HAUNTING THE TRADITION OF THE NOVEL:

GENERIC DOUBLE PLAY IN DIASPORIC FICTION

by

Shan Qiang He

B.A., Shanghai International Studies University, 1982

M.A., Shanghai International Studies University, 1985

M.A., Simon Fraser University, 1989

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© Shan Qiang He

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Name: Shan Qiang He

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Title of thesis: