilizing the body symbolizes the biopolitical violence of linguistic imperialism that in Canada aimed at and partly succeeded in destroying Indigenous cultures such as the Cree and the Métis through several practices of cultural assimilation and control. The residential school system is a clear example of how the Canadian government attempted to detribalize and westernize Indigenous cultures throughout the country within institutes where "[the Indians] were expected to become like non-Natives – to serve

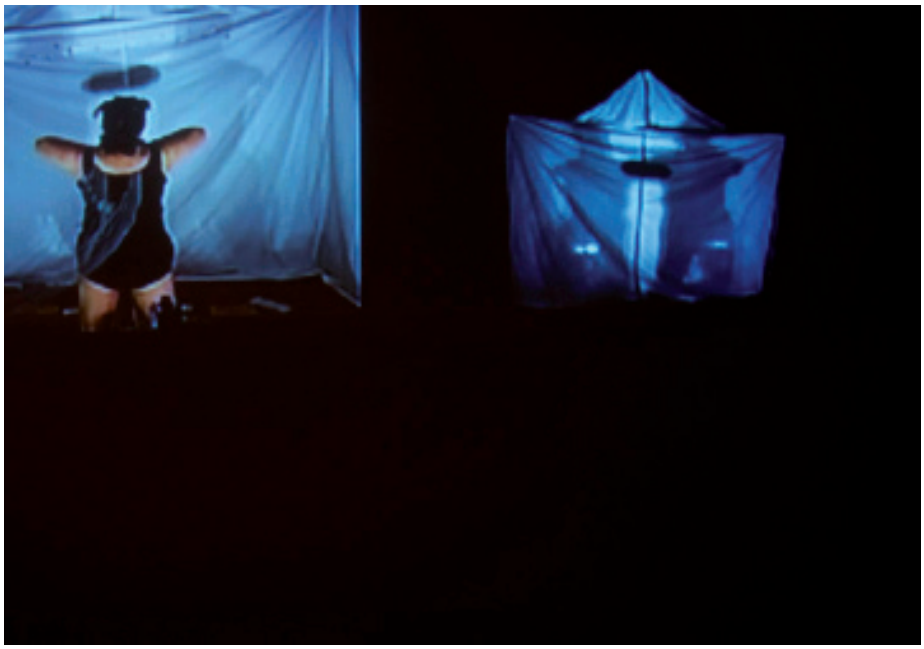


Fig. 1: Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *mocikihtatan e-nehiyawiyak*, 2009. Snapshot from *A Small Gathering for the Healing of Our Aboriginal Languages*, http://front.nfshost.com/gatheringlanguage, 13 September 2014. I have tried to contact copyright owner for the image. If I am in breach of any copyright, please contact me.

[1] Gloria Bird and Joy Harjo, eds., *Reinventing the Enemy's Language: Contemporary Native Women's Writings of North America* (New York: Norton, 1998).

[2] The whole performance can be seen online at http://vimeo.com/39231862, 13 July 2014.

as human resources for the developing of industrial Canada".[3] As Okanagan writer Jeannette Armstrong recalls:

> Many of our people were coerced and brutalized for speaking their language and practising their culture until their memory grew distant and dim…. There was a huge battle. There are newspaper accounts of this mini-war that happened in our community, right on our reserve. The traditional people who were not adherents of the Catholic Church just refused, said 'No, we're not letting our children be taken'.[4]

The writer is referring to the resistance opposed to 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. In fact, "English language teaching was a crucial part of the colonial enterprise … English has been a major language in which colonialism has been written".[5] As Robert Phillipson demonstrates in *Linguistic Imperialism*, in the areas subjected to the trauma of colonialism, linguistic imperialism has worked along with practices of conquest and control.[6] The imposition of English (or French, in the province of Quebec) has been counteracted by numerous struggles for the affirmation of the right to self-representation. Today, linguistic and cognitive imperialism is still present in schools and universities: "Under the subtle influence of cognitive imperialism, modern educational theory and practice have, in large part, destroyed and distorted the ways of life, histories, identities, cultures and languages of Aboriginal people".[7]

Nevertheless, the Canadian government actually failed to repress traditional people's voices, which turned into songs of freedom and livelihood. The voices of the subaltern re-appropriate the space of expression within the hegemonic discourses of power: the subaltern interrupts the rigidity of oppression through the counter-narrative of her body and her song of resistance. Hers is "a tongue of fire",[8] to use the evocative words by Chicano writer Gloria Anzaldùa, the linguistic nightmare resisting translation and setting fire to the linguistic hegemony of the English language. Anzaldùa's words, though coming from another place, could subtitle L'Hirondelle's performance: "I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent's tongue – my woman's voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence".[9]

In the last twenty years many Indigenous cultural associations have tried to revitalize Indigenous languages, recovering and strengthening them. The Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, for example, organizes free language classes and programs in Indigenous languages, also thanks to the contribution of the Elders that have offered their linguistic and cultural memory to the new generations.[10] Indigenous television and radio networks also play an important role: Inuit Broadcasting Corporation, for example, is the main radio broadcast in the province of Nunavut transmitting programs in Inuktitut; APTN, the Aboriginal People Television Network, is the only Canadian television network completely dedicated to and managed by Indigenous People, with a palimpsest that features 25% of its

[3] Celia Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1998), 11.

[4] Jeannette Armstrong, "Words", in Sky Lee, Lee Maracle *et al.*, eds., *Telling It: Women and Languages across Cultures* (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1990), 24. Issues regarding language and power were discussed by Armstrong and other Indigenous writers from Canada during the 1988 conference *Telling It: Women Across Language and Cultures* held in Vancouver (British Columbia).

[5] Alastair Pennycook, *English and the Discourses of Colonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 9.

[6] Robert Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[7] Marie Battiste, *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 193.

[8] Gloria Anzaldùa, "How to Tame a Wild Tongue", in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters, 1987), 54.

[9] Ibid.

[10] In this regard, I would like to recall the Cree scholar Freda Ahenakew, born in Ahtahkakoop (Saskatchewan) who is still considered one of the most important scholars of the Cree language. Her book, *Cree Language Structures: A Cree Approach* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1987), has been the first attempt to study the grammar structures of this language. For years, she has also organized summer camps at Muskeg Lake (Saskatchewan) to reconnect the new generations to their linguistic origins.

shows in Indigenous languages.[11] The intent is to rebuild an intimate connection between its audience and the languages of the Grandmothers, i.e. the Indigenous languages that bear the memories of the ancestors.

Nonetheless, these attempts to reaffirm worldviews through traditional languages seem to ignore the mixing of codes, and the influence of linguistic contact in the zones where languages meet and transform each other. The languages of the Grandmothers have undergone the trauma of erasure. Going back, Iain Chambers would say, is an impossible journey.[12] The relation between languages and cultures, though, is not an authentic one, as Bill Ashcroft remarkably points out; thus, varieties of English can 'carry' Indigenous worldviews. These may be defined as the languages of transformation, created by Indigenous writers in the ongoing process of finding a voice and accommodating their worldviews. In this sense, the appropriation of English is not necessarily the loss of the languages of the Grandmothers, but the gain of new systems of communication, "grammars of appropriation"[13] disseminated with the traces of the languages of the Grandmothers that can convey the very idea of cultural identities in translation.

As the visual art of Cheryl L'Hirondelle, the poetry of the contemporary Cree poet from Alberta Louise Halfe, also known as Skydancer, may further the movement towards a language that can overcome the tradition of silence while retaining both the memory of the Grandmothers' languages and the trauma of colonization. Halfe was born in 1953 on the Indian reservation of Saddle Lake, Two Hills (Alberta), where the bones of her ancestors whisper the stories of the Cree nation: "The prairie is full of bones. The bones stand and sing and I feel the weight of them as they guide my fingers on this page".[14] I had the chance to take part in Louise Halfe's readings three times: each time she didn't wear shoes, her skin touching and becoming one thing with the porous surface of the floors, the streets, the earth. As she told me during an interview in Italy in May 2011, there is continuity between the land and the body, and she is in constant communication with her ancestors. In this way, the stories are passed on. The dialogue with her cultural memory involves her transformation of English. In Drew Hayden Taylor's collection, *Me Funny,*[15] Janice Acoose and Natasha Beeds define "cree-ativity" as the ability to transform and indigenize the enemy's language in order to adjust it to Cree semantic and cultural needs.[16] I believe that Halfe's cree-ativity is also a cree-ACTivity in that it underscores a specific agency meant to preserve "the Indigenous political system and identity"[17] and "to undo some of the damage that colonization has brought".[18]

The search for a language than can retell the cultural memory of the Cree nation is one of the main knots of Louise Halfe's first collection of poems, *Bear Bones and Feathers*, published in 1994.[19] In fact the book traces the poet's interpellation and creative transformation of English: code-switching, code-mixing and neologisms are the strategies that Halfe chooses to interpolate the English language and create a metonymic gap, that is "that cultural gap formed when appropriations of a colonial language insert unglossed words, phrases or passages from a first language, or concepts, allusions or references which may be unknown to the reader. Such words

[11] Data provided by the APTN survey, November 2004, available online at http://www.aptn.ca/corporate/PDFs/Aboriginal_Language_and_Broadcasting_2004.pdf, 19 October 2012.

[12] Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

[13] See Bill Ashcroft, "Grammars of Appropriation", in this issue.

[14] Louise B. Halfe, *Blue Marrow* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc, 1998), 2.

[15] Drew Hayden Taylor, *Me Funny* (Vancouver: Douglas e McIntyre, 2006).

[16] The expression also recalls the title of a collection of creative writings by Indigenous women edited by Bird and Harjo, *Reinventing the Enemy's Language*.

[17] Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory. From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Limited, 2007), 21.

[18] Bird and Harjo, eds., *Reinventing the Enemy's Language*, 24.

[19] Louise B. Halfe, *Bear Bones and Feathers* (Regina: Cocteau Books, 1994)

become synecdochic of the writer's culture".[20] According to Susan Gingell, Halfe's code represents an example of "Creenglish", that is a variety of Canadian English used to register "Indigenous experiences on the page … catching the rhythms, textures, and vocabulary, the sound and spirit of how [Cree] people speak".[21] It must be pointed out, though, that the linguistic features of Indigenous varieties of English in Canada, such as Rez English, Creenglish and Michif English have still to be codified by official policies.

In her poems, Halfe uses Cree loanwords to represent such dimensions of Cree life as spiritual and kinship relations, but also food as part of the traditions she recalls in the very act of writing. Her lexical choices reveal that the most intimate and sacred aspects of life cannot be adequately represented in a language in which that life has been so often violated. In this sense, the poet's creative writing denotes a political project: the search for a linguistic code that can translate what Neal McLeod calls "Nehiyawiwin", a Cree word signifying "a lived memory which is held in stories and relationships", thus empowering such memory to speak.[22] The extensive use of Cree in these poems is also a signal of the primary audience to whom the poem is addressed. As Halfe herself explained: "I write for the survival of my children, my family, my community … I write to keep our stories, our truths, our language alive".[23] Nevertheless, she provides a Cree glossary so that, even if only belatedly, also non-Cree speaking readers can access her world.

In the poem that opens the collection, "Bone Lodge",[24] loanwords are used to signify the spiritual link between the *I* and the land:

> I sleep with *sihkos*
> In the fog she untangles
> my braids.
>
> I chant with robin
> the shawl dance of
> *iskwew*.
>
> I weave with spider
> the journey's *ahcahk*.
>
> I'm squirrel's mouth
> the first time of pleasure.
>
> I thunder *paskwaw-mostos*
> in ribbons of sage.
>
> I'm meat and bones,
> dust and straw,
> caterpillars and ants
> hummingbird and crow.
>
> Of these I know
> in the bones of the lodge.

[20] Bill Ashcroft, *Postcolonial Transformation* (London: Routledge, 2001), 75.

[21] Susan Gingell, "Lips'Inking: Cree and Cree-Métis Authors' Writings of the Oral and What They Might Tell Educators", *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 32 (2010), 35.

[22] McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory*, 37.

[23] Daniel David Moses and Terry Goldie, eds., *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English* (Toronto and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 396.

[24] Halfe, *Bear Bones*, 3.

The title of the poem, "Bone Lodge", expands the English lexicon according to the semantic constraint of the Cree language and culture. In fact, despite being a compound of two English words, 'bone' and 'lodge', the term describes a culturally specific place for healing, known and shared among Cree people. Indeed, traditionally, the bone lodge was a low, circular hut, with a structure made of buffalo bones, where ceremonies of spiritual and physical healing as well as initiation to spiritual life took place. 'Bone' is a recurrent keyword, also occurring in the title of the collection, *Bear Bones and Feathers*. The term itself is central: in fact, bones are metonymies indexing the *Nohkomak* (i.e. the Grandmothers of the Land according to the Cree worldview) and the cultural memory sustaining every ceremony of spiritual healing.

The foregnizing effect of the poem's title, "Bone Lodge", is sustained and deepened by the use of Cree loanwords, such as *Sihkos* ('weasel'), *iskwew* ('woman'), *ahcahk* ('soul and spirit'), and *paskwaw-mostos* ('buffalo'). These stand in a metonymical relation with the Cree worldview. *Sihkos*, for example, has a specific connotation for the Cree people; as one of the most ancient Cree stories recalls, the weasel defeated the Windego, a terrible monster, managing to sneak into his body. *Sihkos* is thus a symbol of resistance, but also signifies the practices of good medicine and initiation. As a matter of fact, the choice of using a Cree word for the weasel suggests the poet's attempt to recall the very story narrated by her *Nohkomak*. Another cultural reference to the animal world is provided by the word *paskawaw-mostos*, that does not simply correspond to the English 'buffalo'; instead, it implies a complex chain of connotations that link the buffalo to values such as survival, spirituality, strength and resistance. Both loanwords pertain to the semantic field of the animal world that in many Indigenous cultures is the main source for stories. In his afterword to to to the collection of stories *Keepers of the Animals*, Native Studies scholar Vine Deloira explains that the observation of the animals among North American Indigenous peoples is fundamental in the construction of the *Traditional Ecological Knowledge*:

> The technical skills of birds, animals and reptiles were such that Native North Americans could take cues from them for their own welfare. If birds consistently built nests out of certain materials, it meant that they recognized and adjusted to the fact of harsh or mild weather in a certain location. The building of beaver dams in certain parts of rivers gave information on the depth of water, its purity, the kinds of fish and other water creatures in the locale and the kinds of roots, berries and medicine roots that would be available at that place.[25]

[25] Quoted in Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac, *Keepers of the Animals: Native American Stories and Wildlife Activities for Children* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997), 12.

Other references to the animal world occur in the poem, though not in Cree but in English: 'robin', 'spider', 'squirrel', 'caterpillars', 'ants', 'hummingbird', 'crow' all signal, at a semantic level, the colonizer's linguistic imperialism.

Ahcahk and *iskwew* belong to the semantic field of spirituality and kinship. *Ahcahk* registers the overlapping of two terms, soul and spirit, and indicates that, according to the Cree worldview, each person's soul intertwines with the

spirits of the *Nohkomak*. The word also functions as the linguistic evidence of the interconnectedness between individuality and collectivity, which informs Cree identity and self-determination. Actually, the tension between the individual and collectivity has been an imposed dichotomy within many Indigenous nations of North America. As a colonial creation, established through language and power, it has gradually displaced the Indigenous sense of community and collective self. This has not been just a consequence of the imposition of a non-Indigenous worldview, but a strategy purposely intended to divide and fracture larger Indigenous nations into smaller political units within reservations.[26]

Similarly, the occurrence of *iskwew* in the poem suggests the impossibility of using the English term 'woman' to refer to the women of the Cree nation. The word in Cree recalls the spiritual and social role that women traditionally have within the Cree nation; in fact, *iskwew* is the lexeme forming *iskwahtem*, meaning 'doorway', which symbolizes the role that women have as thresholds connecting worlds, memories and people.

The same word reoccurs in the verses of "Sister".[27] The poem features the transcription of an old song in Cree that alternates with English, and is central in the process of mourning and healing. In fact, the speaker describes the dead body of a Cree woman and invites her people to listen to the voices of the Grandmother to heal themselves. At the same time, the poem remarks the cancellation of Cree and the possibility of recovering the language through spiritual ceremonies and songs.

In the morgue *e-pimisik*
on a steel table

Scarred face
crushed.
Work boots
trampled her in.

Her arm crooked
limp by her side
vagina raw, bleeding
stuffed with a beer bottle

Pasikok, pasikok
Pehtaw, pehtaw
Kisimisinow pikiskwew

Akosiwak ayisiyiniwak
Piko matotsanihk ta pimatisiyahk
Kipa kiwek[28]

Race with your spirits
Kakisimotak, to heal, to heal.

Iskwew atoskewiw kimiyikonaw.
Kakweyahok, kakweyahok[29]

[26] Val Napoleon, "Aboriginal Self Determination: Individual Self and Collective Selves", *Atlantis*, 29.2 (2005).

[27] Halfe, *Bear Bones*, 93.

[28] "Get up, get up/ Listen, listen, as in hear, hear/ our younger sibling speaks/the people are sick/ We must go into the sweatlodge to be alive/ hurry home/ pray, implore".

[29] "A woman delegated work to us/ hurry, hurry".

Pasikok, pasikok
Pehtaw, pehtaw
Kisimsinow pikiskyew.

Akosiwak ayisiyiniwak
Piko matotsanihk ta pimatisiyahk
Kipa kiwek
Race with your spirits
Ta kakisimoyahk, to heal, to heal
Iskwew atoskewin kimiyikonaw
Kakweyahok, kakweyahol
Ahaw.

The poet chooses her first language to signify the female subject of the poem: *e-pimisik*, meaning 'she lays' suggests that the Cree identity of the woman resists in the active form of the verb *e-pimisik* even if her body is dead. The code-switching traces a contrast between the alienation caused by the imposition of English, that can only recount death, and the Cree language that symbolizes life and a sense of belonging to land and memory. The description of the bleeding, raped body recalls both the wounds inflicted on the Cree nation and, on a metapoetic level, the amputation of the ancestral tongue. The whole poem is built on the juxtaposition of the morgue as a place of death, and the Cree song as a source of life and healing. The Cree prayer explodes and occupies the remaing stanzas of the poem, marking the victory of cultural memory over erasure, the triumph of life over death. Cree sourrounds English, defying the linguistic boundaries between the two languages: enfolded by the language of memory, English is appropriated as another tool for healing. "Race with your spirits/ *Kakisimotak*, to heal, to heal" is the poet's invocation. The same line is partially repeated in the last stanza: "Race with your spirits/ *Ta kakisimoyahk*, to heal, to heal", highlighing the circular structure of the poem. *Ta kakisimoyahk* meaning 'let's all pray' conveys an invitation to make English a healing language rather than a language of violence and cancellation. Such transformation can only happen by means of the appropriation and the de-familiarization of the colonizer's language enacted through the encounter with Cree memory and lexicon.

In "Nohkom's Ice Cream and Syrup"[30] the English/Cree code-switching signals a shift from the poetic voice of the 'I' to the memory of her *Nohkom*'s voice:

[30] Halfe, *Bear Bones*, 37.

She'd sit on her bed
a huge broody hen
rolling long slim cigarettes
grinning through smoke-stained teeth.

"*Nohkom*" I'd say, "Ice cream and syrup"
"*Haw, Kiskiman, asam picikiskis is*" she'd say.
And *Kiskiman*, my cousin, a minature *nohkom*,
would scuttle about, a cockroach
setting the table.
…

"*Nohkom*, ice cream and syrup"
She'd crack the rabbit head open
hand me a spoon and I'd scoop and eat
the ice cream dish.

In a chipped stone saucer
she'd pour muskeg tea
stir in *amomey* and
I'd slop slabs of bannock in my syrup treat

Here, as in the previous poem, the words in Cree are used to convey kinship ties that find no immediate correspondence in English. The main and most recurrent example is *Nohkom*, a term that has already been mentioned in its plural form. As Halfe herself suggests, the closest translation of the term into English is 'grandmother'; nonetheless, *Nohkom* does not signify a scientifically accurate biological tie; on the contrary, being a culture-bound word, it outlines a cultural relationship based on memory and tradition. In fact, to many Indigenous cultures of Canada, identity as well as kinship do not only rest on some kind of blood ties, but on cultural links sustained through and enforced by memory. As Native Studies scholar Mark Rifkin notes:

> Kinship as an active principle of peoplehood … also reorienting it away from reproductive notions of transmitted biological substance or privatized homemaking. Instead it marks extended forms of "interdependence", which remain largely unintelligible within interlocking settler notions of politics and family.[31]

In this sense, *Nohkom* identifies both the elders biologically related to the speaker and the ancestors and the spirits of the ancestors who are as much connected to her as her biological relatives, filling the semantic gap left by the distance between English and Cree worldviews.

As the title of the poem suggests, food is a central topic. In fact, the 'I' is recalling a conversation with her *Nohkom* where she asked for "ice-cream and syrup". Nonetheless, the "ice-cream and syrup" she is going to get are those made by her *Nohkom*. Here the poet appropriates words from English and, through a semantic shift, informs them with meanings coming from Cree food culture and the 'I"s memory. In fact, *Nohkom*'s ice-cream version consists in rabbit brains the kid eats with a spoon, while the syrup is made of muskeg tea and *amomey*, which means 'honey', or, literally, 'bee shit'. As for *muskeg*, it is a loanword that underwent a phonetic variation from the Cree *maskek*, indicating the so-called Labrador tea plant used by the Cree people as a medicine plant, that has now entered the English vocabulary. In drawing food maps by means of the language of memory, the poet's intent may be twofold.[32] On the one hand, she recalls the ceremonies of food preparation as well as the very traditional food her nation used to eat in order to assert Indigenous food sovereignty as a reaction to the erasure of Cree cultural traditions, including food preparation; on the other hand, she uses the semantic field of food in a nostalgic discourse that structures her relation to the

[31] Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight? Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 10.

[32] According to Linda Marte, food maps "are maps of relations; they are perceptual models of how people experience their boundaries of local home through food connections … the word foodmap could be assigned to any representational trace related to food, produced by a specific person: a plate of food, an actual map emphasising food connections, a food narrative". Linda Marte, "Foodmaps: Tracing Boundaries of 'Home' Through Food Relations", *Food and Foodways*, 15.3 (2008), 49.

past while also conveying a sense of group belonging. In fact, food is connected to the Traditional Ecological Knowledge, passed on from one generation to another, that Cree people share and use as medicine knowledge.

The Cree words used in the poems discussed so far suggest the poet's attempt to hybridize English with her cultural memory. In this light, indigenizing English with Cree culture and language is not just a project to resist linguistic imperialism, but also and more importantly an effort to create a space of enunciation where Cree cultural memory can be passed on.

In poems such as "In da name of da fadder"[33], "Der poop"[34] and "My ledders"[35] Halfe linguistic experiments are specifically meant to accommodate the memory of the trauma of colonization making English a hybrid and 'ungrammatical' language. The three poems are linked as a triptych that features not only shared contents but also similar linguistic choices. As for the themes, the poems creates a poetic epistolary addressed to the Pope, while the linguistic choices suggest that the violence and aberration carried by the religious beliefs imposed by Jesuits to detribalize Indigenous people can only be narrated in an undefinable, hybrid language. Such language is itself a wound on the body, the tangible evidence of a scar. At the same time, the deviations from the grammar and phonetic norms of Standard English represent an attempt to rebel against the hierarchical power of both the linguistic and religious heteronormativity imposed on the kids in the residential schools. From the linguistic point of view, the three poems mark a change in register and tone compared to the previous poems: in fact, the language presents colloquialisms and variations both at a phonetic and a morphosyntactic level. Such variations make the language different not only from Standard English, but also from the language used by the poet in the remaining part of the collection. In "In da name of da fadder", for example, the words, as the title itself suggests, have been transcribed following the oral pronunciation, thus unsettling and defaminiarizing one of the most recurrent formulas of the Christian Church, "in the name of the Father". The sentence, which, in the Christian religious tradition, marks the beginning and the end of every prayer, is repeated in the first line of each of the four stanzas composing the poem; the dental consonant /t/ is replaced by the the nasal sound /d/, as in "da" standing for 'the', "fadder" instead of 'father' and "dem" instead of 'them':

> In **da** name of **da** fa**dd**er, **poop**
> on my knees I pray **geesuz**
> cuz I got mad at my husband for
> humpin' and makin too many babies
> I 'pologize cuz I mad and cried I
> didn't have no **bannock** and lard
> to feed **dem** cuz my husband
> drank all da soniyas for wine ….

The 'I' is addressing a prayer to the pope who, in Halfe's poetic variation, undergoes an ironic phonetic transformation in "poop". The same desacralizing intent is

[33] Halfe, *Bear Bones*, 100.

[34] Ibid., 102.

[35] Ibid., 103.

evident in the spelling of 'Jesus' as "geezuz": in both cases, besides the phonetic alteration, the poet intentionally refuses to capitalize the religious names.

On a semantic level, two remarkable choices occurr in the first stanza: the code-switching to the Cree word *soniyas* and the use of *bannok*. The terms contribute to differenciating Halfe's language from other variations, pidgins and creole languages that, though presenting similar phonetic and morphosyntactic features, belong to geographic and cultural locations other than Cree. *Bannok*, for example, is an English loanword that signifies a typical Indigenous dish (a sort of fried bread). *Soniyas* means 'money' and recalls *moniyas* ('white man') that occurs twice in the last stanza:

> In da name of da fadder, poop
> I **dought** da geezuz kind but
> I is no good. I can't read **hen** write.
> I don't understand how come **moniyas** has
> clean **howse** and **lottsa** feed and he don't
> share it with me and my children.
> I don't understand why geesuz say I be
> poor, stay on welfare cuz **moniyas** say
> I good for **nuddin'** cuz I don't have
> wisdom. Forgive me poop I is
> big sinner.

Though appearing in two different stanzas, *soniyas* and *moniyas* seem to echo each other: therefore, the code-switching is used to create a connection between 'money' and 'white man'. This is a critique of capitalism imported by *moniyas* that becomes more evident in the last stanza where noun phrases such as "clean howse" and "lottsa feed", symbols of a rich lifestyle, are used in opposition to "poor" and "welfare". The intensity of the poet's accusation determines an increased 'ungrammaticality' in her language. As a matter of fact, in the last stanza, phonetic variations such as "dought" ('thought'), "howse" ('house') and "nuddin" ('nothing'), among the others, meet some morphosyntactic features mainly related to the lack of subject-verb agreement, the conjugation of verbs and the omission of the copula. "I is no good", in the third line of the last stanza, for example, presents an agreement asymmetry that reoccurs also in the last line "I is big sinner"; similarly, "he don't/ share it with me" features a lack of third person singular verbal agreement with regard to the negative form of the auxiliary 'do', while in "I good for nuddin" and "I dought da geezuz kind" an omission of the copula 'am' and 'was' can be noted.

In "Der poop" and "My ledders"[36] Halfe proposes similar phonetic and morphosyntactic variations that compete to create continuity in the three poems. It is worth noticing, though, the occurrence of some Cree words in the last verses of "Der poop":

> … i don't hask forgiveness not want
> hand many's, or a step ladder to heaven
> me is happy with da sky, da bird *Iyiniwak*,

[36] Ibid., 102 and 103.

four-legged *Iyiniwak*, i is happy
sorry mean dat i don't need yous church
and yous priest telling me what to do
sorry mean dat i free to dalk to *Manitou*
the spirits and plant *Iyiniwak*.

While the religious names related to the Christian Church are not capitalized (as also in "In da name of da fadder"), the two Cree words *Iyiniwak* and *Manitou*, meaning 'the People' and 'the Creator', are keyed in capital letters. The choice emphasises the opposition between Christian dogmas, meaningless to the poetic 'I', and the priciples of Cree culture, also exposing the dichotomy between an imposed religion and Cree spirituality transmitted from one generation to another, based on *isistawina*, the rituals performed during spiritual ceremonies recalled in the third stanza of "My ledders".

To conclude, the language of the Other is unsettled by the presence of the poet's first language; her Grandmother's language unfolds to contaminate, transform and hybridize English. The "languelait",[37] as Hélène Cixous would say, returns from the world of the spirits, from the silent limbo where it had been relegated to. The uncanny disturbs the linearity of the imposed language, and here memory finds its place. The creative transformation of English results in a language that is haunted by the poet's linguistic memory, while also allowing the journey of such memory from the oral to the written domain, by means of untranslated words and specific knowledge that pertain Cree traditions and worldview. The new language serves as a clear identity marker. It asserts the poet's will to own rather than be owned by language, and her attempt to build a "bone lodge" within the English language that can bear "bones and feathers".

[37] Hélène Cixous, *Entre l'écriture* (Paris: Des Femmes, 1986), 32.

Jan Alber and Natalie Churn

Creative Indigenous Self-Representation in Humorous Australian Popular Culture as a Vital Communication Channel for Refiguring Public Opinion

Introduction

There are countless narratives that have contributed in a myriad of ways to promoting the cause of Indigenous social justice in Australia. Aboriginal autobiographies such as Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987) and Doris Pilkington's *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* (1996), for example, try to rectify traditional settler myths according to which the country's history began when James Cook claimed it for the British crown. Novels by non-Indigenous Australians – like David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* (1993) and Andrew McGahan's *The White Earth* (2004) – on the other hand, critically deal with the psychological set-up of the white community both in the past and today. Some Indigenous novels (such as Alexis Wright's award-winning *Carpentaria* [2006]) have also broken into the public consciousness. However, it is clear that such prose narratives only reach a specific audience, unlike more popular cultural forms such as film and television that are easily accessible and widely discussed.[1] Increasingly, films about Indigenous history and questions of social justice have been created to appeal to a wider audience, including *Rabbit Proof Fence* (2002), *Bran Nue Dae* (2010), and *The Sapphires* (2012), and the new free-to-air television channel NITV (National Indigenous Television) was launched in December 2012, showcasing Indigenous films, documentaries and children's shows.

Yet negative stereotypes and constricting policies affecting Indigenous Australians have not improved over the past few decades, resulting in increased poverty in Indigenous communities and huge polarisation in the public eye around questions of race, entitlement and reparations for past injustices, despite Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's national apology in 2008.[2] Thus we would like to highlight the continuing vital importance of popular culture in Australia (and particularly those cultural productes created by and representing Indigenous Australians) for providing a channel through which post-colonial social justice issues such as racism and Indigenous socioeconomic inequality can be explored in ways that not only explore injustices of the past and the presentation of suppressed perspectives, but also creatively mobilise laughter, compassion and the overturning of popular expectations in order to destabilise old prejudices and construct new relationships between the settler culture and Indigenous Australians. Popular culture has an invaluable role to play in Australian society due to its capacity to communicate across a variety of platforms to large audiences, and to entertain while at the same time educating, provoking discussion and presenting alternative solutions.

[1] See Sally Morgan, *My Place* (London: Virago, 1988); Doris Pilkington, *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1996); David Malouf, *Remembering Babylon* (London: Vintage, 1994); Andrew McGahan, *The White Earth* (New York: Soho, 2006); and Alexis Wright, *Carpentaria* (Artarmon: Giramondo, 2006). For a discussion on the merits of literary and popular culture in post-colonial contexts see Bill Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation* (London: Routledge, 2001), 216-217.

[2] See "A Statistical Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia: Social Justice Report 2008", *Australian Human Rights Commission* (2008), http://www.humanrights.gov.au/publications/statistical-overview-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-australia-social, 24 August 2013; and Kerryn Pholi, Dan Black and Craig Richards, "Is 'Close the Gap' a Useful Approach to Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Indigenous Australians?", *Australian Review of Public Affairs*, 9.2 (2009), 1-13, http://australianreview.net/journal/v9/n2/pholi_etal.pdf, 28 July 2013.

Employing the lens of post-colonial humour theory,[3] we will use humorous examples from popular culture created by Indigenous Australians, such as the Chooky Dancers' 2007 YouTube 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), to show that such cultural productions appropriate the space of popular media, reconfiguring the perspectives through which Indigenous people are represented in the popular mind. Creativity in this case evokes a sense of creating new relationships between common concepts of Indigeneity and other ideas of identity, history and humanity, as well as deconstructing the established associations between Indigeneity and poverty, health inequality, land rights, and public resources, which are still being debated in Australia.

Humour and laughter have long been explored by academics who attempt to explain its significance as, for instance, an expression of superiority over another person or group, as resulting from an incongruous or unexpected comparison, as a source of satire and criticism, or as a form of cathartic release.[4] We believe that humour contains all of these functions and more, but most importantly for our purposes we wish to explore the potentiality of humour as a tool for self-reflection and transformation, in that laughter forces one to confront one's own prejudices and expectations, while also opening an entertaining yet critical conceptual space for communicating alternative visions of reality. Humour can be seen as a form of universal language; yet as Andrew Horton has shown, there are also culturally and locally unique forms of humour.[5] Specifically, this investigation will explore the role of humour in popular culture as a creative bridge between Indigenous Australian cultures and the broader Australian public.

Post-Colonial Creativity and Humour

An influential aspect of the Australian self-image is the idea that the nation shares a unique sense of humour. This is, of course, a problematic notion, as nations comprise many different groups and subsystems with different backgrounds and experiences. Even though it seems to be impossible to formally define 'Australian' humour, academics and social commentators have tried to come up with such a definition. In one scholarly collection on Australian humour, the editors acknowledge these difficulties, but also suggest that Australian humour might have to do with a kind of irony that expresses a people unable to control their destiny.[6] Essays in the book deal with humour as a strategy for coping with hardship; an expression of larrikinism or a way to subvert authority; a unifying device; a legacy of Australia's convict and working-class (settler) history; an expression of perceived egalitarianism; a reflection of masculine stereotypes that still pervade Australian culture; and a form of satire or criticism.

Perhaps all of these have their place in Australian culture(s). Yet for our purposes we wish to consider the *self-image* of Australian humour (and Indigenous

[3] For more on the relationships between post-colonial studies and humour theory, see Mark Stein and Susanne Reichl, eds., *Cheeky Fictions: Laughter and the Postcolonial* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005). The classic Western theorists in the field of humour are Sigmund Freud and Henri Bergson: see Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (London: Macmillan & Co., [1900] 1911); and Sigmund Freud, *The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious* (London: Penguin, [1905] 2002).

[4] See, respectively, Antony J. Chapman, *Humour and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications* (London: Wiley, 1976); Simon Critchley, *On Humour* (London: Routledge 2002); Paul Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire: Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humour* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2003); and Eric Weitz, *The Cambridge Introduction to Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[5] Andrew Horton, "Introduction", in Andrew Horton, ed., *Comedy/Cinema/Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1991), 9.

[6] Fran de Groen and Peter Kirkpatrick, eds., *A Serious Frolic: Essays on Australian Humour* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2009), xviii-xix.

humour) in Australian popular culture, for how a nation represents itself can be very telling. An Australian Government website describes Australian humour as "dry, full of extremes, anti-authoritarian, self-mocking and ironic",[7] and this is supported by articles on popular websites which identify Australia's convict history, among other things, as a probable source of this type of humour.[8] Regardless of how one understands Australian humour, it is pertinent to note that the topic of colonialism, and particularly the continuing oppression of Indigenous peoples over hundreds of years, is not a humorous topic. Nevertheless, humour when explored creatively might be a means of confronting the Australian past and present from a fresh perspective.

Indigenous humour (as well as the Indigenous appropriation of Western comedic media) is particularly interesting for the ways in which it relates to national self-images. The case studies to follow will consider whether Indigenous Australian peoples appropriate and transform (or even expose as constructed) the Australian self-image of humour, or rather insert their own image onto the national self-perception, destabilising its centrality. Indigenous academic Lillian Holt argues in her study of Aboriginal humour that humour is significant for Aboriginal people because it forms not only as an aspect of their everyday culture but is even important for their survival.[9] She describes how once a non-Indigenous person approached her and suggested she make a documentary about Aboriginal humour, claiming that non-Indigenous viewers would find such a topic fascinating, as it is not something that they would commonly associate with Aboriginal people.[10] This suggestion shocked Holt, as in her experience humour was an integral part of Aboriginal culture.[11] She suggests that humour "is a brilliant vehicle for conveying those unpalatable truths that we all would prefer not to confront in ourselves", and that to her, humour may even have a role in alleviating racism or its effects.[12]

Holt even entertains the possibility that "the most oppressed people have the best sense of humour", although she acknowledges that she does not know if this is true: her claim that Aboriginal humour is difficult to categorise and even to control will also inform our analysis, as will her suggestion that humour also highlights how "in our arrogance of all-knowing, all-controlling, all-defining, we are not always in command".[13] Thus we will not attempt to define Indigenous Australian humour, but rather explore its plural outputs in Aboriginal popular cultural representations, and especially its creative role in reorienting (largely non-Indigenous) audiences from positions of command to positions of exploration, negotiation and self-questioning.

In Australia, humour is an extremely effective cultural vessel for conveying a message or idea, partly due to the connotations of shared experience and 'Australianness' that using humour evokes. Although these connotations could also be seen as problematic because they play into a patriotic discourse, when in the hands of Indigenous Australians and other minority groups they can take on different meanings. We argue that humour makes one ask what exactly one is

[7] Australian Government, *Australian Humour* (2007), http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-humour, 23 July 2013.

[8] See "Australian Comedy", *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australian_comedy, 6 April 2014; and "Australian Humour", *Convict Creations*, http://www.convictcreations.com/culture/comedy.htm, 6 April 2014.

[9] Lillian Holt, "Aboriginal Humour: A Conversational Corroboree", in de Groen and Kirkpatrick, *A Serious Frolic*, 81.

[10] Ibid., 81-82.

[11] Ibid., 83.

[12] Ibid., 86.

[13] Ibid., 93.

laughing at and therefore provides a mirror which, more often than not, allows people to question their own ideas and to potentially detect sameness within difference.

The Chooky Dancers: The Parodic Transformation of Hegemony

The 2007 YouTube video "Zorba the Greek Yolngu Style" by the Chooky Dancers[14] shows how nine Yolngu dancers from Elcho Island in Australia's north, who wear traditional cloth and body paint, mimic and simultaneously subvert the sirtaki dance from the film *Zorba the Greek* (1964) – which is an extremely successful Western movie.[15] The Indigenous Australians perform a traditional-style dance at an evening disco in their hometown Galiwin'ku for an enthusiastic crowd of local onlookers, which is accompanied by a modern pop version of the film music composed by Mikis Theodorakis.

For Denise Varney, this performance presents "spectators with intelligent and articulate bodies whose movement vocabularies refuse the systematic dehumanisation and othering of Indigenous peoples by hegemonic white cultures".[16] The term 'spectators' here of course comprises different groups: the spectators in the YouTube video itself, that is, the local Indigenous people on Elcho Island who witnessed the first performance and laughed at their friends' and relatives' antics (and probably also the incongruity of the music with the dance, as well as the parodic element of the show), could be viewed as coming from a vastly different background and experience to the average YouTube spectator in Australia and overseas who would not know much about the young men or their circumstances living in such a remote place as Elcho Island. Yet what connects these spectators on both levels is laughter. Within weeks, the video had hundreds of thousands of hits online.

On the Chooky Dancers' website, the origin of the dance is explained as a tribute to a woman from Greece who cared for lead choreographer Lionel Dulmanawuy's sister. Dulmanawuy points out that such humorous dances are commonly included as part of the initiation ceremonies for youths: "[y]ou make up stupid dances and do them at the ceremony to make it more of a fun day for the young boy. *Zorba the Greek* is an extension of that".[17] This use of humour at an initiation ceremony may surprise non-Indigenous viewers who might initially view the video as a satire of non-Indigenous music and dance styles. Yet it also becomes apparent to non-Indigenous viewers that Aboriginal peoples creatively appropriate non-Indigenous cultures just as Western cultures appropriate local Australian Indigenous cultural products for touristic or economic purposes.

Varney is, however, quite critical of later televised performances of the same dance by the Chooky Dancers, including the performance at the 2009 Melbourne International Comedy Festival, which she sees as an example of "domestication and exploitation" in that such a performance "cynically reinstates the colonial stare at the other" as the Aboriginal dancers are "co-opted for white-controlled

[14] The Chooky Dancers, "Zorba the Greek Yolngu Style", *YouTube*, uploaded 20 October 2007, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-MucVWo-Pw, 23 August 2013. The video can also be viewed on the Chooky Dancers' website, *The Chooky Dancers,* http://thechookydancers.com, 1 April 2014.

[15] The sirtaki is based on the *hasapiko* dance and is not a traditional Greek folk dance.

[16] Denise Varney, "New and Liquid Modernities in the Regions of Australia: Reading *Ngurrumilmarrmiriyu* [Wrong Skin]", *Australasian Drama Studies*, 58 (2011), 214. See her article for an informative analysis of the YouTube video, as well as her thoughts on a later theatre production which was in part inspired by the Zorba dance.

[17] Lionel Dulmanawuy, quoted in "History", *The Chooky Dancers*, http://thechookydancers.com/content/history/, 24 July 2013.

showcasing of Indigenous culture".[18] While it might be difficult to avoid the colonial stare in this case, one can also identify a certain element of critical reflection in the sense that non-Indigenous audiences may also feel the Indigenous gaze falling upon their own culture as a construction and stereotype, and thus we argue that both performances in fact constitute cultural practices which seek to undermine white hegemony as well as the Eurocentric narrative of modernity through the deliberate hybridisation of culture and the employment of a strategic utopianism.

The major difference between the 2007 and the 2009 performance is that the latter was specifically designed for a non-Indigenous audience – but as we will show in what follows, this does not necessarily lead to a relapse into the Othering of Indigenous Australians. In contrast to the earlier "Zorba the Greek Yolngu Style", the performance at the Comedy Festival begins with a traditional Yolngu dance, accompanied by a didgeridoo, music sticks, and singing. This 'Aboriginal' sequence may have a disorienting effect for non-Indigenous spectators who do not know what the dance moves, sounds and lyrics mean, whereas for the majority Australian population it is presumably a repetition of the touristic, mythical associations very often made with Indigenous peoples in media representations. This sequence is then followed by the Zorba dance, during the course of which the Aboriginal dancers mock and ridicule Western self-representations by mimicking and slightly exaggerating the sirtaki dance moves.[19]

For much of the audience, the Yolngu version of Zorba's dance has an estranging or defamiliarising effect; it notably makes the Western cultural heritage strange.[20] In contrast to Varney's argument that the context of later performances in commodified, Western public spaces such as galleries and on television weakened the parodic element to an extent that disempowered the performance,[21] we feel that in combination with the disorienting effect of the 'Aboriginal' beginning of the performance, the Zorba dance as televised from the Melbourne Comedy Festival indeed possesses a major function of parody in that it deconstructs the hierarchical relationship between Indigenous and white cultures. The Chooky Dancers demonstrate that cultural practices are always already strange, and in this sense, they are all located at the same level. The performance presents Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures as being equal (or at least equally extraordinary). Perhaps this was not the original intention of the first performance, which was simply a creative, humorous appropriation of the sirtaki dance, but the dance has certainly moved beyond this purpose towards an influential frontier.[22] The Yolngu performance constitutes an example of cultural hybridity insofar as it creatively fuses Aboriginal and Western-European culture. It is neither one nor the other and thus both at the same time. Indeed, in the words of Homi K. Bhabha, the "interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy".[23]

The resulting humour of the second part of the performance clearly has to do with the incongruity of the previously unrelated styles of dancing, but more

[18] Varney, "New and Liquid Modernities", 218-19.

[19] The Zorba dance is thus a paradigmatic example of parody in Linda Hutcheon's understanding of the term. For Hutcheon, parody involves the playful transformation of tradition through mocking references to earlier styles. Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 26 and 129.

[20] Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique [1921]", in Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, eds., *Russian Formalist Criticism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 12.

[21] Varney, "New and Liquid Modernities", 218.

[22] Varney acknowledges that the original YouTube performance already surpasses the performers' aims in that the self-representation of Indigenous identity functions to reinterpret Western culture while parodying it, however she argues that this is not the case for the subsequent televised performances (ibid., 218).

[23] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 5.

interesting for our context is the popular reaction to this dance as Australians and viewers worldwide who find the video on YouTube are at first not sure whether it is acceptable to laugh while watching a dance performance by Indigenous Australians (given the violent history of Australia and the disadvantages Aborigines suffer today).[24] From our perspective, the Zorba dance does not invite the audience to laugh *at* the Yolngu performers; rather, it invites the spectators to laugh *with* the performers as they appropriate and mock dance moves from a Western film.

Both performances by the Chooky Dancers involve a strategic utopianism insofar as they project a situation in which the hegemony of Western cultures is subverted. These performances both speak from what Bhabha calls the "Third Space", an "in-between space" which "makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the 'people'".[25] And by exploring the Third Space, the Chooky Dancers deliberately elude the politics of polarity, which still dominates today's Australia. Furthermore, since the Chooky Dancers develop what Bill Ashcroft calls "hybridized cultural forms through the appropriation of those of Western modernity", they actively construct an "alternative or non-Western modernity". Like many post-colonial literatures, these dance performances constitute "a specific practice, an enterprise engaged by agents who locate themselves within a discourse in a resistant, counter-discursive way through the transformation of dominant technologies".[26]

And this is a crucial point: instead of arguing that the Yolngu men place themselves into Australia's modernity (as countless past policies have tried to do), we suggest that they use humour to displace Western culture, such as particular dances and musical styles, but also the apparent settler-culture monopoly on definitions of Australian humour, into a Yolngu worldview in which different cultures and traditions can co-exist and laugh together, thus not necessarily making *them* belong to us ('us' being in this case non-Indigenous audiences), but rather making *us* belong to them. In doing so, the Chooky Dancers construct an alternative modernity which is clearly *ahead* of the Western modernity that continues to form Australia, while also presenting a glimpse of the future. They call attention to the comparatively fleeting existence of this hierarchical modernity and the constructed nature of cultural forms by the fact that they are portrayed as obscure and thus hilarious in the context of much greater time horizons. Populist understandings of Australian humour are represented as not merely springing from Australia's convict origins and other settler myths; rather, these myths form just one interpretation of Australia's comedic history and present.

Varney employs Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquid modernity" in her analysis of the video and a later, related theatre performance entitled *Ngurrumilmarrmiriyu* (Wrong Skin) to argue that the Yolngu performance embodies an alternative experience of modernity that combines both cultural tradition and modern technology, and she suggests that tradition is presented in this way as "preferable to the rootlessness and fluidity of liquid modernity", which Bauman describes as the changing, unstable identities and constantly evolving relationships

[24] In the 1930s, Indigenous Australians argued that the goal behind the policies of the Australian government (including the work of the Aboriginal Protection Boards) was the extermination of the Aborigines: "The purpose of your legislation has been, and now is, to exterminate the Aborigines completely so that no trace of them or their descendants remain"; quoted in Anne Brewster, "Aboriginal Life Writing and Globalisation: Doris Pilkington's *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*", *Southerly*, 62.2 (2002), 161 fn 5.

[25] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 38-39.

[26] Bill Ashcroft, "Alternative Modernities: Globalization and the Post-Colonial", *ARIEL*, 40.1 (2009), 83 and 93.

of the modern, globalising world.[27] Moreover, this post-colonial move involves a kind of laughter of a second order. The two dance performances expose the idea of difference that informed colonial practices for such a long time as something to be laughed at (albeit painfully), and highlight society's continuing focus on difference and stereotypes in contemporary society. This laughter results from our uneasiness as to how to deal with these differences and similarities that are being rewritten before our eyes and created into new configurations.

[27] Varney, "New and Liquid Modernities", 215. See also Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

The Bush Mechanics: Creativity and Humour in the Face of Disadvantage

The 2001 *Bush Mechanics* series,[28] in its portrayal of an Aboriginal community at Yuendumu who use inventive methods to repair old cars, focuses on humorous portrayals of the consequences of contingency in the context of post-colonial disadvantage. Not only humour is produced as a by-product of this contingency, but also new perspectives on issues such as recycling, the importance of spirituality, of community support, and even climate issues such as lack of rainfall and drinking water. The solutions provided by the bush mechanics may provoke laughter, but they also suggest alternatives to our throw-away society while highlighting the resourcefulness of living in difficult circumstances, and bring Indigenous poverty into the public eye in a way which is focused on creating solutions and mobilising a shared humanity.

[28] *Bush Mechanics*, dir. David Batty and Francis Jupurrula Kelly, produced by Jeni McMahon, Film Australia in association with Warlpiri Media Association, broadcast by ABC Television, 2001.

The popular 2001 miniseries produced by Film Australia is based on an original documentary from 1998 by the Warlpiri Media Association created together with Francis Jupurrula Kelly and Simba Nelson, which won an Australian Film Institute Award and received international recognition. It employs humour and magic realism combined with a documentary style in order to portray Aboriginal men who are able to repair broken vehicles using creative methods that make use of naturally occurring objects and discarded car parts. These men are described by Georgine Clarsen as highlighting the power of alternative approaches to problems,[29] as they live in the remote town of Yuendumu where everyday products and services are not readily available. The humour often comes from the unexpected ways in which the men repair their broken vehicles, the situations that arise to derail their plans, and the banter between friends. Yet there also exists an element of underlying 'superiority' laughter for some sections of the audience, in that these men always find themselves in ridiculous situations that would be almost unimaginable for more privileged members of the Australian public.

[29] Georgine Clarsen, "Still Moving: Bush Mechanics in the Central Desert", *Australian Humanities Review* (March 2002), http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-March-2002/clarsen.html, 3 April 2014. Clarsen provides an enlightening discussion on colonial legacies explored in the series as well as background information.

This series is particularly interesting for the way in which the men's activities are subordinated to contingent events as they occur, such as the need to travel to Broome to collect pearl shells for a rainmaking ceremony. The *Bush Mechanics* series emphasises two facets of contingent creativity: it embodies the moment of creativity in which one is forced to make fast decisions based both on one's own needs and the expectations of others, but also the moment of forced negotiation

brought about by the circumstances of poverty, racism and disadvantage. As Clarsen suggests, the way in which these contingent responses seem to be a part of normal life in Yuendemu illustrates "[s]omething of the random and inexplicable logic – or illogic – of colonialism".[30]

[30] Ibid.

On one level, humour is created through the seemingly unbelievable way in which old cars can still function and even be driven over hundreds of kilometres of dirt track despite lacking a wheel, windows or a roof, and important parts of the motor being replaced with tin cans, branches, grass and water bottles. On another level, however, this humour is soured through the realisation that the cars also function, in a way, as metaphors for life in Yuendemu. The cars are discarded and forgotten in the desert, to be kept alive through desperate but creative do-it-yourself methods brought into force through local knowledge that is passed down through generations and due to necessity. The people obviously love cars, and they also make a point regarding how many of the vehicles were originally used by non-Indigenous oppressors before they were deemed useless and disposed of. The men in the series have an approach to vehicles that sees them as a tool for closing distances, but also as mechanical challenges to be faced positively: cars are at the same time reduced to their mechanical parts as well as seen as beings that have futures, if only they can be patched up by their occupants. Post-colonial creativity becomes obvious as a result of continuing post-colonial oppression.

Not every moment in the series is optimistic. The men complain of the heat, of their hunger while on the move, and they must often barter goods such as paintings in order to buy clothes and petrol. One older man extols the virtues of sharing instead of buying. Local conceptions of ownership (of cars, houses, food), of borrowing, of what is broken or useless, and of fortune/abundance challenge Western notions of possession, functionality and wealth. While rivalry still exists in Yuendumu, the lines are much more blurred, and helping others in one's community is portrayed as being an important trait. In her analysis, Clarsen suggests that as the series continues, the cars become less central, while everyday issues of real life such as the need for clean water, or levels of violence and crime in outback communities, take the foreground.[31] She concludes, therefore, that very serious topics, including forms of economy and survival required for living in remote areas, and the importance of continuing cultural traditions and beliefs, are explicitly explored in this otherwise humorous, entertaining series.[32] Thus mechanics are only one aspect in which the Yapa people must be creative.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

Clarsen's analysis of the show's representation of innovation in the face of continuing colonial oppression provides a basis for our interrogation of the creative use of humour in the series. Although the major source of humour comes from the relationship between the men and their cars, this humour merely provides a psychological gateway that gives a glimpse into Yuendumu people's lives. Instead the series manipulates the influence that 'humour through adversity' has in the Australian media as well as in patriotic ideas about mateship and community. As Lillian Holt points out (quoted earlier), Indigenous humour often comes

unexpected to Australian audiences, providing a form of relief when exploring serious issues, but also a fresh perspective on and interest in Indigenous lives, a possibility that can be appropriated in many creative ways despite the problematic notion that this humour is unexpected in the first place. We do not wish to suggest that humour is a necessary tool required to make Australian audiences feel sympathy through the lightening of a serious situation. Instead, humour is creatively expressed as a human emotion that not only helps the people in the television series to overcome difficult situations, but which forms a backdrop to any human situation, allowing audiences to relate to each other.

In the Press Kit for the series, producer Jeni McMahon attests to the power of the creative process in overcoming adversity when she describes the difficulties of filming in a remote location, where simple tasks such as shopping or acquiring cash necessitate a long trip to Alice Springs, and the water supply is a constant cause for concern.[33] This issue is taken up in the final episode entitled "The Rainmakers", where elder Thomas Jungala Rice asks some of the younger men to take a 'Napa' car (a car he has painted with the Rain Dreaming) to Broome in order to exchange it for pearl shells that will bring more rain to central Australia. Several episodes feature traditional lore, including references to the Dreaming and therefore aspects of life that non-Indigenous viewers might consider elements of myth or fantasy. Yet these aspects of the series also reference Indigenous creativity in the capacity to be more open-minded as well as the ability to combine more traditional methods and beliefs with what one might consider 'modern' technological methods.

Whenever the Dreaming spirit Jupurrula appears to help the men repair their car with traditional bush methods, all figures on the screen move in fast motion, adding a comedic, cartoon-like visual effect to the already amusing methods of car-repair. While the sceptical viewer may argue that in a real mechanical emergency in the desert no spirit mechanic will appear to aid stranded travellers, one could see this televisual technique as reinforcing the fact that in Yuendumu, traditions and lore are still an important part of the creative process of dealing with adverse post-colonial situations. Cars are re-appropriated from their signification as vehicles of Western modernity (and colonialism), and instead they become important, albeit humorous, aspects of indigenous survival. As Clarsen argues, technology can be interpreted in multiple ways, and the creators of the series "presume to tell non-Aborigines that we have much to learn about a technology we thought was our own".[34] For us, humour here functions to challenge Western ideas about use value, recycling and modernity. The audience laughs at the fact that the cars are rarely allowed to die, yet is also surprised by the fact that they can run with such simple repairs, even if a little spiritual help is sometimes involved. The funny situations thus criticise the waste of modern capitalism, yet at the same time optimistically stress that nothing – whether car or culture or people – is beyond survival, if everyone pitches in. Interestingly, in the Press Kit for the series, the producer notes that shortly after

[33] Jeni McMahon et al., "Bush Mechanics Press Kit", *National Film and Sound Archive*, http://sa-staging.com/search-programs/program/?sn=8209, 20 July 2013.

[34] Clarsen, "Still Moving".

the Napa car was painted with the Rain Dreaming and driven to the coast in search of the pearlshells that would bring about rain, "Central Australia was hit by six weeks of non-stop rain and there were severe hailstorms in the Tanami Desert. Yuendumu mob are convinced that the Napa car and the pearlshells are responsible".[35]

By leaving it up to the viewer to decide if the Napa car is really responsible for bringing rain to Yuendumu, the show's creators allow the audience to glimpse unexplored possibilities – and not merely those hinging on the mythical. The Bush Mechanics present us with an alternative way of facing adversity and of dealing with contingent events, while at the same time indirectly criticising those methods possible in 'reality' which have, in fact, not improved their circumstances for the better. Stephen Slemon has identified magic realism, a term which could describe the appearance of the spirit mechanic Jupurrula and the role of the Dreaming in the series, as a strategy for resisting the ideologies of imperial culture.[36] The inclusion of the mythical in *Bush Mechanics* may be a creative way of pointing out the irrationality of Indigenous poverty in their own country. Much of the laughter in the series results from the fact that the bush mechanics can repair what other Australians cannot fix, and they can survive in places that many would consider inhospitable, making jokes about the heat or the need to find a windscreen for the car in case it rains. Where the 'rational', western, modern world has failed them, irrationality (from a Western point of view) might provide some answers. This in turn provokes us to ask if we are indeed laughing at irrationality and incongruity, or instead reacting physiologically, in a compulsive and even defensive manner, at the failures of post-colonial Australian society.

The series is an important example of reorienting the self-constructed, iconic Australian sense of humour as a mentality brought about from the convict's necessity to laugh at one's circumstances (as problematic a category as that is), and instead demonstrating that not only does Indigenous humour share similar survivalist and community-building traits brought about by oppressive conditions, but also holds up a mirror at the Australian audience who allows such depraved circumstances to exist, as we realise that many of the situations in the series are, in fact, not something one can generally laugh about, but instead should inspire us to bring about real change. In this vein, Clarsen argues that *Bush Mechanics* functions to provide "challenges to non-Aboriginal Australia".[37] This, we feel, is where the creative use of humour on the part of the Indigenous protagonists and text-creators can be most effective. The humorous exploration of these issues provides an unexpected sense of hope for audiences in that these issues are being explored in optimistic, creative ways that do not focus only on the past (which often unfortunately brings about only defensive and even racist reactions) but also solutions in the present and future, and thus non-Indigenous viewers are challenged to revise how they understand Indigenous Australia and post-colonial inequality.

[35] McMahon, "Bush Mechanics Press Kit", 7.

[36] Stephen Slemon, "Magic Realism as Post-Colonial Discourse", *Canadian Literature*, 116 (1988), 9-24.

[37] Clarsen, "Still Moving".

That the *Bush Mechanics* still resonates with audiences over a decade later is demonstrated by the creation of a short clay animation version in 2014.[38] Humour provides a bridge of shared humanity and emotion, presenting a world of difference and sameness through a lens that is thought-provoking and reflective. The audience's laughter becomes a realisation that these are national issues that can be approached by either using the tools at hand or creatively constructing new approaches that involve reconciling with the past but also looking forward to a shared future. To communicate this is the most important role of popular culture in Australia today.

[38] See the video report by Sally Bothroyd, "Clay Mechanics Keep the Dream Alive", *ABC News*, 24 March 2014, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-24/clay-mechanics-keep-the-dream-alive/5339944?section=nt, 8 April 2014.

Concluding Remarks

The problematic role that humour plays in cultural texts that deal with post-colonial injustice is a significant issue in post-colonial studies, especially considering the serious subject matter. In their work on laughter and the post-colonial, Stein and Reichl write that every type of laughter can "reflect a struggle for agency, an imbalance of power, and a need, a desire, for release".[39] Yet they also suggest that it is not enough to simply laugh "back at the coloniser", as this could reinforce colonial power, and they ask whether laughter can indeed promote agency or even "gesture toward a new world order".[40] It is also not enough, as Varney suggests of the Chooky dancers, that humorous Aboriginal cultural products function to portray Aboriginal communities in a positive light despite difficult material circumstances, thus circumventing stereotypes of colonial disadvantage.[41]

As Ashcroft argues, post-colonial cultural productions possess a transformative power which is partially realised in the re-appropriation of Western products, including popular culture.[42] Increased support is needed for this creative area of cultural production in Australian mainstream culture, where Indigenous Australians can represent themselves and highlight the constructed nature of cultural difference, but also give non-Indigenous Australians the opportunity to share their experiences through the emotional connection provided by humour, as well as using channels that are accessible to all. Humour is obviously not the only element that can provoke an exploration of shared concerns and lives, as the acclaimed and well-received ABC Television drama series *Redfern Now* (2012 and 2013) has demonstrated. Therefore, we are not arguing that Indigenous cultural production should *conform* to populist ideas of Australian humour, but rather that ideas surrounding 'typically Australian' humour such as survival, mateship and convict wit can be creatively mobilised and subverted by text-producers to highlight post-colonial issues and present unique solutions for questions of social justice, as well as new possibilities for Australia as a whole.

[39] Stein and Reichl, "Cheeky Fictions", 9.

[40] Ibid., 10-12.

[41] Varney, "New and Liquid Modernities", 217.

[42] Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformations*.

Chandani Lokuge

Sinhalese Literary and Cultural Aesthetics: Martin Wickramasinghe's Novels *Gamperaliya* and *Viragaya*

This paper explores the ways in which a literary narrative set within a specific cultural frame may enhance or challenge our understanding of that culture. Generally, literature collapses large encompassing discourses of nation or culture into private and intimate stories that emerge from the writer's perspective. Writers utilize multifarious and multidimensional aesthetic strategies to reconfigure the static objectivity of discourse. Predominant among them is emotional resonance. I base this essay on the view that emotions themselves are culture specific and help build frameworks that provide insights into a culture's or sub-culture's 'emotionology'.[1] By discussing the ways in which Martin Wickramasinghe aestheticizes political and cultural discourse in his classic literary novels *Gamperaliya* and *Viragaya* I aim to draw out important features of Sri Lanka's unique Sinhalese-Buddhist cultural tradition.[2]

Due to its central location in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka is perennially open to culture flows from both East and West. The earlier influences were informal, mainly through trade and settlements that filtered in from various directions. While India has remained the most formidable influence on Sri Lankan culture, from around the fifteenth century, Western colonization had a profound effect. However, despite various foreign powers entering and overpowering the country's political life, the Sinhalese aesthetic tradition has retained and developed its own "special character throughout the over two millennia of its existence in the island of Sri Lanka".[3]

Sinhala, an Indo-Aryan language brought to Sri Lanka by northeast Indians around sixth century BC, gradually became restricted almost exclusively to the island. Significant poetical and critical work surviving at least from the seventh century seem to prove that the Sinhala language along with Tamil, was the first local language (*desabasha*) of literature in South Asia.[4] In the ninth century, as it formally transformed into a literary language, its aesthetic features were set out in the ninth century poetic handbook, *Siyabaslakara* (poetics of one's own language). An adaptation of the Sanskrit treatise on poetics, *Kavyadarsa*, is one of the earliest extant literary texts in Sinhala.[5]

When Buddhism arrived in Sri Lanka from India in 250 BC, it pervaded the island's culture, which was, at the time, a mix of indigenous and Aryan civilizations. Buddhism became its major philosophy, reforming and integrating the Sinhalese aesthetic and cultural traditions from within. Importantly, Sinhala language and literature intermingled with Buddhism to such an extent that key aesthetic terms found in the *Siyabaslakara* – such as *guna* (quality), *dosa* (blemish), *alankara* (ornament), *marga* (path), *rasa* (transforming flavour), and *pratibhana* (creative eloquence) are also fundamental concepts of Buddhist ethics.[6] The *Siyabaslakara* also recommends that the subject of poetry should be the lives of the Buddha.[7] The Buddhist clergy

[1] See Peter Stearns, "Emotion", in Rom Harré and Peter Stearns, eds., *Discursive Psychology in Practice* (London: Sage, 1995), 37-54.

[2] Martin Wickramasinghe, *The Uprooted (Gamperaliya)*, trans. by Lakshmi de Silva and Ranga Wickramasinghe (Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka: Sarasa, [1944] 2011); and *The Way of the Lotus: Viragaya* (*Viragaya*), trans. by Ashley Halpe (Dehiwala: Tisara Press, [1956] 1985). All quoted extracts are from these translations.

[3] James W. Gair, "Sinhala, an Indo-Aryan Isolate", in James W. Gair and Barbara C. Lust, eds., *Studies in South Asian Linguistics: Sinhala and Other South Asian Languages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 12.

[4] Charles Hallisey, "Works and Persons in Sinhala Literary Culture", in Sheldon Pollack, ed., *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 690.

[5] See Hagoda Damminda, "Introduction", in King Sena IV, *Siyabaslakara Vivaranaya* (Wellampitiya: Chathura Publishers, 2002), v-xviii.

[6] Hallisey, "Works and Persons", 705-706.

[7] Ibid., 704.

developed the system of Sinhala-Buddhist education for the laity, and developed the earliest archives.

The Portuguese and Dutch colonized the island between the fifteenth and seventeeth centuries, their main purpose being trade and Christianization, and their influence felt more strongly in the coastal capital areas. However, the Dutch contributed to the island's literary activity by introducing the press and cutting the first Sinhala type, paving the way to newspapers and magazines. With British colonization (1815-1948), the local literati were introduced to western literary forms (particularly the novel), which substantially influenced their literary output. The earliest novels were referred to as 'amuthu katha' (strange or fantastic stories) that were easy to popularize because of the reader's familiarity with similar aims, themes and aesthetics in Buddhist literature such as the *Jatakas*, the beast fables, religious tales and *Panchatantra*. Influenced by contemporary British gothic romance and horror novels, a few writers such as W. A. de Silva and Piyadasa Sirisena published popular romance novels. Critics began to refer to them as *nava katha* (new stories), by which term the novel written in Sinhala, even as it later evolved, has continued to be known.[8]

Sri Lanka gained independence from Britain in 1948. Surrounded by the upsurge of nationalism throughout this period, the nation became committed to reconstructing its Sinhalese-Buddhist 'national' identity that had been suppressed by over four centuries of western colonization. One of the most important advocates of this movement in literature and literary criticism, Martin Wickramasinghe (1890-1976), introduced the aesthetics of Sinhala language and literature into the historical and political conditions of postcolonial Sri Lanka. He championed nationalism and national heritage, refuting the view that Sri Lankan culture was a replica of the Indian. Though bilingual, he chose to write in the vernacular believing that together with Buddhism, it was an essential part of Sinhalese culture.

However, Wickramasingha argued against the glorification of a utopian past that excluded all else but the Sinhalese-Buddhist tradition, and promoted the hybridization of East and West. He immersed himself in contemporary British and Russian literary traditions, and branched out into Darwinism, Marxism, and western psychology. As Ranjini Obeyesekere reflects:

> [N]ationalist though he was, he roundly condemned the fanatics who believed that anything old was necessarily good and should be venerated; or those who claimed that the literary language should not be contaminated with that of modern colloquial speech, or that the culture of ancient Sinhalese should be revived. The difference [in] his nationalism … arose from Wickramasinghe's exposure to modern liberal and scientific thought through his reading of English literature and rationalist philosophers.[9]

A revolutionary architect of modern Sinhalese literary aesthetics and literature, Wickramasinghe's own aesthetic evolved through three major phases: 1) he was deeply influenced by the English and European realist novel and its poetics of characterization, plot, and socio-cultural reformism; 2) he rejected Sanskrit aesthetic

[8] Ranjini Obeyesekere, *Sinhala Writing and the New Critics* (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena, 1974), 27-28.

[9] Obeyesekere, *Sinhala Writing*, 59.

discourse for its verbosity and ornamentation in favour of the more direct and simple style of Pali aesthetics; 3) he championed a 'native' literary criticism that centred Sinhalese-Buddhist culture. Through each phase, he upheld the moral import of literature drawing support from the traditional Buddhist *Jataka* stories, and believed in the prominent role that literature could play in cultural education. His prolific literary and critical output stretched from pre- to post-independence: 1914 and 1973. His oeuvre of 22 books of literary criticism published between 1914 and 2002 that includes *Vichara Lipi* (*Literary Criticism*, 1941), *Sinhala Sahityaye Negima* (*Landmarks of Sinhala Literature*, 1945), *Vyavahara Bhashava Ha Parinama Dharmaya* (*Sinhala Language and Evolution*, 1997) and *Ape Urumaya ha Bickshun Wahanse* (*Our Heritage and the Buddhist Clergy*, 1998), holds a prominent place in the tradition of Sinhalese literary aesthetics.

Wickramasinghe's fiction is an amalgam of eastern and western traditions, and he fused into his aesthetic, the political, religious, historical and literary identities of the country. He drew from his experience in the village of Koggala where he grew up, his knowledge of Sinhalese literature and theory, and his exposure to western and Russian poetics. His fiction, including the trilogy *Gamperaliya* (*The Changing Village*, 1944), *Kaliyugaya* (*Era in Trouble*, 1957) and *Yugantaya* (*The End of an Era*, 1949), and later novels, *Viragaya* (*Devoid of Passion*, 1956) and *Bavatharanaya* (*Siddhartha's Quest,* 1973) are perennially acclaimed classics of modern Sinhalese literature.

Wickramasinghe reclaimed and revitalized the Sinhalese Buddhist aesthetic tradition through his fiction, arguing against the static and ornate Sanskritist (*Alankarist*) aesthetic tradition that was the original source of Sinhalese literature. However, in all this, Wickramasinghe's aim was to connect the best from each culture. Informed by western poetics that gave predominance to plot and character development, he upheld the theory of *Rasa*, for instance, that, although part of the Sanskrit poetic discourse, implied (in Wickramasinghe's understanding) a creative process not too different from the Western. In fact, as the second paragraph quoted below suggests, he adapted the theory with his knowledge of western poetics and techniques of plot and story.

> Anandavardhana [a developer of the *Rasa* theory] says that a great poem ought to consist of the following features: Its construction should be such that the story whether drawn from reality or from the imagination, should be rendered beautiful by the appropriate use and descriptions of *bhava* (simple emotions), *vibhava* (causes of emotions), and *vyabhicari bhava* (subsidiary emotions) in order to arouse the appropriate sentiment (*rasa*). The use of alankara (images and figures of speech) should not be merely resorted to for the purpose of following the rules laid down, but in order to heighten the communication of feeling. … Bharata [the founder of the *Rasa* theory] and Anandavardhana have both described the plot as the body of a poem. Bharata says that the body of a poem is its story while its soul is its *rasa*.[10]

With most Sinhalese Buddhists, Wickramasinghe shared the view that the advent of Buddhism to Sri Lanka laid the foundation for "the growth of a higher and independent culture in the Island".[11] After substantial conflict with Mahayana Buddhism that

[10] Martin Wickramasinghe, *Landmarks of Sinhalese Literature* (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena, 1948), 34-35.

[11] Ibid., 2.

preached a more secular doctrine, Sri Lanka became the protector of the ascetic and purist philosophy of Theravada Buddhism. As Wickramasinghe maintained, with the influence of the more direct and plain Pali language (the language of Buddhist rhetoric), a style and spirit that "[came] near what might be called indigenous" was introduced to the classical Sinhalese poetic tradition.[12] Though as foreign a language as Sanskrit, Pali was felt to be more 'Buddhist in spirit', and therefore closer to the indigenous culture.[13]

Wickramasinghe appropriated the western realist novel and naturalized it in indigenous soil. It was a revolutionary new form of aesthetic expression in a literary culture that had so far been dominated by the tradition of classical Sinhalese poetry that, as noted above, was deep-rooted in the Sanskrit tradition of alankara (ornamentation). Here is an excerpt from Sri Rahula's *Salelihini Sandeshaya* (*The Message of the Nightingale*, fifteenth century) from the classical period:

> The stream called Diyavanna with its ripples and its wavelets
> Seems a silk garment worn by the woman-city.
> Worked with rows of red lotus, and figures of golden swans,
> Its spreading cascades the long rippling waist folds.[14]

The nationalist fervour that spread among the Sinhalese-Buddhist population in the decades prior to independence promoted the village as the utopia of Sinhalese-Buddhist culture. In concert with it, and also possibly rebelling against the only other realist novel (written in English) that dealt with the Sinhalese village experience, Leonard Woolf's abjectly dystopian *The Village in the Jungle* (1913), Wickramasinghe aestheticized the village like old lace in his novel *Gamperaliya*. Compared with his contemporaries such as W.A. de Silva (see above), Wickramasinghe introduced a revolutionary realist texture and modernist aesthetic to Sinhalese literature.

Set in 1904, *Gamperaliya* turns a nostalgic gaze into a timeless past. The harmonious slow rhythm of village life anchored in Buddhism and tried-and-tested Sinhalese cultural mores, its charm and simplicity are captured in the dialectical Sinhalese of the southern villager. Here is the famous opening paragraph that brought to the Sinhalese readership the intimacy and emotional resonance of village life through the aesthetic space of literature.

> The village of Koggala lies in a long stretch of land bounded on one side by the Indian Ocean, and on the other by the Koggala Oya, a beautiful wide river. The smooth black ribbon of road linking the southern towns of Galle and Matara runs between the village and the sea. Verandahs are a feature of each village house, whilst the sea-shore is the panoramic front-verandah for the entire village. On an embankment a few feet above ground level, the rail-track extends as far as the eye can reach, like a long ladder with no beginning and no end. … Water from little streams running under numerous culverts, has collected in the ditches, to form little ponds that abound in water lilies and lotuses, and little fish. (1)

The novel is studded with informative descriptions of village customs and superstitions, rituals and rites surrounding marriage and funeral. However, Wickramasinghe's aim was also to encourage his readership, the Sinhalese-educated

[12] Ibid., 66.

[13] Obeyesekere, *Sinhala Writing*, 56.

[14] Sri Rahula, "Salelihini Sandeshaya", in C.H.B. Reynolds, ed., *An Anthology of Sinhalese Literature up to 1815* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970), 284.

intelligentsia, to critically evaluate traditions that hindered progress. For instance, while the village practice of Buddhism that is suffused with superstition is etched into the novel, the author assumes the intrusive point of view of a critical commentator:

> Some villagers believe that the powers of deities have taken residence in the rock. The belief that there are divine powers that transcend their understanding is not confined to ignorant villagers. Even educated people acknowledge such powers, although they may reason that these are the result of planetary influences, or the workings of the laws of karma. Villagers, who see the Devalgala as the steadfast witness from the dim past, to their grief and joy, tears and lamentations, are guided more by what they see and feel, than such abstract reasons. (2)

Faithful to village tradition that prescribed roles rather than to a Western habit of individualism, the characters in *Gamperaliya* are depicted as performers of role identity: husband, wife, sister and daughter. I will focus briefly on the female protagonist Nanda, the younger daughter of the mansion. Having grown up on a solid foundation of Sinhalese Buddhist tradition, she is of marriageable age when the novel commences. Wickramasinghe's representation of her as the dutiful daughter and *pativrata* (ideal wife) is masterful. Her willing surrender to her first marriage to Jinadasa, arranged by her parents, her fidelity to him through crisis after tragic crisis, her unfailing dignity in social interaction, evoke the stock character: "Her feelings [for Jinadasa] were those of a devoted wife for her husband. A village woman's relations with her husband was a complex amalgam of passion, empathy, longing to be a mother, mother love" (134).

Nanda is never liberated from this Sinhalese-Buddhist cultural frame – her consciousness is held gracefully within it. But what is revolutionary about Wickramasinghe's art is his suggestion of depths of character that role identity prohibits. Nanda experiences an enigmatic sensuality for Piyal, the up and coming young man from the lower social stratum of the community, destined to be her second husband. With him she would finally take the first steps out of the home and into the world – the city of Colombo. These deeper levels of meaning in the novel are laid unobtrusively and with deep understanding of village expectations of high-caste, high-class Sinhalese-Buddhist womanhood. As Philip Coorey reflected on Lester James Peries' artistic vision in directing Sinhalese films including *Gamperaliya*:

> Even the interior drama finds expression in movement, gestures, speech patterns, which are radically different [from western film]. In the East, at its simplest level, the greater the conflict, the greater the withdrawal into oneself ... This attitude, this behaviour-pattern, is the result of many factors: influence of a caste system, submission to parental authority, and … above all, the influence of *Karma* (fate) and the acceptance of its inevitability. Thus conflict … is often [caught in the film] through the tell-tale betrayal in a voice, in a gesture, or a look.[15]

[15] Philip Coorey, *The Lonely Artist: A Critical Introduction to the Films of Lester James Peries* (Colombo: Lake House, 1970), 65-66.

By retaining this behaviour-pattern Wickramasinghe introduces to the Sinhalese literary tradition the complexities of character development – a spark of subversive individualism and rebellion. Assuming an objective third person point of view, he

subtly suggests to the reader, Nanda's unsettled introspective thought-process. Here is one instant when her part conscious, part unconscious selves are captured without direct confrontation or challenge to custom, during a village pilgrimage to the neighbouring Paragoda.

> This unaccustomed shyness, apprehension, uncertainty and agitation with regard to Piyal had to come from wayward half-realized feelings for him. Family pride, marital devotion, custom, and social conventions were instrumental in preventing even thought of any sub-conscious feelings that bordered on marital infidelity, in the morality of the social milieu that she [Nanda] occupied. She was herself uncertain whether there were any such dormant feelings for Piyal. The little shops, the chena, and the great jungle stretching to the horizon had brought memories of Jinadasa [her first husband] and her life with him, and with that, the intrusion of Piyal from her sub-conscious. (147)

Nor is *Gamperaliya* a paean to village life as it was being celebrated in Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalist discourse. The artist's power lies in the emotive configuration and cognitive re-figuration of a culture in transition, when the village was uprooted, in the early twentieth century, as tradition confronted and fell to western modernity. With controversial fervour, Wickramasinghe attacked the movement of nationalist revival as decadent and impotent, advocating change and revival: "That which does not change becomes inert and dies. That which changes survives. The past survives in us because we have been changing. We can perpetuate the past only by changing ourselves and our heritage".[16]

[16] Wickramasinghe, *Aspects of Sinhalese Culture*, quoted in Obeyesekere, *Sinhala Writing*, 61.

With Chekhovian poignancy the novel laments the failing aristocratic struggle to change with the pressures that western influence imposed on it. The *mahagedera* (mansion) and its inmates are already in a state of collapse at the beginning of the story:

> A discerning observer would conclude that despite its solid structure, this house would decline to an irreparable state of decay in a few decades. By delving into their past and their present way of life, an intelligent and inquiring mind would conclude that perhaps a similar fate awaits its inmates, with the inevitable erosion of their pride in the past lineage, a relic of the past no longer relevant to the changing village, and the consequent erosion of their privileged position. (5)

The mansion and the once distinguished family crumble owing to the inability to adapt to change. The novel ends with Piyal continuing to prosper under the western regime, with Nanda as his wife. By thus presenting a subjective perspective through particularized characters responding with culture specific emotions to culture specific moments of history, Wickramasinghe challenges the reader to critique the abstract objectivity of Sri Lanka's nationalist agenda of the village as an unchanging and unchanged utopia.

Viragaya (1956), Martin Wickramasinghe's next novel of great national significance was written in the atmosphere of near-fanatic Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism that pervaded the island just after independence. In the same year as

the publication of the novel, Sinhala was officially restored as the national language by the then Government. Wickramasinghe was already Sri Lanka's Grand Old Man of Sinhalese literature, famed author of *Gamperaliya*, and the author of over twenty-five other fictional and critical works. By this stage of his career as a literary critic, he was moving away from his partial allegiance to western values and the traditional (Sansrkitist) system to a total rejection of both, in favour of Sinhalese-Buddhism. Obeyesekere argues that he perhaps sought refuge in Buddhism in particular, because it offered him a mystical affirmative higher consciousness than that afforded by a Western secular consciousness.[17]

[17] Obeyesekere, *Sinhala Writing*, 64.

With regard to the Sinhala language, it was Wickramasinghe's strong conviction that a national literature could breathe only if it was rooted in the language (Sinhala) and life of the people (village). As a committed socialist-nationalist, he continued to advocate that literature had to be communicated in the simple language of the people for the people, rather than as a replica of classical Sanskrit for the connoisseur. This extract from *Viragaya* is an excellent example of theory in practice: note the simplicity of expression that instils a glowing, almost spiritual stillness to the transient *sambogya rasa* (love in union) that Aravinda experiences in this early encounter with Sarojini. The ambience enhanced by the Buddhist festival of Vesak, the immediacy of the life of the village flowing past, offer a wonderful backdrop to the secret interlude between the adolescent girl and boy on the threshold of romantic love:

> It was the night of Vesak ... Our verandah and garden were full of friends and relatives … I became more and more conscious of a girl sitting among them ... today she was swathed in a saree. I could not take my eyes off her; I wanted to talk to her.
>
> The Vesak lamps shone more brightly; the moonlight seemed ethereal ... The light from a yellow lantern made the jewels in her earrings flash with fire ... The carol-float was approaching like a swirling cloud bearing little groups of children on its breast. I was in a world of dreams as beautiful to me as the carol-float was to the children it the garden. The moon shedding its gentle rays upon the earth was like some vast lamp set in the heavenly canopy of a visionary land ... All the gay lanterns were now out, their candles burnt down; all but one that flickered on at a corner of the fence. The shadows lay deeper. We could hear the laughter and chatter of people returning after offering flowers at the temple. The sight of them seemed to remind Sara too, that it was time to go ...
>
> "Sara, wait: surely you needn't go yet?" I begged.
>
> "Mother will scold me. She doesn't like me coming here very much." (29-35)

The aesthetic achievement of *Viragaya* is the author's skilled engagement of the reader in the sensibilities of Buddhism. In this sense, the novel becomes a vehicle for transmitting knowledge, a mediator easing the reader into a complex and abstract dogma.

The story is set in a small self-contained village community that is sustained by a feudal hierarchical social system. The protagonist Aravinda and his family are of the higher echelons and live disengaged from the 'rustics' whose presence is always felt in the way they keep the traditional culture alive. The maintenance of traditional Sinhalese-Buddhist cultural mores is the community's guiding focus. The novel's theme is the ascent of the protagonist Aravinda from the plane of human emotion

to the higher plane of spiritual enlightenment. This is the Buddhist path – the path of life that leads to the supreme Truth.

Viragaya is embedded in Buddhist symbolism and metaphor beginning with its title that means 'devoid of passion' or 'dispassion'. As G P Malalasekera explains, in sum, "*viragaya* can be seen to comprise in a nutshell the whole gamut of the *Dhamma*, being a term that stands for the path to be taken as well as for the goal to be reached".[18] This is a state of mind that counteracts the samsaric predicament of the cycle of sorrow caused by emotional states of being such as human lust, desire and craving. In Buddhist philosophy, the hold on the self by these human passions is gradually reduced by the mind's recognition of their impermanence. Destruction and decay follow this recognition, and the passions are removed. The mind then attains a state of *nirodha* (cessation). In an occasional scripture such as the *Ratana Sutta*, viraga is also seen as a synonym for *nibbana* (enlightenment).[19]

[18] G. P. Malalasekera, *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, vol. Vlll (Colombo: Govt. of Ceylon, 2008), 688-690.

[19] Ibid., 690.

The very name of the protagonist Aravinda derives from the Sanskirt word for 'lotus' that is also deeply embedded in the metaphoric aesthetics of Buddhism. Imaged in the sitting position, Buddha's seat is a lotus, and he also holds a lotus in full bloom in his hand. When depicted in the posture of standing, each of his feet rests on a single lotus. As such, the title of the novel's English translation by Ashley Halpe, *The Way of the Lotus: Viragaya*, with its epigraph from the Buddhist scripture, *Anguttara Nikaya* is meaningful.

> The lotus emanates beauty
> and fragrance.
> Untouched the water from which it is born
> Rising above the world into which he is born
> the Superior Being follows the way of the Lotus. (np)

The lotus is also the Buddhist symbol of purity. While its roots are in the mud, its stem grows out of the water, and finally, the perfumed flower lies pristine above it, signifying the progress of the soul from the mud of materialism, through the waters of experience into the bright whiteness of enlightenment. This process illustrates Aravinda's 'love' for Sarojini that remains pristine pure throughout their romance and even after her marriage to another man. At a deeper level, it is a metaphor for Aravinda himself, and his growth from human passion to dispassion.

At the beginning of the novel, Aravinda, an adolescent village boy is entangled in familial and romantic attachments. His parents and sister play an overriding role in his life, from trying to steer him into a medical career, to deciding the course of his marriage. Through all this, the death of his father, the loss of his first love Sarojini to his worldly-minded cousin, his mercenary sister's eviction of him and his mother from their ancestral home, drive the teenage Aravinda into deep disillusion. He is now in a state of emotional discoloration. He rents a basic house and develops a strong attachment to Bathee, the little daughter of his servant woman. If Bathee represents human passion and sensuality through the early to mid part of their relationship, the village maverick Kulasooriya

represents the tenets of Buddhism, particularly in detachment from desire as a form of freedom of the spirit.

The novel's complexity lies in Aravinda's struggle between the human emotional entanglements and liberation from them. As the story develops, so does Aravinda's dilemma, and Wickramasinghe's aesthetic prowess engages the reader into empathy with Aravinda in his state of *viprvalamba rasa* (love in separation):

> I went to bed early, but that night the heavy darkness failed to soothe my mind and body … though I lay quite still, my mind was seething. Innumerable notions streamed up in my consciousness, like those little winged termites that come swarming out of their nests in the ground on rainy days. It is no better than being on a treadmill. At last, worn out by the endless succession of repetitious thoughts, my mind seemed to dissolve into the darkness that had already obliterated the outer world. I floated between sleeping and waking in a state of utter exhaustion. Twice, a leg twitched involuntarily, jerking me back into painful consciousness of my situation. (84)

Against Aravinda's spiritual growth, Wickramasinghe critiques the mental and spiritual deficiency of lesser mortals who are unable to gain access to the higher intellectual plane of Buddhism, earthbound as they are. Aravinda's sister Menaka, sunk in materialist sensation is unable to understand the complex theory of detachment; in her mind it can only be derided as indifference, as this ironic dialogue suggests:

> Menaka: "Why do you spend so much time with Kulasooriya? He's no more alive than a sack of vegetables."
> "Then how does he walk out into the countryside every morning and evening?" I [Aravinda] said.
> "Well, then, that's the only difference between him and a sack of vegetables."
> "How can you know what he's really like? He's the only person I know… [who] doesn't bother with what's over and done with."
> "Now, isn't that just like a vegetable? You have to be a real vegetable to be so indifferent to everything. I'm not surprised that his son and daughter never come to visit him."
> "Kulasooriya doesn't complain about that."
> "There you are! Only a vegetable could be like that." (96-97)

Gradually, Aravinda detaches himself from emotion and worldly desires. By engaging with the *Abidhamma* (scriptures of Theravada Buddhism) and Kulasooriya's mentoring, he moves into the state of cessation. Finally, as a dying man in Bathee's care, he is able to relate to everyone including Bathee, with a selflessness and disinterested *metta* (loving kindness), devoid of lust, passion or desire. Here is the ending of the novel that eloquently upholds for the reader, the moral import of the story. Having received *metta* from the uneducated and naïve rustic Bathee, Aravinda has himself learned the meaning of *metta*: "I know now that I will not survive this illness. But the sense of despair, of loss, of futility, has left me, because here kindness, love and affection are palpable human qualities" (173).

One of Wickramasinghe's philosophies was that Buddhism should be humanist rather than abstract, and with the ending he achieves this feat within the aesthetic

of the novel. In this sense, *Viragaya* is his attempt to aestheticize the crux of Buddhism – its various states of being. This is an elusive and difficult task to execute in fiction, and his character Aravinda's realization of the near-impossibility of his journey possibly parallels the author's own recognition of the fine line between cultural specificity and creative license: "But how can anyone cut himself off from people completely except by living like a hermit in the forest? … It takes courage and resolution to go alone into the wilderness, or to enter a monastery, or to rid oneself completely of desire, and I lack both these qualities" (162-63).

In western literature Aravinda could easily be read as the existential antihero, that lonely indecisive central character drifting through his life, unable to communicate with anyone, and incapable of making any decisions. However, in the Sinhalese-Buddhist culture, he is seen in a very different light – almost as the personification of a concept – the elimination of suffering and attainment of spiritual well being. The highly figurative language of symbolism and metaphor of the abandoned fields and ploughland, the mountain summits and their peaks, and the clouds in the following paragraph close to the end of the novel reveals to the reader that Aravinda is within sight of *nibbana* – he may now blossom free of the mud in which he was rooted.

> Through the bars of the window I see an abandoned field stretching into the distance. Beyond this again is a rocky range whose summits seem to vie with each other to be the highest. The outlines of the furthest peaks, reaching up and merging into the sky, appear like clouds. At sunrise, however, they are preternaturally clear and massive, the summits of the range tangled in cloud, but the base set firm in the ploughland.
>
> My mind flutters like a swallow with broken wings. (172)

While throughout his life, his worldly relatives and friends have attempted to push him into the mainstream, the response of the simple villagers to his lifestyle as they mourn his death, reveal the ways in which Wickramasinghe directs the reader to read the character of Aravinda.

> I gathered from Siridasa that his relatives had been amazed by the crowds that came to the funeral. It had been in his own village. The country people had come to pay their respects in an unbroken stream. I wonder if these … rustics have some instinctive capacity for recognizing real goodness? (6)

Wickramasinghe's fiction and literary criticism is part of the transnational network of world literatures. However, while he is recognized as Sri Lanka's foremost novelist (writing in Sinhala) of the twentieth century, his work has not received sufficient international attention. Translations of his books into English have been few and far between. This is a pragmatic problem that has hindered its global circulation. There is also what is lost in translation. In addition, the layered meanings in his novels meticulously framed by a particularized cultural context, ethos and aesthetic, may elude readers nurtured by a different culture. They may experience the pleasure of the text, certainly, and the exotic of being introduced to another culture, but still remain outside of it. However, current trends in

world literary criticism show how these obstacles may be overcome through universalization, and how they may consequently enrich our reader responses. I draw support on this point from Dan Shen who in his essay titled "Language Peculiarities and Challenges to Universal Narrative Poetics", makes an excellent argument for the deep rooted ways of cultural thinking and language particularities in Chinese language that may lead to the detection of narrative modes not found in western narratives. His conclusion is that:

> Narratives from different cultures also have various unique features that defy accommodation to a universal narrative poetics. The demand on narrative theorists and critics is therefore twofold: to build up universal narrative poetics to account for shared structures, and to pay attention to multicultural particularities.[20]

My aim in this essay has been to meet the challenge of this demand. The other ongoing challenge that critics of world (vernacular) literatures face is to develop a transnational network of vernacular aesthetics and poetics. Important to note, there is no single, autonomous postcolonial poetics. "Colonial and postcolonial authors", as Brian Richardson reminded recently, "have utilized a variety of aesthetics and poetics; I do not believe there is or can be a single essence that runs through them all. The task for narrative theory is to come up with a framework sufficiently capacious to encompass these resonant texts".[21] Wickramasinghe's fiction, read within the frame of Sinhala-Buddhist poetic discourse, illuminates one of the many narrative modes that contribute to world literature.

[20] Dan Shen, "Language Peculiarities and Challenges to Universal Narrative Poetics", in Frederick Luis Aldama, ed., *Analysing World Fiction: New Horizons in Narrative Theory* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 32.

[21] Brian Richardson, "U.S. Ethnic and Postcolonial Fiction: Towards a Poetics of Collective Narratives", in ibid., 15.

Alexander Fyfe

Generic Discontinuities, National Allegory, and the Aesthetics of Postcolonial Fiction

The debate over the extent to which postcolonial literature can be said to 'represent' or 'write' the nation state has been a field-defining one in Postcolonial Literary Studies. Parallel to this debate stands the issue of the transformation of established literary genres and the question of how they are adapted in the postcolonial context. This article aims to reconsider both of these issues in relation to two texts that emanate from post-imperial cosmopolitan milieus. These are Salman Rushdie's *Shame* and Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*. In so doing, I build upon recent scholarship that has rehabilitated the notion of 'national allegory' for postcolonial studies and provide an account of how the material world conditions the imaginary in the case of two texts. Following Arthur Koestler and conceiving of creativity as a combination or "bisociation" of previously disparate cultural paradigms,[1] the article argues that even in contexts that are removed from the struggle for independence from colonialism, the nation state continues to shape the creative choices of postcolonial writers.

This article is, therefore, an attempt to bridge the gap between the political and the aesthetic. In doing so, it draws on the growing body of work dedicated to a materialist critique and "reconstruction" of postcolonial studies.[2] Thus, in describing the generic unevenness and internal heterogeneity of these two texts, I eschew de-historicised terms such as 'hybridity' which impose established theories of the postmodern upon the text. Instead, I will 'start from the bottom up' as it were, and read the texts as representational acts that are formed from and perform the national and cultural contexts from which they emanate.

I have chosen to use Fredric Jameson's concept of "generic discontinuities"[3] because of its power to unite complex ideological subtexts with the aesthetic properties of a text. At this point it will be helpful to explore the concept as it appears in Jameson's writings. The general thrust of Jameson's book *The Political Unconscious* is to advocate a Marxist literary criticism that is sensitive to the social and political currents that underlie the narrative act. In a chapter entitled "Magical Narratives: On the Dialectical Use of Genre Criticism", an attempt to move away from prescriptive approaches to genre, Jameson suggests that we read a text "synchronically, as the coexistence, contradiction, structural hierarchy, or uneven development of a number of distinct narrative systems".[4] Such a process, Jameson says, "allows us to grasp the text as a socially symbolic act, as the ideological – but formal and immanent – response to a historical dilemma".[5] Moving his focus to the nineteenth century novel, Jameson notes that diverse generic paradigms make up Alessandro Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi*:

[1] Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (London: Arkana, 1989).

[2] Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1. See also Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[3] See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (London: Routledge, 1996), 144.

[4] Ibid., 138.

[5] Ibid., 138-9.

> On this reading, then, the 'novel' as an apparently unified form is subjected to a kind of x-ray technique designed to reveal the layered or marbled structure of the text according to what we will call *generic discontinuities*. The novel is then not so much an organic unity as a symbolic act that must reunite or harmonize heterogeneous narrative paradigms which have their own specific and contradictory ideological meaning.[6]

[6] Ibid., 144, emphasis in original.

For Jameson, the generic discontinuities of Manzoni's novel endow it with a "totalizing completeness"[7] and allow it to straddle the diverse cultural forces of a particular moment in bourgeois culture. It is the attention to the "layered or marbled structure" of the text's generic makeup, that is to say, to the *manner* in which the text switches from one genre to another other, which allows us to locate it politically. Generic discontinuity is, therefore, a useful concept for exploring connections between questions of aesthetics, genre and politics.

[7] Ibid., 144.

Generic discontinuity can play a role in the signifying process that Jameson has elsewher named "national allegory", which is elucidated in the 1986 essay "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism".[8] Many readers will be familiar with the controversy surrounding this essay and with Aijaz Ahmad's impassioned response to the effect that Jameson "others" literature of the third world.[9] I will not enter into the terms of that debate, other than to cite Neil Lazarus's compelling and satisfactory defence of Jameson's position.[10] Jameson's essay argues that "Third-world texts … necessarily project a libidinal dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of third-world culture and society".[11]

[8] Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism", *Social Text*, 15 (1986), 65-88.

[9] Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'", *Social Text*, 17 (1987), 3-25.

[10] Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, 89-113.

[11] Jameson, "Third-World Literature", 69.

This is not as controversial as it may sound, for it is quite reasonable to claim that literature emanating from countries with a burgeoning nationhood should have a major preoccupation with national consciousness. Indeed, similar arguments are readily deployed in relation to eighteenth and nineteenth century Western literature. However, for the notion of national allegory to be entirely useful and mobile, I think it important to understand it in terms of a basic preoccupation with solidarity, or as "appeals to collective identity",[12] for which the nation state and national consciousness are the most obvious correlates. A key aspect of my argument is that the same process occurs in later postcolonial fiction: whereas Jameson illustrates the national allegory thesis in relation to postcolonial texts that were written before, during, or just after decolonisation, I want to show how the concept works in relation to migrant authors of a later generation and who write in an age when the idea of 'the nation' has lost much of its political credibility.

[12] Ibid., 78.

Importantly, Jameson does not over-simplify the point and his argument has interesting implications for an investigation of aesthetics, for he notes that, "the allegorical spirit is profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities, of the multiple polysemia of the dream rather than the heterogeneous representation of the symbol".[13] Such a conception of allegory has clear parallels with the form of a generically discontinuous text. Indeed, the compatibility of the two concepts is manifest when Jameson highlights the generic discontinuities of Ousmane Sembène's *Xala* as contributing to a national allegory.

[13] Jameson, "Third-World Literature", 73.

In the first section of what follows, I unpack the generic complexity of Rushdie's *Shame* which has hitherto been under-examined. Understanding the significance of the realist pull in *Shame*'s otherwise magical realist narrative helps us to see its relation to the nation as an idea and to build upon a recent reassessment of Rushdie's place in the postcolonial canon. In the second section I argue that the internally heterogeneous nature of Kincaid's *A Small Place* is best understood in the context of Antigua's problematic nationhood. Delineating the relation between generic discontinuity and the nation state can, I argue, help us to better understand these two texts as creative acts that are shaped by their contexts.

Genre and Containment in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*

Numerous critics have examined the meta-narrational asides of Rushdie's migrant narrator in *Shame*.[14] However, it remains to be shown how these interruptions are actually of a different generic category from the main narrative, and therefore constitute an instance of generic discontinuity. Whereas the main narrative in *Shame* is magical realist in the manner of Rushdie's previous novel *Midnight's Children*, the narrator's interruptions frequently conform to an alternative narrative register; they are firmly grounded in the narrator's contemporary reality. Whereas the main narrative is obviously at pains to place the story at one remove from the real Pakistan, the narrator's meta-narrational comments employ the proper nouns for Pakistan and for real-life figures who are analogous to characters in the primary narrative.[15] In what follows I demonstrate that these generic discontinuities are, by virtue of their formal and structural manifestations in the novel, key to Rushdie's representation of the authoritarian nation state of Pakistan.

Brendon Nicholls summarises an important aspect of Rushdie's representation of Pakistan in *Shame*:

> Central to Rushdie's project is the sense that a national narrative founded upon repression inevitably exhibits a crisis of plausibility. As such, any cultural claim staked upon the homogeneity of the nation already authorises the alternatives, detours and embellishments that antagonise its intention. To put it another way, since the authoritarian state actively suppresses possibilities within its own puritanical narratives, it at some level unconsciously imagines-into-being the very same cultural contestants that it seems unable to avow.[16]

My argument is that this "crisis of plausibility" of the authoritarian state is articulated by the generic discontinuities in *Shame*. The picture of oppressive religious nationalism that Rushdie paints in the primary magical realist narrative is not fully containable within the conventions of that genre. The leakage that Nicholls describes is manifested in the narrator's interruptions that conform to a more realist narrative paradigm. Before turning to specific instances of generic discontinuity, it is necessary to examine how Rushdie presents the state's oppression and its consequences in the primary magical realist narrative.

[14] See, for example, Ayelet Ben-Yishai, "The Dialectic of Shame: Representation in the Metanarrative of Salman Rushdie's *Shame*", *Modern Fiction Studies*, 48.1 (2002), 194-215; Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992); Hima Raza, "Unravelling *Sharam*: Narrativisation as a Political Act in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*", *Wasafiri*, 39 (2003), 55-61.

[15] An important distinction here: on the one hand we have the generic discontinuity that I describe. Related to, though distinct from this, is the general slipperiness around the names and places and people. Although, this reinforces part of the shifts in genre, I also see it as part of Rushdie's unreliable narration.

[16] Brendon Nicholls, "Reading 'Pakistan' in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*", in Abdulrazak Gurnah, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Salman Rushdie* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 110.

As Timothy Brennan and Aijaz Ahmad note, *Shame* focuses almost exclusively on the Pakistani ruling elites rather than on the masses.[17] The sense of claustrophobia in his portrait of the nation is, Ahmad notes, made particularly acute by the fact the two ruling families who populate the story are themselves related to one another. What I want to emphasise here is that the primary narrative, in its claustrophobic portrayal of Pakistan and the rise of religious nationalism, and with its sketching of the relationship between violence, shame and shamelessness, generates a sense of rising pressure, that is only released in *periodic* acts of violence.

From the very start of the novel, the narrator issues warnings that contribute to this sense of growing pressure: "Trouble in a marriage is like water accumulating on a flat roof",[18] is one example. This is combined with, particularly from the beginning of Raza Hyder's premiership, an increasingly forceful Islamic nationalism, expressed not only through the regime's rhetoric, but also through the introduction of oppressive religious laws (247). Stephen Morton has demonstrated how "Rushdie uses the conventions of magical realism to articulate the excesses of state terror".[19] This occurs most notably through the character of Sufiya Zinobia, whose "psychosomatic" (123) blushing and subsequent violent outbursts (all articulated in the magical realist tradition) are the result of her family's and the nation's shame (122). The magical realist narrative is used by Rushdie to show how the shame begotten by the excesses of the nationalist religious state results in violence.

I suggest that Sufiya Zinobia's violent outbursts are analogous to the generic discontinuities in *Shame*. The totalising narrative of the state that seeks to assert its hegemony upon the nation "unconsciously imagines-into-being the very same cultural contestants that it seems unable to avow".[20] The "cultural contestant" is shame that, produced within the Hyder family and to a greater extent by Raza Hyder as dictator, builds up in the figure of Sufiya Zinobia and is released in periodic acts of violence in the main narrative. Likewise, on a formal level, the conventions of magical realism are insufficient to fully represent the consequences of this totalising state narrative – the consequences of state violence might be said to be too *real*. The fallout from a totalising nationalist government pierces the narrator's contemporary reality, hence the need for a realist narrative paradigm. Just as Sufiya Zinobia's violent outbursts are periodic, so are the narrator's interruptions; their structural manifestations suggest that they play a similar function as an outlet for the "cultural contestants" brought about by the regime.

This problem of containment within the magical realist narrative is compounded by the narrator's own ambivalence about the nation state and, in particular, the foundation of Pakistan, as evidenced by his comments about the manufactured character of its name (87). This can be linked with a paradox inherent in Benedict Anderson's influential study of the modern nation state:[21] if the nation state is an essentially arbitrary, *imagined* community, why does it remain a site of great emotional investment and a source of so much violence? This paradox is a real issue for the narrator in *Shame*, as we see in one of his realist interventions:

[17] See Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 121; and Ahmad, *In Theory*, 140.

[18] Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (London: Picador, 1984), 93; hereafter in the text.

[19] Stephen Morton, *Salman Rushdie: Fictions of Postcolonial Modernity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 54.

[20] Nicholls, "Reading Pakistan", 110.

[21] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991).

> It is the true desire of every artist to impose his or her vision on the world; and Pakistan, the peeling, fragmenting palimpsest, increasingly at war with itself, may be described as a failure of the dreaming mind. Perhaps the pigments used were the wrong ones, impermanent, like Leonardo's; or perhaps the place was just *insufficiently imagined*, a picture full of irreconcilable elements, mid-riffbaring immigrant saris versus demure, indigenous Sindhi shalwar-kurtas, Urdu versus Punjabi, now versus then: a miracle that went wrong. (87; emphasis in the original)

This quotation reveals the difficulty of reconciling the violence that Pakistan begets with its seemingly arbitrary creation as detailed by the narrator in the paragraph previous to the one that I have quoted. If Pakistan is "a failure of the dreaming mind", then this is illustrated in *Shame* by periodic lapses in the magical realist narrative that symbolise failures to conceive of Pakistan using that genre's conventions. This is consistent with Nicholls's comment that, "the unrepresentable or unreclaimable elements of traumatic national memory must emerge as disruptions or flaws in narrative design".[22]

[22] Nicholls, "Reading Pakistan", 111.

That this is a genuine case of generic discontinuity is evidenced by the narrator's explicit flirtation with the realist genre in one of his asides (68-69). Here, he speculates on what he would have to include if it were a realistic novel. The irony is increased by the repetitive statements: "If this were a realist novel about Pakistan," (68) and "But suppose this were a realist novel!" (69). By specifically plotting the points of correspondence between the magical realist narrative and a projected realistic narrative, Rushdie simultaneously denies and posits its correspondence with the real world. This not only implies that the magical realist narrative has direct correspondences with the outside world, but that the matter of genre is a conscious concern and preoccupation.

One should be wary, however, of interpreting this as a postnational/postmodern comment on the nation *per se* – as is the tendency in much criticism on Rushdie. In *Decentering Rushdie* Pranav Jani attempts to recover the diversity of post-independence Indian fiction that has been, to some extent, obscured by Rushdie's success. Whilst offering readings of lesser-known Indian novels that offer sophisticated nationalist *and* postnationalist attitudes towards India, Jani is able to revise the common postmodern/postnational reading of Rushdie. In a decisive reading of a short passage from Rushdie's essay "Imaginary Homelands" Jani notes that, "the passage problematizes efforts to interpret it strictly within the paradigms of postmodernist epistemology":[23]

[23] Pranav Jani, *Decentering Rushdie* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2010), 4.

> Despite Rushdie's overall project in the essay to establish migrancy as an Archimedean site from which to view the nation, the cited passage exudes a nostalgia for India that is distinctly modernist and mournful rather than postmodernist and celebratory.[24]

[24] Ibid.

I think it important to bear this reading in mind when thinking about Rushdie's attitude towards the nation in *Shame*. Indeed, is not the *extent* of the nation's penetration into the novel's levels of narrative an indicator of the mournfulness that Jani detects in the "Imaginary Homelands" essay? Surely such a commitment

suggests displeasure that the state of Pakistan has failed as a means of ensuring solidarity, rather than simply a postmodern dismissal as the concept as a whole.

I now turn to some further examples of generic discontinuity in the novel in order to illustrate my argument. One particularly pertinent instance is the narrator's intervention that tells the violent stories of Annahita (Anna) Muhammad, the girl attacked on the London Underground and of the boy found burned to death in a car park (115-117). These have occurred in his 'real life', outside of the story he is narrating. In each case, the narrator implies, the violence was caused by the dialectic of shame and shamelessness that is present in the primary narrative. These London victims are, says the narrator, "inside my Sufiya Zinobia" (117). The point being made is that the shame produced by the authoritarian nation state is not containable within the magical realist narrative; it breaks out into contemporary reality. Just as violence breaks out within the main narrative, the "crisis of plausibility"[25] of Pakistan's nationalist narrative creates acts of such violence that a realist narrative is required to show them.

[25] Nicholls, "Reading Pakistan", 110.

In concluding this section I would like to respond to Aijaz Ahmad's well-known critique of *Shame* in his book *In Theory*. His argument may be summarised thus: the claustrophobic picture painted of Pakistani's political elite "is presented, in the rhetorical stance of the book, as the experience of a 'country"'.[26] The result, for Ahmad, is a skewed representation of Pakistan that "does not include those who resist, or love, or act with any degree of integrity or courage".[27] This leads to a representation of women that "overvalorizes, when it comes to describing women, the zones of the erotic, the irrational, the demented and the demonic";[28] "none [of the women] may be understood in relation to those fundamental projects of survival and overcoming which are none other than the production of history itself".[29]

[26] Ahmad, *In Theory*, 140.

[27] Ibid., 151.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

Ahmad, I believe, does not take the generic complexity of *Shame* into account and is too willing to read Rushdie in terms of the latter's postmodernism. The presence of the realist category both explicitly and implicitly introduces a correspondence with the world beyond the closed magical realist narrative. The generic discontinuities, and the various scenes they describe (the narrator's return to Pakistan, or the violence in London for example) show that there is inevitably something *outside of* the "closed circle"[30] of Pakistan. The point is that the "closed circle" brings such "cultural contestants"[31] into being. True, the novel does not narrate acts of resistance and is not written from the perspective of the masses, but Rushdie's decision to introduce a generic paradigm that is different from magical realism does allow for such a possibility. With regards to the question of women in *Shame*, I will quote one of the narrator's realist interventions: "I hope it goes without saying that not all women are crushed by any system, no matter how oppressive. It is commonly and, I believe, accurately said of Pakistan that her women are much more impressive than her men … their chains, nevertheless are no fictions. They exist" (173).

[30] Ibid., 139.

[31] Nicholls, "Reading Pakistan", 110.

The above passage (which Ahmad does not mention) demonstrates further that although there is no description or portrait of them in the novel, *Shame*'s generic discontinuities do allow for acts of women's resistance. The novel's generic makeup, an expression of the inevitable by-products of a totalising regime, does not, when taken as a whole, imply that such a resistance on the part of women is impossible.

Generic Instability in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*

Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* defies easy categorisation. For, despite its brevity (only 81 pages), the text frequently shifts generic register. Indeed, critics have noted the difficulties in locating it within a particular genre. Giovanna Covi states that, "*A Small Place* is a political essay in content, but it reads like fiction".[32] Meanwhile, Corinna McLeod sees it as having "a multiplicity of narrative elements" and states that, "it is difficult to find a place for the text in terms of genre".[33] For whilst it maintains a polemical imperative throughout, *A Small Place* uses the conventions of a range of genres. In what follows, I argue that the individual manifestations of these generic paradigms, their relation to the book's polemical passages, and the text's subsequent generic unevenness can be read as a kind of national allegory. A national allegory that, as we shall see, reflects the gap between Antigua and coherent nationhood.

[32] Giovanna Covi, *Jamaica Kincaid's Prismatic Subjects: Making Sense of Being in the World* (London: Mango Publishing, 2004), 31.

[33] Corinna McLeod, "Constructing a Nation: Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*", *Small Axe*, 25 (2008), 77-78.

It is first necessary to examine how Antigua relates to the concept of the nation state, both in the economy of *A Small Place* and in reality. In her essay entitled "Constructing a Nation: Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*" McLeod focuses primarily on the text's engagement with the discourse of modern tourism. By deconstructing the network of discourses that superimpose the island, Kincaid's text, McLeod argues, "yields a pathway by which the narrator (and, vicariously, the reader) is able to conceive a nation".[34] Although McLeod's account of the text is persuasive, I think that it rests on the idea that Antigua and 'the nation' are commensurable – an idea that neither history *nor* the text itself support. *A Small Place* is undeniably a critique of tourist discourse and the latter's foundations in colonialism. But the idea that a coherent national community is in some way *recoverable* from behind the distorting effect of such discourse is at variance with the text. When Kincaid's text is read against the precise disjuncture between Antigua and the nation state, the operation of an unusual kind of national allegory becomes apparent and the strangeness of its generic makeup begins to make more sense.

[34] Ibid., 77.

For, Antigua is categorically *not* a nation. It is an island that makes up the greater part of the multi-island state of Antigua & Barbuda. This is something of which the narrator of *A Small Place* is acutely aware:

> for reasons known only to the English person who did this, Redonda and the islands of Barbuda and Antigua are all lumped together as one country. When Antiguans talk

> about 'The Nation' (and they say 'The Nation' without irony), they are referring to the nine-by-twelve-mile-long, drought-ridden island of Antigua; they are referring to Barbuda, and island even smaller than Antigua … ; and they are referring to a barren little rock where only booby birds live, Redonda.[34]

[34] Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 51; hereafter in the text.

Antigua and "The Nation" are, therefore, not the same thing. Kincaid's repetition of the physical dimensions of the island throughout the text (9; 80), underscores Antigua's incommensurability with the discursive formation of "The Nation" by emphasising its physicality. In order to understand how the national allegory functions in the text and how this relates to the generic discontinuities, it is important to understand how solidarity and national consciousness are rendered problematic by Antigua's postcolonial circumstances.

Despite one hundred years or so of anti-colonial agitation in the British Caribbean, independence for Antigua was not a triumphant affair. Granted in 1981, Antigua & Barbuda's independence was late in arriving in comparison with the much of the rest of the West Indies.[35] Perhaps more importantly, it did not come as the climax of any great anti-colonial struggle. As Bonham C. Richardson notes of the region as a whole,

> Political independence for the states of the former British Caribbean has not resulted directly from military struggles featuring full-blown battle campaigns with armies of downtrodden peasants eventually vanquishing European troops. Quite the opposite: independence ceremonies in the former British colonies usually have been marked by handshakes, band concerts, and celebrations.[36]

[35] As a point of reference, Jamaica gained independence in 1962, Barbados in 1966 and the Bahamas in 1973. Only two further states (Belize in also 1981 and St Kitts & Nevis in 1983) also gained independence in the 1980s.

[36] Bonham C. Richardson, *The Caribbean in the Wider World, 1492-1992* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 182.

[37] Ibid.

Despite the fact that "older residents of the Commonwealth Caribbean recall with pride the resistance to colonial policies exhibited by protest leaders in the 1930s and their uncompromising demands in the years thereafter",[37] Richardson's account suggests that independence was couched in the terms of the former colonisers and not those of the newly liberated. Such a genial handover of power, whilst remaining undeniably the result of Black agency, raises several conceptual and practical problems for a newly emancipated nation. Frantz Fanon's famous statement that "[v]iolence alone, violence committed by the people, violence organized and educated by its leaders, makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths and gives the key to them" is relevant here.[38] Although violence is certainly not the only path to successful postcolonial nationhood, Fanon does point towards the necessity of understanding the nature of colonialism. Without the disruption caused by anti-colonial violence, the reality of colonial power structures is less likely to be revealed to the people. Fanon's remark is especially pertinent to Kincaid's text since one of its recurring themes is the ignorance of Antiguans, past and present, to the forms of their oppression.

[38] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 118.

Antigua & Barbuda's independence should not be seen as the decisive break from colonialism that Fanon advocates. Indeed, the slow handover of power, which was not the result of a popular uprising, was especially likely to lead to the

middle class taking power – a situation that Fanon describes in *The Wretched of the Earth*. A potential danger of decolonization, Fanon argues, presents itself when the native middle class takes its influence from the colonisers, and effectively emulates the European bourgeoisie. Consequently, nationalist liberation ends in failure, since the proletariat remains as oppressed as it was before, only this time by a native bourgeoisie trying to maintain its power.[39] Again, the parallels with Antigua (and Kincaid's description of it in *A Small Place*) are manifest: Vere Bird (Prime Minister of Antigua for more than a decade and a significant political figure long before independence) began his political career in the Antigua Trades and Labour Union but, as freedom from colonialism became ever more feasible, he gradually shifted to the right. The national consciousness which the labour movements of the 1930s helped to propagate was gradually ceded to the aims of the Bird family and their bourgeois cronies.

[39] Ibid., 119-165.

Thus from the Fanonist perspective, Antigua and Barbuda's independence failed to bring about true liberation. National consciousness that was developed by protest movements from the 1930s onwards failed to create a coherent national community and dissipated when the middle class took power. Furthermore, the amalgamation of Antigua and Barbuda into a single nation state has caused problems. Following independence in 1981, a dispute developed between the Antiguan government and Barbudans over "whether Barbudan land is owned by Barbudans themselves or by the larger state whose capital is in Antigua".[40] Richardson notes that the dispute is due in part to a difference in outlook between the Antiguans and the Barbudans: "Barbudans consider themselves a sober, family-oriented, and proper people, content in their isolation. Their view of most Antiguans, in contrast, is that of a free-spending, improvident lot who have sold themselves to international banking interests".[41] The very borders of this nation state, drawn on a map by the British, do not effectively circumscribe solidarity and national consciousness.

[40] Richardson, *The Caribbean in the Wider World*, 187.

[41] Ibid.

Antigua, therefore, stands in a complex relation to the nation state. Having unpacked the circumstances behind the narrator's scepticism towards "The Nation", the questions to ask are: what is the relation between the text's generic makeup and the nation state as it has been elucidated? What does this tell us about us about Kincaid's text as, in Jameson's words, "a socially symbolic act, as the ideological – but formal and immanent – response to a historical dilemma"?[42] In what follows, I provide an alternative reading that takes account of the text's generic complexity and focuses on the unconscious narrative act which underlies the critical imperative of *A Small Place*. In short, the aim is to show that the creative use of genre is linked to the vexed question of Antigua's status as a nation state.

[42] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 139.

The text comprises unnumbered four sections. The first section employs the generic conventions of the travel brochure. Tourism is Antigua's primary industry and this has resulted in the subordination of the island's needs to the dictates of international capital. Kincaid systematically undoes the Western reader's expectations of such a narrative whilst she simultaneously "imitates the lofty, omniscient style of a tourist brochure" (14).[43] The luxuriant features of an exotic tourist destination

[43] McLeod, "Constructing a Nation", 92

are consistently undercut, revealing a much darker side to the tourist's experience. For example, the image of the sea, which is often made a centrepiece in travel brochures, is here subverted by the suggestion that human waste may end up in it: "the contents of your lavatory might, just might, graze gently against your ankle as you wade carefree in the water" (14). As well as imitating the benign tone of a travel brochure, Kincaid appropriates its tendency to address the reader in the second person, a practice that allows the prospective holidaymaker to imagine him/herself on holiday. Thus, Kincaid constructs what John Urry has termed "the tourist gaze".[44] The reader's view is framed so that he/she sees Antigua with "an anticipation … of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different pleasures from those customarily encountered".[45] But there are, in effect, two voices at work here. The first is the soothing one of the travel brochure, the second is that of Kincaid and this second voice undercuts the propositions of the first and is polemical in tone. Appearing frequently in parentheses, this second voice appears to be in tension with that of the travel brochure.

[44] See John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London: Sage Publications, 1990).

[45] Ibid., 3.

A tourist brochure's descriptive narrative comes laden with assumptions about the specificity place and national culture. Urry notes that tourist commodities "are consumed because they supposedly generate pleasurable experiences *which are different from those typically encountered in everyday life*".[46] In trying to sell a 'once in a lifetime experience' the brochure must make the product seem unique. Behind such an attempt is a particular perspective on globalisation that is blind to the homogenising influence of global capital. In this perspective, the world is simply more connected, whilst individual locations retain their exoticised local wonders. Kincaid picks up on this tendency and subverts it. The tourist's encounter with a taxi driver is an important example:

[46] Ibid., 1; my emphasis.

> You see a man, a taxi driver; you ask him to take you to your destination; he quotes you a price. You immediately think that the price is in the local currency, for you are a tourist and you are familiar with these things (rates of exchange) and you feel even more free, for things seem so cheap, but then your driver ends by saying, 'In U.S. currency'. (5)

The tourist mindset is hardwired to anticipate freedom from the grubby business of Western capitalism. But this tourist's specialist knowledge – presumably acquired from other trips abroad – is shown to be incompatible with the reality of global capital. The passage associates freedom with the use of local currency, but this is trashed when the tourist learns that exchange value is measured on the same scale as at home. The first section of *A Small Place* makes further attempts to undermine the myth of 'undiscovered territory'. The cliché of freshly prepared local food is trashed by the suggestion that it "came off a plane from Miami" (14). The commonplace of primitive arts and crafts is similarly undermined: "you look at things they can do with a piece of ordinary cloth, the things they fashion out of cheap, vulgarly colored (to you) twine" (16). The 'ordinariness' of the cloth hints that these are not truly primitive crafts, since the cloth is "ordinary" to the Western tourist.

Towards the end of section 1 the travel brochure narrative dissipates. Kincaid continues to address the constructed Western 'you', but no longer in the anodyne tones of the tourist industry. The constructed tourist's gaze disassembles as Kincaid attacks the Western tourist and shows the connection between self-realisation and holidaymaking to be facile (17). The voice that was mostly relegated to parentheses in the earlier part of this section now becomes dominant as the author excoriates the Western tourist. The repetition of 'you' reaches almost fever pitch: "(it is their custom to eat their food with their hands; you try eating their way, you look silly; you try eating the way you always eat, you look silly); they do not like the way you speak (you have an accent)" (17). This creates the sense of a kind of struggle of genres, in which the polemic is the victor. Whereas earlier in the section it was mostly relegated to the numerous parentheses, it now appears both inside and outside of them. I will return to the generic instability of this section later. For now, it is sufficient to note that Kincaid has employed a genre of writing (the travel brochure), which comes laden with assumptions about the specificity and uniqueness of tourist destinations. By setting it in tension with another narrative paradigm (the polemic), Kincaid undermines and exposes these presuppositions that ignore the reality of global capital.

The second section of *A Small Place* opens thus: "The Antigua that I knew, the Antigua in which I grew up, is not the Antigua you, a tourist, would see now" (23). After the caustic accusations of the end of section 1, the calmer, reminiscent tone acts to pacify the reader. Here, Kincaid adopts the conventions of autobiography in order to plot the oppressive power dynamics of the colonised Antigua of her childhood. It is appropriate to think about how this genre functions elsewhere in postcolonial and Caribbean contexts.

Bart Moore-Gilbert has investigated postcolonial transformations of autobiography. He notes that in many cases postcolonial autobiographical texts feature "generic undecidability"[47] – something he attributes to "the intrinsic hybridity of postcolonial subjectivity".[48] However, in *A Small Place*, a text which takes Antigua as its subject, might not "generic undecidability" be attributable to the island's vexed relation to national community? Meanwhile, Louise Hardwick has looked into the rise of the Caribbean *récit d'enfance* genre in the 1990s. Although not always strictly autobiographical, these texts use "the child's gaze as the fundamental conceit"[49] to "explore the links between private destiny and the wider socio-political context".[50] Autobiography, then, has frequently been ripe for adaptation by postcolonial authors.

In *A Small Place*, the coincidence of the beginning of the autobiographical generic paradigm with the beginning of the second section suggests an attempt at compliance with the dictates of formal chapter divisions and, consequently, with the stability of the speaking subject that the autobiographical form traditionally prescribed.[51] On the level of overt critique, this paradigm allows Kincaid to demonstrate how her personal development was mediated through Antigua's colonisers and to elaborate the naivety of the people towards the means of their oppression. This naivety is a

[47] Bart Moore-Gilbert, "A Concern Peculiar to Western Man? Postcolonial Reconsiderations of Autobiography as Genre", in Patrick Crowley, Jane Hiddleston, eds., *Postcolonial Poetics: Genre and Form* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 98.

[48] Ibid., 100.

[49] Louise Hardwick, "The Rise of the *récit d'enfance* in the Francophone Caribbean", in Patrick Crowley, Jane Hiddleston, eds., *Postcolonial Poetics: Genre and Form* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 176.

[50] Ibid., 168.

[51] Moore-Gilbert's essay describes the customary wholeness of the speaking subject in Western autobiography.

key trope throughout the text. For example, the public holiday on May 24th is to celebrate Queen Victoria's official birthday (30), and the speaker states: "We didn't say to ourselves, Hasn't this extremely unappealing person been dead for years and years? Instead we were glad for a holiday" (30). Intertwined with these observations are the Antiguans' further misapprehensions concerning the discourse and rhetoric to which they are subject. They believe that the people at the Mill Reef Club are simply rude (27) and the speaker's mother naively believes that the foreign doctor is worried about germs when he insists that any black child that he sees must be clean (28). They doubt that the white people they see can be English because they have always been told that the English are polite (29-30).

Despite lamenting this ignorance, Kincaid remembers the old Antigua with apparent nostalgia. Features of colonial Antigua are recalled with an emphasis on their utility: "In that part of High Street, you could cash a cheque at the Treasury, read a book in the library, post a letter at the post office, appear before a magistrate court" (25). Although colonial domination is never forgotten (the mention of the magistrate court ensures this), there is a distinct fondness in Kincaid's description of "the Antigua that I knew" (24). Even if it is at variance with the situation she describes, her command to the reader to "let me show you the Antigua that I used to know" (24) registers pride.

But there is a key contradiction here. Why, particularly within the liberal Western narrative of a decolonized postcolonial world, should Kincaid remember the old Antigua so fondly? In the light of what she actually tells us about it, the nostalgia for the old Antigua becomes analogous to the ignorance of the Antiguans. There is a clear difference between the expectations of the genre (both those of the Western autobiography and the *récit d'enfance*) and the Antigua that Kincaid is capable of remembering. The non-fragmentary subject that Moore-Gilbert sees as a central feature of traditional Western male autobiography requires the narrative of an eventful childhood and coming of age. Such recollections are blocked for Kincaid. Towards the end of the section, Kincaid seems to become aware of this: "Have I given you the impression that the Antigua I grew up in revolved around England?" (33). The effect of this question is a jarring one; for having been self-reflexive for the entire section, Kincaid suddenly turns her focus back onto her constructed Western reader. From this point, the autobiographical impetus of the narrative dissipates into further censure of the descendents of colonisers. Any sense that the autobiographical genre is contained neatly within the section parameters is trashed. This implies that the autobiographical narrative, laden with nostalgia, is incompatible with the task of writing about Antigua.

The third section begins abruptly and, again, changes tack:

> And so you can imagine how I felt when, one day, in Antigua, standing on Market Street, looking up one way and down the other, I asked myself: Is the Antigua I see before me, self-ruled, a worse place than what it was when it was dominated by the bad-minded English and all the bad-minded things they brought with them? (41)

This casual sentence ushers in the theme of return. Return is a common theme in Caribbean writing – understandable, given the size of the region's diaspora. Although the Caribbean return novel cannot be said to be a codified genre to the extent of, perhaps, the *récit d'enfance*, there are certain distinctive tendencies that we can discern. For example, several autofictional novels by the Haitian writer Dany Laferrière problematise the return from exile and explore the strange interplay between continuity and change that the homecomer experiences.[52] The complexities that surround the subject of the homecoming of members of the Caribbean diaspora have been investigated in other disciplines. In a fascinating study entitled *Narratives of Exile and Return*, social historian Mary Chamberlain studies oral accounts from Barbadans who left for the UK in the mid-twentieth century. She notes that although Barbados "emerged as a symbol of stability"[53] from her interlocutors' narratives, various factors complicate the notion of 'home'. Important among these factors is "the ideology of the mother country"[54] – the notion, inculcated by colonial education, that England was home. This contributes to what Chamberlain terms "an 'instability' in regard to national boundaries, and an implicit challenge to the idea of the nation-state (and the 'British' way of life) as the natural and only form of political and social organisation".[55] Kincaid, herself a member of the Caribbean diaspora, is therefore entering into an established cultural narrative, the chief characteristic of which is ambiguity.

The return that Kincaid attempts in section 3 of *A Small Place* is, in some sense, a failure. Indeed, the first indication that the reader has of a return is the casual opening sentence quoted above which begins "And so". This does not pave the way for a grand homecoming. In fact, the full return is effectively blocked. The narrator compares a ""Teenage Pageant"" that she sees on her return to the gatherings of her own youth. She notes that the teenagers struggle to speak in English and that, whereas in her day the young were obsessed with "the rubbish of England" (44) those of today prefer "the rubbish of North America" (44). For her, this suggests that the standard of schooling has deteriorated in her time away. It also implies that cultural imperialism persists, albeit from a different source of power. The corruption of successive governments is described in detail. Every attempt that the speaker makes to reconnect with an aspect of the nation is disrupted by the narrative that she must first unpick. Again, the inability of the Antiguans to understand the nature of their oppression is foregrounded: the hotel training school, ostensibly an academic institution is, for the narrator, tantamount to a preparatory college for modern slaves (55). The library, which evokes so many memories for the speaker, instead offers only an entry into the deceitful world of Antiguan politics (45-47). The description of the return rarely goes beyond the level of landmarks and memories associated with them. Kincaid cannot approach the subtle ambiguity that characterises Laferrière's novels and the oral narratives examined by Chamberlain. Interestingly, there is no sense of tension with the polemical passages, as in the previous two sections.

[52] See, for example, Dany Laferrière, *L'Enigme du retour* (Paris: Grasset, 2009), and *Pays sans chapeau* (Paris: Le Serpent à plumes, 1999).

[53] Mary Chamberlain, *Narratives of Exile and Return* (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1997), 87.

[54] Ibid., 85.

[55] Ibid., 88.

Rather, the return narrative that Kincaid adopts appears to be particularly commensurable with her angry critique. Perhaps the fact that the return genre is relatively uncodified is means that less of a battle of authority ensues.

The fourth and final short section acts as a conclusion and argues mournfully that Antigua's beauty and small size are the sources of its many problems. What we are left with at the end of *A Small Place* is a book that feels unstable and incomplete. Jameson's reference to generically discontinuous texts as featuring the "uneven development of a number of different narrative systems"[56] is particularly pertinent here. For, Antigua is a victim of uneven development. Whilst the country's tourist and service facilities are developed to the highest standard, much of the general population lives in poverty. A text that attempts to represent these paradoxes cannot have a stable generic base. In terms of 'national allegory', the generic makeup of *A Small Place* is an instantiation of Antigua's *lack* of national community and solidarity. Various attempts are made to write Antigua in established registers, but these frequently dissipate into polemic and never achieve narrative closure. This impression of incompletion pervades the short text. Kincaid's achievement is to have constructed a text that points to the gap between Antigua and nation, whilst diagnosing its cause. When the idea of the nation is as problematic as it is for Antigua, national allegory still functions; it simply generates a self-contradictory and unsatisfactory image, which in itself speaks volumes.

[56] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 139.

Conclusion

What is obvious, but nonetheless important to note, is that postcolonial creativity in literature extends well beyond 'writing back'. The decades after decolonisation made, and continue to make, political demands on writers that require the constant adaptation of forms – even of those which emerged in the years after decolonisation and in different cultural circumstances.

I have, I hope, shown that one of these political demands is the nation state. The idea of the nation continues to shape literary production despite the widespread dissatisfaction with the idea of nationalism from the mid-twentieth century onwards, even if many of its promises remained unfulfilled. Furthermore, I have tried to highlight the fact that attention to the *full complexity* of the use of genre in a text helps us to better appreciate it as an object of its time. So, for example, seeking an explanation for the generic discontinuities in Rushdie's *Shame* supports a more nuanced interpretation of the relation between his work and the nation. Likewise, setting the complexity of Antigua's national situation against the slipperiness of *A Small Place*'s generic makeup allows us to see that the text engages with the problematic of national community.

In recent years a new focus has been given to the aesthetic dimensions of literature in postcolonial studies. Notable in this regard are *Postcolonial Poetics: Genre and Form* (essays from which I have cited above) and *Locating Postcolonial Narrative*

Genres.[57] Both of these collections make considerable headway in understanding some of the myriad ways in which literary forms are oriented and moulded by material circumstances. Whether or not we wholly accept Jameson's statement that "third-world culture", denied the luxury of "placeless individuality", "must be situational and materialist despite itself",[58] this essay has tried to contribute to the argument for a materialist approach to postcolonial literary studies, an approach which can help us to better appreciate the aesthetic diversity of its ever-growing corpus.

[57] Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio, eds., *Locating Postcolonial Narrative Genres* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[58] Jameson, "Third-World Literature", 85.

Bill Ashcroft

Grammars of Appropriation*

We all tend to believe our language *is* us, that it inhabits us and we inhabit it, that it constitutes what Martin Heidegger calls the "House of Being".[1] It is obvious why this is so, language introduces us to an identifiable world, initiates us into a family, providing those most basic concepts – 'me', 'us', 'them'. Language itself identifies us, announces us, even, it seems, defines us, defines the space of being itself. Our language "is not just *a* language", says Edgar Thompson, "it is *our* language, the language of human beings".[2]

This is why the question of language in colonialism, and subsequently the question of language in post-colonial writing have become so hotly debated. The attachment to one's language and the fear of its suppression or domination has been true of all languages and all societies. But 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. The exciting implication of this is that neither cultural production nor the production of identity is confined to a single language.

A symbol of the impact of a colonial language comes in that moment in Shakespeare's final play *The Tempest* when the monster Caliban and Prospero have had a bitter exchange and Caliban is banished. Caliban threatens to overwhelm Prospero's island by miscegenation – "to people the isle with Calibans" (I: ii 351-352),[3] and it is his daughter, Miranda, who replies in a speech that defines the colonial relationship. Caliban is an "abhorred slave" (353), "savage" (356), "brutish" (358), and "vile" (359). Miranda's language has the power to construct Caliban, a power that reflects Prospero's very tangible control of his body, his actions, his destiny.

This play has for some time been seen as an allegory of the colonial relationship and especially of the way in which language can construct, imprison and define the colonized. But Caliban's response to Miranda's diatribe is one of the most memorable in literature and encapsulates the bitter reaction of many colonized peoples to centuries of linguistic and political control: "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" (I: ii 364-66). In terms of the play it is no wonder that Caliban rejects that language. It serves to confine him in Prospero's power as surely as

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[1] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Alfred Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

[2] Edgar Thompson and E. C. Hughes, eds., *Race: Individual and Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1958).

[3] This and further quotations are from William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (London: Arden, 1999).

the magician's cloak. For the language is a feature of Prospero's Art itself. But if we see Caliban as a model of the colonial subject he has done much more with Prospero's language than use it to curse.

The physical and cultural space between Miranda and Caliban, a space that seems to be unbridgeable, a space of time, geography and culture, is ironically, the in-between space that language inhabits.Bhabha calls this the Third Space of Enunciation and for him cultural identity always emerges in this contradictory and ambivalent space, a space that makes untenable that purity and hierarchy of cultures so beloved by imperial discourse.[4] But this space is also a transcultural space, a 'contact zone', the excess of fixed subjectivity – that space in which cultural identity develops. This is pre-eminently the space of language. It is the space of post-colonial transformation. The radical observation we make from the struggles and transformations of post-colonial language use is that *all* language occupies this space, but its most radical examples occur in the appropriations of English by formerly colonized people. Far from being locked in a linguistic prison like Caliban, the colonized people who have transformed the English language have made it a vehicle of liberation, of self-representation and self-empowerment.

[4] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 36-39.

Two anglophone African novelists, the Kenyan Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and the Nigerian Chinua Achebe, have debated the pros and cons of using a colonial language longer, more often and more resolutely than other post-colonial writers. The fundamental questions remain the same: Do writers who continue to write in a colonial language 'remain colonized' or can they appropriate the language as a tool for their own purposes? Does literature in a language such as English privilege western cultural values, and with them the whole history of colonial oppression and control? Can such a literature use English as a tool to reveal the non-western world and even record resistance to that colonial world view? Does *any* communication in the dominant language imprison the subject in a dominant discourse?

Let me offer the startling claim that language *itself* occupies the space between identities. The space of the crossing, the 'in-between space' rarely comes into the discourse of either nation or language. For national or cultural identity there seems little space for in-betweenness. Yet it is within this in-between space that people live and speak. To say language occupies this interstitial space may appear both disruptive and extreme. So much cultural identity is invested in language that it appears imperative to most speakers that language be a stable discourse in which ontological certainty can be guaranteed. 'My' language constitutes the avenue of my entry into an articulately experienced world. It is the language through which I came to have a family, a community, a society, a nation. To all intents and purposes, *my language is me*. Yet my language may be used by someone who is not me, my family or culture. How then does my language identify my difference?

The situation becomes extremely fraught when the language is a colonial one. Ngũgĩ's position is stated early in his essay "Towards a National Culture" in which

he expresses four general objections to the use of English: (1) the colonial tongue becomes a province of the élite and thus the language itself reproduces colonial class distinctions; (2) language embodies the "thought processes and values" of its culture; (3) learning a colonial tongue alienates a speaker from the 'values' of the local language and from the values of the masses (which to Ngũgĩ are the same thing); (4) national language should not exist at the expense of regional languages which can enhance national unity "in a socialist economic and political context". To various degrees these objections apply today to the use of a global language.[5]

English has indeed been an instrument of domination, but does a post-colonial user of English remain a slave in the language because it was first used to enslave? "Those of us who have inherited the English language", says Achebe,

> may not be in a position to appreciate the value of the inheritance. Or we may go on resenting it because it came as part of a package deal which included many other items of doubtful value and the positive atrocity of racial arrogance and prejudice which may yet set the world on fire. But let us not in rejecting the evil throw out the good with it.[6]

The position of most African writers is as pragmatic as Achebe's. The legacies of colonialism constantly need to be addressed, but, paradoxically, they may best be addressed by some of the tools taken from the colonizers. I will address here only Ngũgĩ's major objection, that "[l]anguage embodies the thought processes and values of a culture". In *Decolonizing the Mind* Ngũgĩ states that "[l]anguage, any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture".[7] Where English is concerned, "[i]t is widely used as a means of communication across many nationalities. But it is not the carrier of a culture and history of many of those nationalities".[8] This is an issue that has become global because virtually every society must now deal with English. The key question here is "how does a language 'carry' a culture?" and "[i]s it impossible for a language to 'carry' a culture different from the one in which it emerged?". Obviously what we mean by the term 'carry' will be critical in deciding this. Chinua Achebe believes that a language can 'carry' a different culture: "I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings".[9] Clearly, what Ngũgĩ and Achebe mean by the term 'carry' are quite different things, and this points out some of the difficulty of the debate, because many people believe that to 'carry' does not mean simply to 'bear', but to 'embody'. At the centre of this conflict is the myth that a language embodies the essence of a culture. Hence, English, whether transported into a foreign language or settler culture, is held to be profoundly 'inauthentic' in its new place. If we were to regard an 'authentic' language as one which somehow embodies cultural uniqueness in a way no other language could, then English would be linguistically inappropriate to the development of a non-British culture.

[5] Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo, "Towards a National Culture", in *Homecoming* (London: HEB, 1972).

[6] Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (London: Heinemann, 1975), 58.

[7] Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo, *Decolonizing the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Curry, 1981).

[8] Ibid., 13

[9] Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, 62.

But if we look at the issue from another angle and ask "What is inherently English about the English language?" we would be confronted with a mosaic of Saxon, Celtic, Norman, French and Latin. When Samuel Johnson tried to fix the English language in place for all time with his dictionary he found the effort futile, that "to pursue perfection was, like the first inhabitants of Arcadia, to chase the sun, which, when they had reached the hill where he seemed to rest, was still at the same distance from them".[10]

The ideas that language embodies the essence of a culture, and hence that this essence cannot be conveyed in another language, are two of the most persistent myths about language, and prevail in every post-colonial region. But the question is: Is it impossible for signs of cultural difference to be communicated in a different language? If those signs communicate difference rather than essence, the answer must obviously be 'No!'. In fact the very existence of a dynamic field of post-colonial literatures in English refutes this. Appropriations of a language can accommodate various forms of difference. The idea of an authentic relation between a language and a culture is a political concept, and as such, can be very useful, as Gayatri Spivak indicates in her use of the term 'strategic essentialism', but it runs the risk of imprisoning writers into a belief in their inability to use to language 'authentically'.

Chinua Achebe responds to the assertion that African writers will never reach their creative potential till they write in African languages, by reiterating the point that a writer's use of a language can be as culturally specific as he or she makes it. If we ask 'Can an African ever learn English well enough to use it effectively in creative writing?', Achebe's answer is yes. But the secret such a writer has at his or her disposal is a healthy disregard for its traditions and rules. All writers have a creative sense of the possibilities of language, but the non- English speaking post-colonial writer has the added dimension of a different mother tongue, a different linguistic tradition from which to draw. If we ask 'Can he or she ever use it like a native speaker?' Achebe's answer is 'I hope not'. His point is one that remains as true today as it was then. The appropriation of English by post-colonial writers is not only possible but extremely effective and enriches the language. The grammars of such appropriations can be very unruly ones, but in Achebe's words, "[t]he price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use".[11]

Ngũgĩ's purpose in *Decolonizing the Mind* is to draw attention to the political ramifications of using a colonial language. However there is a constant slippage between this political position, which confirms the ability of the individual speaker to make choices, and a position that sees the speaker as unable to avoid the view of the world the language seems to present. To assume that the colonial language inculcates the subject, incontrovertibly, into a way of seeing the world, is to accept, by implication, that the subject is either passive or helpless. This occurs when Ngũgĩ claims of colonized African societies that "it was language which held captive

[10] Samuel Johnson, "Observations on the Present State of Affairs (1756)", in Donald Green, ed., *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, vol. 10 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 188, 186.

[11] Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, 61.

their cultures, their values and hence their minds".[12] To assume that the speaker of a colonial language has a 'colonized mind' is to accept a theory of the subject as without agency, something that is refuted at every turn by post-colonial discourse.

Indeed, cultural producers of all kinds have always recognized the utility of the tools at their disposal. Even where writers have used indigenous languages, the influence of English literary traditions is obvious. For instance, the emergence of novels and plays in languages like Wolof, Yoruba, Gikuyu in Africa, and Bengali, Kannada and Malayalam in India, has in each case required the invention of an audience, the creation of audiences of readers to 'consume' literary works of a kind that had not previously existed in those languages. Ngũgĩ is quite happy to "utilize all the resources at our disposal – radio, television, film, schools, universities, youth movements, farmers' co-operatives – to create a different kind of society". But language is held to be different because it somehow mysteriously embodies the thought processes, values and cultural history of a culture.

A crucial consideration in the link between language and culture is whether a culture can be pinned down to a particular set of beliefs, values and practices, as Ngũgĩ asserts, or whether in fact cultures experience a perpetual process of internal change and transformation. Achebe identifies this changeability with the resonant phrase: "[w]e lived at the crossroads of cultures". These crossroads have a dangerous potency "because a man might perish there wrestling with multiple-headed spirits, but also he might be lucky and return to his people with the boon of prophetic vision".[13] The metaphor of the crossroads does not fully indicate the extent to which cultures may become changed by the intersection. Indeed no culture is static, but is a constant process of hybrid interaction and change. Cultures encounter each other in a contact zone in which both are changed. It is within this Third Space – the Third Space of language itself – that the transcultural work of post-colonial literatures is performed. This work occurs by means of the processes of appropriation and transformation that enable the Third Space to become a space of resistance as well as a space of sharing.

The idea of language as *itself* somehow a Third Space, a vehicle that is by its very nature interstitial and 'in-between', means that language is always a translation. This becomes clearer if we consider bilingual writing as a form of inner translation. Salman Rushdie writes: "[t]he word 'translation' comes, etymologically, from the Latin for 'bearing across'. Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained".[14] Whether lost or gained, the 'bearing across' is a dynamic and dialogic process.

Strategies of Transformation

The strategies by which a colonial language is transformed are extremely varied. Apart from direct glossing in the text, either by explanation or parenthetic insertions,

[12] Ngũgĩ, *Decolonizing the Mind*, 32.

[13] Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, 67-68.

[14] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-91* (London: Granta, 1991), 17.

such devices include the inclusion of untranslated words, syntactic fusion, in which the English prose is structured according to the syntactic principles of a first language; neologisms, new lexical forms in English which are informed by the semantic and morphological exigencies of a mother tongue; the direct inclusion of untranslated lexical items in the text, ethno-rhythmic prose which constructs an English discourse according to the rhythm and texture of a first language, and the transcription of dialect and language variants of many different kinds, whether they come from diglossic, polydialectical or monolingual speaking communities. I elaborate these transformative strategies at greater length in *Caliban's Voice*.[15]

If we look closely at these inter-cultural linguistic devices and the commentary which surrounds them, we can see that they are often claimed to reproduce the culture by some process of metaphoric embodiment. Evidently many writers believe that by such means they are keeping faith with their own culture and transporting it into the new medium.[16] Thus the untranslated words, the sounds and textures of the language are vaguely held to have the power of the culture they signify by a process of ontological union. Such uses of language are metonymic. Code switching, ethno-rhythmic prose, the refusal to translate certain words, all have an important cultural function, not by embodying the culture, by representing cultural identity, but by inscribing difference. They install what can be called a 'metonymic gap', a sense of distance that comes about through the use of certain linguistic strategies. In effect the writer is saying 'I am using your language so that you will understand my world, but you will also know by the differences in the way I use it that you cannot share that world'. In this way language variance has a metonymic function in the literary text. It occupies fully and openly the contested space of translation.

Ultimately, literature reveals that although 'language speaks' in that we can only say what the laws of language allow, the inventiveness of speakers at the limits of those laws, the capacity to appropriate and transform a dominant language with the grammar and syntax of a vernacular tongue, is a characteristic of post-colonial writing. Why is this important? Because the task of decolonization has not ended but keeps reinventing itself just as neo-colonial power keeps re-inventing itself as neoliberalism and neoconservatism. Although globalization is not a simple extension of imperialism, we still need to contend with imperialism. The message of post-colonial writing in its use of an imperial language is that we do not have to be victims, but can interpolate the discourses that victimize and transform them in ways that change the forever.

[15] Bill Ashcroft, *Caliban's Voice* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

[16] Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, 61-62.

Bill Ashcroft

Grammatiche dell'appropriazione*

Tendiamo spesso a credere che *siamo* la lingua che parliamo, che essa risieda in noi e noi in lei, e che la lingua costituisca ciò che Martin Heidegger ha definito "la casa dell'Essere".[1] Ovviamente questo accade perché la lingua ci presenta un mondo ben identificabile, ci introduce all'interno di una famiglia, fornendoci concetti basilari come 'io', 'noi' e 'loro'. È la lingua che ci identifica, ci annuncia e sembra perfino definirci e circoscrivere lo spazio stesso dell'essere. La lingua che parliamo non è solo *una* lingua, come afferma Edgar Thompson, essa "è la nostra lingua, la lingua degli esseri umani".[2]

Questo spiega perché la questione della lingua rapportata al colonialismo, e, di conseguenza, alla scrittura post-coloniale sia stata così fortemente dibattuta. Il vincolo che lega le/i parlanti alla propria lingua e il timore che essa venga soppressa o dominata vale per tutte le lingue e le società, ma nelle società post-coloniali la lingua è stata il fulcro di una vera e propria lotta. Centrale, in questa lotta, è il ruolo che la lingua occupa nel processo di costruzione dell'identità. Viviamo in un mondo globalizzato e pertanto siamo tutte/i consapevoli del fatto che questioni di potere e identità siano connesse alla lingua. Ma il successo delle scrittrici e degli scrittori post-coloniali costituisce un esempio lampante dell'esistenza di una *agency* che le popolazioni assoggettate detengono e che è inscritta nell'appropriazione stessa della lingua. E proprio la loro esperienza può offrire una speranza alle comunità locali in un mondo sempre più globalizzato, poiché la scrittura post-coloniale dimostra, fondamentalmente, che l'identità culturale non è *parte integrante* della lingua ma è *prodotta*, così come l'io, dalle e dai parlanti. L'implicazione più affascinante di questo discorso è che né la produzione culturale né la produzione dell'identità sono confinate ad una singola lingua.

L'impatto della lingua del colonizzatore sul soggetto è ben rappresentato in *The Tempest* (*La tempesta*), l'ultima opera di Shakespeare, nella scena in cui, in seguito a un diverbio, Prospero bandisce Calibano dall'isola. Quando il mostro minaccia di invadere l'isola di Prospero con la sua progenie meticcia ("to people the isle with Calibans"; I: ii 351-352), Miranda, la figlia di Prospero, gli risponde con un discorso che definisce la relazione coloniale tra i due personaggi. Calibano è uno schiavo "abominevole", "selvaggio", "inumano" e "vile". La lingua di Miranda ha il potere di costruire Calibano, un potere che riflette il controllo materiale che Prospero ha sul corpo, sulle sue azioni e sul suo destino.

Il dramma è stato spesso letto come un'allegoria della relazione coloniale e, in particolare, del modo in cui la lingua può costruire, imprigionare e definire la/il subalterna/o. La risposta di Calibano all'attacco di Miranda è tra le più memorabili nella storia della letteratura e incarna lo sdegno con cui molte popolazioni colonizzate hanno risposto a secoli di controllo linguistico e politico: "You taught me

* Questa lezione è stata orginariamente tenuta presso l'Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale" (16 giugno 2011).

[1] Martin Heidegger, *Brief über den Humanismus* [*Lettera sull'umanesimo*], in *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit* [*La dottrina di Platone sulla verità*] (Bern, 1947), trad. it. di F. Volpi, *Segnavia* (Milano: Adelphi, 1987), 267-269.

[2] Edgar Thompson and E. C. Hughes, eds., *Race: Individual and Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1958). Laddove si fa riferimento ad una fonte inglese, la traduzione è mia [N.d.T.]

language; and my profit on't/ Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you/ For learning me your language" (I: ii 364-66). Non c'è da meravigliarsi se Calibano rifiuta la lingua di Prospero: essa, alla stregua del mantello del mago, serve a Prospero per assoggettare il mostro al suo potere, e, infatti, fa parte delle sue arti magiche. Ma se consideriamo Calibano il prototipo del soggetto coloniale, l'uso che egli fa della lingua di Prospero va ben oltre la maledizione.

Lo spazio fisico e culturale 'tra' Miranda e Calibano, uno spazio temporale, geografico e culturale che sembra incolmabile, è, ironicamente, lo spazio "*inter-medio*"[3] in cui risiede la lingua. Bhabha definisce questo spazio il terzo spazio dell'enunciazione, ed è da questo spazio contraddittorio e ambivalente che emerge l'identità culturale. È uno spazio, questo, che rende insostenibili la purezza e le gerarchie culturali così care al discorso imperiale. Tale spazio è transculturale, una 'zona di contatto', l'eccesso della soggettività 'fissa', ed è anche il luogo in cui l'identità culturale si sviluppa. È preminentemente lo spazio della lingua. È lo spazio post-coloniale della trasformazione. La resistenza e le trasformazioni che avvengono attraverso l'uso della lingua postcoloniale mettono in evidenza che ogni lingua occupa uno spazio interstiziale, ma la più esemplificativa tra tutte è l'inglese appropriato dalle popolazioni delle ex colonie. Le popolazioni colonizzate che hanno trasformato l'inglese, lungi dall'essere intrappolate come Calibano in una prigione linguistica, hanno fatto della lingua un veicolo di liberazione, di auto-rappresentazione e di consolidamento del proprio potere.

Due scrittori africani anglofoni, il keniano Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o e il nigeriano Chinua Achebe hanno dibattuto più ampiamente, spesso e in maniera proficua rispetto ad altre scrittrici e altri scrittori post-coloniali sui pro e i contro dell'uso della lingua coloniale. In questo dibattito, spiccano alcuni interrogativi fondamentali: le scrittrici e gli scrittori che continuano a scrivere usando la lingua del colonizzatore sono 'colonizzate/i' o possono appropriarsi della lingua e farne uno strumento assoggettato ai propri scopi? La letteratura in una lingua come l'inglese privilegia valori culturali occidentali, e con essi tutta la storia dell'oppressione e del controllo coloniale? Una letteratura di questo tipo può usare l'inglese come uno strumento per rappresentare un mondo non occidentale e per registrare la resistenza ad una visione coloniale del mondo? Qualunque comunicazione nella lingua imperiale imprigiona il soggetto in un discorso dominante?

Sebbene per qualcuno potrebbe essere motivo di sorpresa, la lingua di per sé occupa uno spazio 'tra' le identità. Questo 'spazio del tra' è uno spazio di attraversamento che raramente rientra in discorsi sulla nazione o sulla lingua, poiché sembra che l'identità nazionale o culturale lasci poco spazio all'*intermedialità*. Ma è all'interno di questo spazio che le persone vivono e parlano. Dire che la lingua occupa tale spazio interstiziale può sembrare cosa drastica ed estrema poiché l'identità culturale è così legata alla lingua che per la maggior parte delle e dei parlanti la lingua deve per forza essere un discorso stabile con cui garantire la certezza ontologica. La 'mia' lingua costituisce l'ingresso ad un mondo di cui ho un'esperienza articolata ed è la lingua attraverso la quale sono entrato a far parte di una famiglia, di una

[3] Homi Bhabha, *I luoghi della cultura*, trad. it. di Antonio Perri (Roma: Meltemi, 2001), 216.

comunità e di una nazione. Io sono a tutti gli effetti la mia lingua. Tuttavia la mia lingua può essere utilizzata da qualcuno diverso da me e che non provenga dalla mia famiglia o dalla mia cultura. In che modo, allora, la lingua che parlo identifica la mia differenza?

La situazione diventa estremamente complessa quando si tratta di una lingua coloniale. Ngũgĩ chiarisce la sua posizione nel saggio "Towards a National Culture" in cui elenca quattro obiezioni generali all'uso dell'inglese: (1) la lingua coloniale diventa una 'provincia' di quella elitaria, finendo così per riprodurre distinzioni coloniali di classe; (2) la lingua incarna il pensiero e i valori di una data cultura; (3) imparare una lingua coloniale provoca l'alienazione del parlante rispetto ai valori della lingua madre e a quelli delle masse (che per Ngũgĩ coincidono); (4) la lingua nazionale non dovrebbe esistere a discapito delle lingue regionali, le quali possono, invece, contribuire all'unità nazionale "in contesti economici e politici socialisti".[4] Oggi, queste obiezioni sono da ricondurre, per vari aspetti, all'uso di una lingua globale.

[4] Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo, "Towards a National Culture", in *Homecoming* (London: HEB, 1972).

L'inglese è stato uno strumento di dominazione, ma è vero che chi usa l'inglese in contesti post-coloniali resta uno schiavo di questa lingua, dal momento che essa è stata innanzitutto utilizzata per assoggettare? "Chi tra noi ha ereditato l'inglese", scrive Achebe,

> potrebbe non essere nella condizione di apprezzarne il valore. Tutti noi potremmo continuare a non tollerare questa lingua perché ci è giunta come parte di un pacchetto che includeva molti altri elementi di dubbio valore, nonché l'atrocità dell'arroganza razziale e del pregiudizio che possono ancora essere di grande impatto. Tuttavia, non bisogna generalizzare.[5]

[5] Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (London: Heinemann, 1975), 58.

La posizione della maggior parte delle scrittrici e degli scrittori africani è pragmatica quanto quella di Achebe. I retaggi del colonialismo hanno costantemente bisogno di essere affrontati ma, paradossalmente, il modo migliore per farlo è attraverso il ricorso ad alcuni degli strumenti sottratti ai colonizzatori. Mi occuperò, qui, solo dell'obiezione principale sollevata da Ngũgĩ, ovvero che la lingua incarna il pensiero e i valori di una certa cultura. In *Decolonizing The Mind*, Ngũgĩ afferma che qualunque lingua "la lingua, qualunque lingua, ha una doppia natura poiché è sia un mezzo di comunicazione che un veicolo culturale".[6] Quanto all'inglese, "è ampiamente usato come mezzo di comunicazione in molti paesi, ma non porta con sé il peso di tutte quelle culture né di quelle storie".[7] Tale questione è divenuta globale poiché oggi potenzialmente tutte le società si imbattono nella lingua inglese. Le domande cruciali, ora, sono queste: "in che modo una lingua 'porta' il peso di una cultura? È veramente impossibile per una lingua 'portare' il peso di una cultura diversa da quella da cui è emersa?" Ovviamente le risposte dipendono dal senso che attribuiamo al termine 'portare'. Chinua Achebe sostiene che ciò sia possibile: "Sento che l'inglese sarà in grado di portare il peso della mia esperienza africana, ma dovrà essere una nuova lingua inglese, ancora in piena comunione con le sue origini ancestrali ma alterata dal nuovo contesto africano".[8]

[6] Ngũgĩ wa Thiongo, *Decolonizing the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Curry, 1981), 13.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, 62.

È chiaro che Ngũgĩ e Achebe hanno un'idea diversa del concetto di 'portare', e da ciò derivano alcune delle problematiche di questo dibattito, poiché in molti credono che 'portare' non significhi solamente 'portare', ma 'incarnare'. Il mito secondo il quale la lingua incarna l'essenza di una cultura è al centro di questo conflitto. Pertanto la lingua inglese, seppure portata altrove, ad esempio in un paese straniero o all'interno di una cultura colonizzata, non sarà mai completamente 'autentica'. Se considerassimo 'autentica' la lingua che in qualche modo incarna una data specificità culturale, allora la lingua inglese sarebbe inappropriata allo sviluppo di una cultura che non sia quella britannica.

Ma se consideriamo la questione da un altro punto di vista e, cioè, ci domandiamo cosa c'è di esclusivamente inglese nella lingua inglese, dobbiamo fare i conti con un mosaico di culture e lingue come la lingua sassone, celtica, normanna, francese e latina. Quando Samuel Johnson tentò di fissare una volta e per sempre la lingua inglese in un dizionario, si rese conto che lo sforzo era inutile e che "perseguire la perfezione equivaleva a inseguire il sole, cosa che facevano i primi abitanti di Arcadia, i quali raggiungevano la collina dove a loro pareva che il sole si fosse fermato per poi accorgersi che li separava da lui sempre la stessa distanza".[9]

Due dei miti più persistenti nella totalità dei contesti post-coloniali consistono nell'idea che la lingua incarni l'essenza della cultura, e, di conseguenza, che questa essenza non possa essere trasmessa in un'altra lingua. A questo punto la domanda da porre è la seguente: è davvero impossibile comunicare i segni della differenza culturale in un'altra lingua? Se questi segni comunicano una differenza, invece che un'essenza, la risposta, ovviamente, è negativa. Difatti, l'esistenza stessa di un campo così dinamico come le letterature post-coloniali, nega da principio questa possibilità. Le pratiche di appropriazione di una lingua possono accogliere varie forme di differenza. L'idea di una relazione autentica tra una certa lingua e una certa cultura è un concetto politico e, come tale, può risultare un essenzialismo strategico molto utile, cosa che Gayatri Spivak suggerisce, ma che rischia di imprigionare le scrittrici e gli scrittori nella convinzione di non saper usare la lingua in maniera 'autentica'.

All'affermazione secondo la quale le scrittrici e gli scrittori africani non svilupperanno mai a pieno il loro potenziale creativo finché non scriveranno nelle lingue africane, Chinua Achebe risponde ribadendo che la specificità culturale di una lingua dipende dalle intenzioni di chi la usa. Alla domanda 'un/a africano/a potrà mai essere in grado di imparare l'inglese così bene da utilizzarlo efficacemente nella scrittura creativa?', Achebe risponde positivamente. Ma il segreto di cui si serve tale tipo di scrittrice/scrittore è una sana indifferenza verso le tradizioni e le norme linguistiche dell'inglese. Tutte le scrittrici e gli scrittori posseggono un intuito creativo circa le possibilità della lingua, ma chi scrive da una prospettiva post-coloniale ha anche un'altra lingua e un'altra tradizione linguistica da cui attingere. Alla domanda: 'chi scrive può usare l'inglese come se fosse la propria lingua materna?', la risposta di Achebe è: 'Spero di no!'. L'affermazione di Achebe vale oggi come allora. L'appropriazione dell'inglese da parte delle scrittrici e degli scrittori post-coloniali non è soltanto possibile ma estremamente efficace ed arricchisce

[9] Samuel Johnson, "Observations on the Present State of Affairs (1756)", in Donald Green, ed., *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, vol. 10 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 188, 186.

la lingua. Le grammatiche di tali pratiche di appropriazione possono essere molto indisciplinate, ma, per Achebe, "il prezzo che una lingua globale deve essere pronta a pagare è la sottomissione agli svariati usi che se ne possono fare".[10]

In *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngũgĩ intende spostare l'attenzione sulle ramificazioni politiche che derivano dall'uso di una lingua coloniale, ma esiste un'intrinseca contraddizione tra una posizione politica come questa, che ribadisce la capacità del/la parlante di scegliere, e una posizione che vede la/il parlante incapace di evitare la visione del mondo che la lingua sembra veicolare.[11] In altre parole, affermare che la lingua coloniale inculchi nel soggetto, in maniera incontrovertibile, una certa concettualizzazione del mondo equivale ad accettare, di conseguenza, che il soggetto sia passivo o impotente. Questo accade quando Ngũgĩ dice che nelle società africane colonizzate è stata la lingua a schiavizzare le culture, i valori e le menti delle persone: sostenere che chi usa la lingua coloniale ha una mente 'colonizzata' equivale ad accettare l'idea che il soggetto non abbia alcuna *agency*, cosa che tutto il discorso post-coloniale rifiuta.

Anzi, chiunque faccia cultura ha sempre riconosciuto l'utilità degli strumenti a propria disposizione. Anche laddove le scrittrici e gli scrittori hanno usato le lingue indigene, l'influenza delle tradizioni letterarie inglesi è sempre stata ovvia; ad esempio, romanzi e testi teatrali in lingua wolof, yoruba e gikuyu in Africa, o bengali, kannada e malayalam in India, hanno richiesto, in ciascun caso, la reinvenzione di una *audience*, e la creazione di un pubblico di lettrici e lettori che consumassero opere letterarie come mai ne erano state scritte in quelle lingue. Ngũgĩ si dichiara felice di poter utilizzare tutte le risorse a disposizione – radio, televisione, film, scuole, università, movimenti giovanili e cooperative agrarie – per dare vita ad un altro tipo di società. Ma la lingua dev'essere diversa perché essa incarna misteriosamente i processi di pensiero, i valori e la storia di una cultura.

A proposito del legame tra lingua e cultura, è importante chiedersi se la cultura può essere individuata in una certa gamma di credenze, valori e pratiche, come sostiene Ngũgĩ, oppure se, di fatto, le culture vivono un continuo processo di cambiamento e trasformazione. Achebe sintetizza cosa intende con questa capacità di cambiamento nell'espressione "abbiamo vissuto al crocevia delle culture":[12] i crocevia, però, sono potenzialmente pericolosi "poiché, in questa lotta con gli spiriti a più teste, un uomo può rimetterci la vita, ma può anche essere fortunato e tornare dalla sua gente con la benedizione di una visione profetica".[13] Tuttavia, la metafora dei crocevia non rappresenta a pieno la misura in cui le culture possono essere cambiate dalle intersezioni con altre culture e lingue: esse non sono statiche, anzi, vivono un costante processo di interazione e cambiamento. Le culture si incontrano in una zona di contatto dove si cambiano reciprocamente. È in questo terzo spazio, il terzo spazio della lingua, che la transculturalità delle letterature post-coloniali entra in scena. La transculturalità si attua attraverso processi di appropriazione e trasformazione che rendono il terzo spazio uno spazio tanto di resistenza quanto di condivisione.

[10] Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, 61.

[11] Ngũgĩ, *Decolonizing the Mind*, 32.

[12] Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, 65.

[13] Ibid.

L'idea della lingua come una sorta di terzo spazio, un veicolo che è per natura interstiziale e intermedio, indica che la lingua è sempre una traduzione. Tale affermazione risulta più chiara se consideriamo la scrittura bilingue come una forma di traduzione interna. Salman Rushdie scrive: "L'etimologia del termine 'traduzione' deriva dal latino 'transducere' e poiché siamo stati tutti 'trasferiti' da un luogo all'altro del mondo, siamo uomini 'tradotti'. È opinione comune che qualcosa vada sempre perso in traduzione; io, invece, resto ostinatamente legato all'idea che ci sia anche qualcosa da guadagnare".[14] Che se ne parli in termini di perdita o di guadagno, l'atto stesso del tradurre è un processo dinamico e dialogico.

[14] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-91* (London: Granta, 1991), 17.

Strategie di trasformazione

Le strategie con cui la lingua coloniale viene trasformata sono estremamente varie. Oltre alla glossa del testo, sia attraverso inserzioni parentetiche che parafrasi esplicative, altri espedienti sono: l'uso di parole non tradotte; la fusione sintattica, in cui la prosa inglese è strutturata secondo le norme della prima lingua; i neologismi, nuove forme lessicali inglesi che vengono investite delle esigenze semantiche e morfologiche della lingua materna; l'inserimento, all'interno del testo, di elementi lessicali non tradotti e di prosa etno-ritmica con l'intento di ricostruire un discorso in inglese che risenta, però, del ritmo e delle intessiture della prima lingua; infine la trascrizione di varianti dialettali e linguistiche di svariati altri tipi afferenti a comunità diglossiche, polidialettiche o monolingue. In *Caliban's Voice* discuto più ampiamente di questo tipo di strategie di trasformazione. [15]

[15] Bill Ashcroft, *Caliban's Voice* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

Se osserviamo da vicino queste strategie linguistiche interculturali e i commenti che le accompagnano, noteremo che esse sono state utilizzate per *riprodurre* la cultura attraverso un processo di incarnazione metaforica. Molte scrittrici e molti scrittori credono, evidentemente, che in questo modo essi possano mantenere fede alle loro culture e le *trasportino* in un nuovo codice. Dunque essi ritengono che i termini non tradotti, i suoni e le intessiture linguistiche detengano il potere della cultura che significano attraverso un processo di unione ontologica. Tali usi della lingua sono *metonimici*. Il *code-switching*, la prosa etno-ritmica, la resistenza alla traduzione di alcune parole, sono tutte strategie che hanno una funzione culturale importante, non perché incarnino la lingua rappresentandone l'identità culturale, ma perché ne inscrivono la differenza e stabiliscono quello che potremmo definire un '*gap* metonimico', vale a dire un senso di distanza che deriva dall'uso di alcune strategie linguistiche. È come se la scrittrice o lo scrittore stesse effettivamente dicendo 'sto usando la vostra lingua così potrete capire il mio mondo, ma dall'uso diverso che ne faccio capirete anche che non potete farne parte'. In questo modo le discrepanze linguistiche nel testo letterario detengono una funzione metonimica: esse occupano a pieno e apertamente lo spazio di contestazione della traduzione.

Infine, la letteratura rivela che nonostante 'la lingua parli', poiché possiamo dire soltanto ciò che le norme linguistiche ci permettono, la creatività di chi parla ai limiti di quelle norme, la capacità di appropriazione e trasformazione della lingua

dominante attraverso l'ibridazione con la grammatica e la sintassi di una lingua vernacolare, è una caratteristica della scrittura post-coloniale. Perché questo è rilevante? Perché il compito dei processi di decolonizzazione non si è esaurito, ma è in continua reinvenzione, così come il potere neocoloniale si trasforma costantemente assumendo le forme del neoliberalismo e del neoconservatorismo: abbiamo ancora bisogno di affrontare l'imperialismo, nonostante la globalizzazione non ne costituisca una mera estensione, e il messaggio che ci arriva dalla scrittura post-coloniale, attraverso l'uso che le scrittrici e gli scrittori fanno della lingua imperiale, è che non dobbiamo essere delle vittime, ma possiamo interpolare i discorsi che ci vittimizzano e trasformarli per sempre.

Traduzione di **Anna Mongibello**

Maurizio Calbi, *Spectral Shakespeares: Media Adaptations in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 252 pp. ISBN 978-0-230-33875-3

Reviewed by **Aureliana Natale**

Maurizio Calbi's *Spectral Shakespeares: Media Adaptations in the Twenty-First Century*, engaging with the issue of the contemporary cultural practice of recycling the classics over and over again, introduces the reader to the state-of-the-art of Shakespearean Media Studies through the analysis of some recent multimedia and multicultural experimental re-creations. Drawing not only on adaptation studies and media theory but also, and maybe most prominently, on some of Jacques Derrida's theoretical categories, this book contributes to the redefinition of adaptation as a fragmented, unfinished and never-ending process of transaction and negotiation. A process which nevertheless ends up forging a sort of omni-pervasive Shakespearean presence, however disseminated and fissured, on our contemporary mediascapes. As Calbi points out, transforming the source plays in a myriad of different ways, this interminable practice of reshaping the original to shape the new, turns Shakespeare's textual presence into a spectral one, haunting the new versions of his masterpieces. Taking his cue from the Derridean concept of 'hauntology', Calbi's reflection starts from *Specters of Marx* and makes use of Derridean thinking as a key to open the Shakespearean text in a radical way. Deconstructionist theory proves to be at the base of his approach. Borrowing from the French philosopher himself the definition of the "Thing Shakespeare" as a "Spirit" that is "more than one, no more one" (1), Calbi conceives of Shakespearean presence in terms of a sort of latent immanence floating upon the contemporary cultural scenario: a proliferating signifier deprived of any possible stable meaning.

Calbi searches the contemporary mediascape sifting out a list of multicultural works, including non-English language films and performances. A Shakespearean new canon in the plural goes from Kristian Levring's *The King Is Alive* (2000), where a group of lost tourists tries to fight desperation and gain survival by performing *King Lear*, to the original and provocative Twitter version of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Such Tweet Sorrow* (2010).[1] Here Twitter creates a space to participate in Shakespeare's text: in the social media sphere, the audience intervene not as simple followers, but they also have the possibility of stepping in the twitted event, creating groups as #*savemercutio* or #*mercutiogroupies* intent upon a radical retelling of the classic.

Calbi's analysis includes also: Alexander Abela's *Souli* (2004), a postcolonial version of *Othello* regarding the practice of storytelling and the "rhetoric of silence" (63); Roberta Torre's *Sud Side Stori* (2000), an Italian adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* set in Palermo and based on the love story between Toni Giulietto, a rock singer,

[1] See also Linda Jennifer Buono's review of *Such Tweet Sorrow* in *Anglistica AION*, 15.2 (2011), 97-100.

and a Nigerian prostitute, Romea Wacoumbo; Alexander Fodor's "iconoclastic and referential" (112) *Hamlet*, with Polonio transforming into Polonia, a *noir femme fatale*, who works as a pusher for her drug addicted younger sister Ophelia. Fodor's film is an example of Shakespeare "in the extreme" (99), a game of re-writing from a "Shakepearecentric" to a "Shakespeareccentric" perspective (110). In addition Calbi suggests three versions of *Macbeth* by respectively Klaus Knoesel (*Rave Macbeth,* 2001), Billy Morrissette (*Scotland PA*, 2001), and Peter Moffat (*BBC Shakespeare Retold Macbeth*, 2005). In the analysis of the last two *Macbeth* adaptations (*Scotland, PA* and the *BBC Shakespeare Retold Macbeth)* Calbi draws on the idea of ghostly immanence and repetition. Respectively a filmic and TV production, they share with the original the basic plot and some motives (sense of guilt, predictions, apparitions), but one is set in a Café being transformed into a restaurant in rural Pennsylvania and the other in a Three Stars Restaurant in Glasgow. In both versions, verging on grotesque, Macbeth kills Duncan, who is in both versions the owner of the restaurant where Macbeth works. As a consequence the killer becomes not only the head-chief, but also the head-*chef* of the kitchen. But the emphasis seems in both cases to be upon repetition and murder as a condition claiming more bloody deeds. As Calbi writes:

> Both … respond to the 'original' by adopting a compulsive spiral-like logic of reiteration of their own, a logic of "strange things … which must be acted, here they may be scanned" but inexorably "return/ To plague th'inventor". More specifically, they implement a logic of repeated murderous deeds that fail to be effective as acts of full incorporation, and therefore produce (bodily) remainders that relentlessly come back to haunt. (32)

In his afterlife Shakespeare and his disseminated phantoms have become a, maybe hardly recognizable, but constant presence in global cultural networks. On the web 2.0 he circulates everywhere. Shakespeare, as an infinite source, offers words, themes, stories, and the newness of the present is based on the production of new meaning formations. As a result there is the destruction (and the deconstruction) of the spatio-temporal boundaries between old and new that opens the gate to the spectro-textuality and spectro-mediality of the Bard's haunting. Calbi in his introduction gives examples like the immense *Designing Shakespeare*: *Audio Visual Archive* that collects the Bard's adaptations between 1960 and 2000, but another example could be the web site *Global Shakespeare* where plays are broadcasted from all around the world, in hundreds of different languages.

Hence, *Spectral Shakespeares* is a testimony of the infinite and multiform process of re-shaping Shakespearean imaginary through media which produces, as a consequence, the killing of his authority and his coming back in new garments, destroying a myth while perpetuating its glorification at the same time. In its focus on the intersections between the multicultural and the multimodal Calbi's book looms large as an original contribution not only to adaptation studies but to Shakespearean studies tout court.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Bono, Paola and Bia Sarasini, eds., *Epiche. Altre imprese, altre narrazioni* (Roma: Iacobellieditore, 2013), 239 pp.
ISBN 978-88-625-2239-7
EUR 14,90

Buonauro, Antonietta, *Trauma, cinema e media. Immaginari catastrofici e cultura visuale del nuovo millennio* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2014), 190 pp.
ISBN 978-88-787-0921-8
EUR 16,00

Gilsenan Nordin, Irene, Julie Hansen, and Carmela Zamorano Llena, eds., *Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2013), 284 pp.
ISBN 978-90-420-3735-9
EUR 65,00

Korkka, Janne, *Ethical Encounters: Spaces and Selves in the Writings of Rudy Wiebe* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2013), ix+ 313 pp.
ISBN 978-90-420-3725-0
EUR 70,00

Lindfors, Bernth and Geoffrey V. Davis, eds, *African Literatures and Beyond: A Florilegium* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2013), 426 pp.
ISBN 978-90-420-3738-0
EUR 92,00

Monegato, Emanuele, *Anarchici (su carta). Narrazioni anarchiche dalla cultura inglese tardo-vittoriana alla contemporaneità* (Assago, MI: Libraccio Editore, 2014), 144 pp.
ISBN 978-88-977-4867-0
EUR 15,50

Munos, Delphine, *After Melancholia: A Reappraisal of Second-Generation Diasporic Subjectivity in the Work of Jhumpa Lahiri* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2013), 237 pp.
ISBN 978-90-420-3740-3
EUR 60,00

Sarnelli, Laura, *La donna fantasma. Scritture e riscritture del gotico inglese* (Roma: Iacobellieditore, 2013) 154 pp.
ISBN 978-88-625-2193-2
EUR 14,90

Walcott, Derek, *The Journeyman Years, Volume 2: Performing Arts. Occasional Prose 1957-1974*, edited by Christopher Balme and Gordon Collier (Amsterdam and New York: 2013), 542 pp.
ISBN 978-90-420-3757
EUR 120

Walcott, Derek, *The Journeyman Years: Occasional Prose 1957-1974. Volume 1: Culture, Society, Literature, and Art*, edited by Gordon Collier (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2013), 572 pp.
ISBN 978-90-420-3756-4
EUR 125

Abstracts

Jan Alber and Natalie Churn

Creative Indigenous Self-Representation in Humorous Australian Popular Culture as a Vital Communication Channel for Refiguring Public Opinion

Many excellent novels and films have brought much-needed public attention to Indigenous social justice in Australia. Yet unhelpful representations in the mass media, as well as controversial policies affecting Indigenous Australians, have often had more negative than positive consequences for Indigenous rights and life quality over the past few decades. This article highlights the vital importance of popular culture in Australia for providing a channel through which postcolonial social justice issues such as poverty and racism can be explored in ways that creatively mobilise intensely human experiences such as laughter, understanding and surprise in order to destabilise old prejudices and construct new relationships between the settler culture and Indigenous Australians. We use examples from popular culture created by Indigenous Australians, such as the Chooky Dancers' popular YouTube video *Zorba the Greek Yolngu Style* and the internationally-selling mockumentary *Bush Mechanics*, in order to argue that such texts appropriate the space of popular media in order to reconfigure the perspectives through which Indigenous people are represented in the popular mind. More specifically, we focus on the creative use of humour and its various functions in present-day Australia, as well as the notions of Australian humour and Indigenous humour themselves, in order to consider how laughter provides unique openings in popular culture for bringing about positive social change. Creative cultural production that moves in the spheres of self-representation in popular Australian culture can have even more power than government policies for the way in which it makes use of popular channels of communication, empathetic human emotions, and elements such as humour that specialise in reconfiguring perspectives and difference to build new relationships in the public eye and present new solutions to social justice issues.

Esterino Adami

Post-colonial Creativity in Language and Cultural Constructions: Railway Discourse in South Asian Englishes

This paper investigates the effects of post-colonial creativity on language use, especially at lexico-morphological and metaphorical levels, by focusing on railway discourse in South Asian Englishes, with special reference to Indian English and Pakistani English. Rather than merely adopting the constraints of technical language, the lexis of railway discourse constitutes a significant linguistic domain, in which constructions and devices emerge from various productive processes including vocabulary fossilisation (e.g. obsolete items derived from Victorian English), lexical

shift (the extension of standard meaning) and semantic expansion (via borrowing or code-mixing with reference to local languages). The paper draws on both published sources as well as authentic materials (the websites of the Indian and Pakistani railway companies). Following Yamuna Kachru and Larry Smith's contention that literary works in English "are a valuable source of sociocultural knowledge not easily recoverable from grammars, dictionaries and textbooks", I shall also expand my scope and briefly discuss the phenomenon of post-colonial creativity for railway discourse in literary texts as well, given the paramount importance and sociocultural connotations of the train in various South Asian narrative contexts.

Bill Ashcroft
Grammars of Creations

This is the text of a lecture given given at the University of Naples "L'Orientale" on June 16, 2011.

Manuela Coppola
Spelling out Resistance: Dub Poetry and Typographic Creativity

Since the 1960s, the emergent textualization of Jamaican Creole through music, folklore and 'dialect verse', and the concurrent process of cultural nation-building stemming from independence in 1962, has called for a debate on the 'Jamaican vernacular' and its standardisation, focusing in particular on the political implications of orthography. This paper will explore the issue of standardization of written Creole in Jamaica and in the UK, and will investigate how different spelling choices are intended to signal symbolic difference. In particular, it will focus on dub poetry as an interesting area of research on the textualization of Jamaican and British Creole, referring to the ideological implications embedded in its written re-production in orality-related texts like performance poems.

While dub poets such as Linton Kwesi Johnson and Jean Breeze recognize the material conditions which bring them to adopt a system more easily acceptable for an audience whose first literacy is English, the contention of this paper is that they also perform powerful 'creative interventions' on the conventional orthographic system. By strengthening a sense of identity which resists any pressure for standardization, they promote creativity while freely using and deliberately modifying the colonial orthographic standard. Equally aware of the danger of proclaiming a supposed 'standard Creole', they also shun the risks of turning textualization into a tool for fixing the written conventions of Creole. As if to resist any claim of authenticity or 'correctness', dub poets thus constantly displace their text and their voice, moving away from the dangers of standardization like clever tricksters.

Alexander Fyfe

Generic Discontinuity and the Aesthetics of Postcolonial Fiction

This article develops Fredric Jameson's concept of generic discontinuity in the context of late twentieth century postcolonial literature. The aim is to show that established generic registers are employed in innovative and diverse ways by three major postcolonial authors for their own projects. Jameson defines generic discontinuity as the use of different, and often opposed, generic registers within a single work of literature. I examine how three canonical postcolonial authors create their own aesthetics by combining and subverting generic registers. The texts have been chosen for their heterogeneity in provenance and form; they evidence vastly diverse uses of genre in three very different postcolonial situations. Attention will be paid throughout to the origins of the generic paradigms in each of the texts. Not only are traditionally Western genres used discontinuously, but also those that have come to be associated with postcolonial literature. It is the textual manifestations of these discontinuities that demonstrate the creative diversity of postcolonial fiction, particularly in the ways that the ideological baggage of a particular generic mode is transformed for the author's own aesthetic. A materialist study of the operation of genre in postcolonial texts is essential, since it allows us to see exactly how writers adapt the inherited literary tools of colonialism, whether in the diaspora or in the postcolony.

Chandani Lokuge

Sinhalese Literary and Cultural Aesthetics: Martin Wickramasinghe's Novels *Gamperaliya* and *Viragaya*

This paper will introduce the unique aesthetics of Sri Lankan (Sinhalese) literary and cultural traditions through an examination of the fiction of the literary critic and novelist, Martin Wickramasinghe. Wickramasinghe published t he first realist novels in Sinhala during the mid-twentieth century when, liberating itself from British imperialist rule, Sri Lanka was rejuvenating its national literature and culture as vital aspects of national identity. Due to the significance of themes embedded in Buddhism and village culture (long suppressed by centuries of European colonization) and sophistication of technique, Wickramasinghe is recognized in Sri Lanka as the most important Sinhalese novelist to date. While he appropriated the form and structure of the Western novel, returning to the pre-modern Sinhala poetic tradition Wickramasinghe fictionalized the aesthetics of Sinhalese Buddhist social and cultural traditions. This paper offers a reading of his seminal novels, *Gamperaliya* (1944) and *Viragaya* (1956). By reading this culture-specific literature against the backdrop of its own poetics, this paper will contribute to the transcultural and transnational space of world literatures written in languages other than English.

Rashmila Maiti

"Utterly Butterly": Language and Culture in Indian Advertisements

The aesthetics, sheer intelligence, creativity and universality of advertisements make them an extremely appealing and attractive genre to study. There have been numerous studies on advertisements in different post-colonial countries and the aesthetics behind them. However, there hasn't been any substantial study dealing with contemporary advertisements the main. This paper will try to map out the universality (through language) of certain advertisements in post-colonial globalized India.

Anna Mongibello

Language has Memory: Cre(e)ativity and Transformation in Louise Halfe's *Bear Bones and Feathers*

"The prairie is full of bones. The bones stand and sing and I feel the weight of them as they guide my fingers on this page": in *Bear Bones and Feathers*, her first collection of poems, the Cree poet from Alberta (Canada) Louise Halfe attempts to rebuild a dialogue with the *Nokhomak* bones, that is her cultural memory, through the cre(e)ative transformation of English. Focusing on some of her poems, the paper aims at investigating the indigenization of "the enemy's language" through Halfe's Cree worldview, and the invention of a new language, haunted by the poet's linguistic memory.

Shondel Nero

Changing Englishes in the US and Caribbean: Paradoxes and Possibilities

In the United States and the Anglophone Caribbean, where English has been historically the dominant language, both the perception and reality of the changing nature of the language have been riddled with paradoxes. This article addresses the ways in which transnational practices between the US and the Caribbean, aided by geographic proximity, technology, social media, and of course linguistic creativity, have fueled changes in the definition, use, attitudes, and response towards Englishes in both locations, especially in schools. The paradoxes surrounding these changes include: English as at once monolithic and pluralistic; fiercely hybridized and standardized; and in the case of the Caribbean, Creole English simultaneously celebrated and denigrated. Furthermore, we see linguistic diversity increasingly celebrated in theory but English homogeneity required in practice in schools. It is suggested that such paradoxical changes offer rich possibilities for research and informed pedagogy.

Jan Alber is Associate Professor in the English Department at the University of Freiburg in Germany. He is the author of a critical monograph titled *Narrating the Prison* (2007) and the editor/co-editor of several other books such as *Stones of Law – Bricks of Shame: Narrating Imprisonment in the Victorian Age* (with Frank Lauterbach, 2009), *Postclassical Narratology: Approaches and Analyses* (with Monika Fludernik, 2010), and *Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology* (with Rüdiger Heinze, 2011). Alber has authored and co-authored articles that were published in such journals as *Dickens Studies Annual*, *Journal of Narrative Theory*, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, *Literature Compass*, *Narrative*, *Storyworlds*, *Style,* and *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*. In 2007, he received a research fellowship from the German Research Foundation to spend a year at Ohio State University doing work on the unnatural under the auspices of Project Narrative. In 2010, the Humboldt Foundation awarded him a Feodor Lynen Fellowship for Experienced Researchers to continue this research at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and the University of Maryland.

Esterino Adami is a Researcher in English Language and Translation at the University of Turin, Department of Humanities. He has published extensively on Anglophone cultures, post-colonial literatures, varieties of English (in particular South Asian Englishes), stylistics and sociolinguistics. His research interests also extend to the semiotics of comics, intercultural discourse and English-language education in Asia and Africa. He is the author of *Rushdie, Kureishi, Syal: Essays in Diaspora* (New Delhi 2006), and editor of *To a Scholar Sahab: Essays in Honour of Alessandro Monti*, with C. Rozzonelli (2011) and *Within and Across: Language and Construction of Shifting Identities in Post-Colonial Contexts*, with A. Martelli (2012). He is currently working on storytelling devices in diasporic drama and the Gibraltarian author Mark Sanchez.

Bill Ashcroft is Professor of English at the University of New South Wales, a founding exponent of post-colonial theory, co-author of *The Empire Writes Back* the first text to examine systematically a field that is now refer red to as "post-colonial studies". He is author and co-author of sixteen books and over 140 chapters and papers, variously translated into six languages.

Natalie Churn is co-editor of the volume *Movements in Time: Revolution, Social Justice and Times of Change* (2012), and is currently completing her PhD thesis on alternative concepts of time and their meaning for social justice issues as explored in Australian popular culture. Her research, which she has presented at conferences and in several upcoming articles, covers a range of issues, including the representation of refugees in Australian popular culture, links between Australian identity and populist concepts

of leisure time, and hip hop music in Aboriginal self-representation. Her two BA degrees were completed at the University of Western Australia, and she did her MA at Freiburg University.

Manuela Coppola holds a PhD in Anglophone Cultures and Literatures from the University of Naples "L'Orientale", where she currently lectures. Her main interests focus on gender studies, postcolonial literature and language varieties. Her latest publications are *L'isola madre. Maternità e memoria nella narrativa di Jean Rhys e Jamaica Kincaid* (2010) and *Crossovers: Language and Orality in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry* (2011). She is currently researching on contemporary women poets of the African diaspora.

Alex Fyfe is a PhD student in Comparative Literature at The Pennsylvania State University. He holds degrees from University College London and the University of Warwick. His research focuses on materialist questions within postcolonial studies, with a specific focus on African and Caribbean literatures. His other interests include the digital humanities, literary theory from the periphery and current debates around "World Literature".

Chandani Lokuge has published fourteen books including three novels and a book of short stories. Her fiction has been translated into Greek, French and Hindi. As editor of the *Oxford Classics Reissues* series, she has published 6 critical editions of Indian women's writing in English. Among special issues of journals that she has edited are *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* (with Elleke Boehmer, forthcoming), *Moving Worlds* (with Shirley Chew), *CRNLE Journal* and *New Literatures in English* (with Clive Probyn). She is Associate Professor in Literary Studies and Creative Writing at Monash University, Australia.

Rashmila Maiti is a doctoral student at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville USA. Her research interests include postcolonial varieties of English, post-colonial theory, popular culture, magic realism, children's litearture, cultural studies, South Asian literature, and gender studies.

Anna Mongibello holds a PhD from the University of Naples "L'Orientale". She has published papers in academic journals and a monograph that focuses on the connection between language, land, cultural memory and identity in the works by some contemporary Indigenous women writers from Canada. Her main research interests include Indigenous Studies, translation, language variation and change, gender and memory.

Aureliana Natale is a PhD student in Comparative Literature at the University of Bologna/L'Aquila. She took her BA degree in French and English Languages, Literatures and Cultures, and her MA degree in Anglophone Literature and Cultures, at the University of Naples "L'Orientale", with a particular focus on post-colonial

theory. In 2012 she spent a research period in London, collecting materials for her university dissertation about trauma-studies theories applied to post-9/11 literary and theatrical productions. At the moment she's researching about performativity as a strategy to overcome traumatic experience. She has published three short critical pieces on *Lab/Or* and two of her reviews essays have been accepted by *Anglistica AION*.

Shondel Nero is Associate Professor and Program Director of Multilingual Multicultural Studies at New York University. She has authored three books and numerous articles on the education of speakers of Caribbean Creole English and other World Englishes. Her most recent book (with Dohra Ahmad) is entitled *Vernaculars in the Classroom: Paradoxes, Pedagogy, Possibilities* (forthcoming 2014).

Katherine E. Russo, PhD University of New South Wales (Sydney), is a Lecturer/ Researcher in English Language and Translation at the Università degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale". Her research focuses on Language Variation and Change, Audiovisual/Translation Studies, Media Discourse, Gender, Post-colonial and Whiteness Studies. She is the author of *Practices of Proximity: The Appropriation of English in Australian Indigenous Literature* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010) which won the ESSE Book Award for Junior Scholars in 2012, and of *Global English, Transnational Flows: Australia and New Zealand in Translation* (Tangram Edizioni Scientifiche, 2012). She is a member of the Board of the European Association for Studies of Australia and is a member the Management Committee of the European Programme - COST Action IS1101 "Climate change and migration: knowledge, law and policy, and theory".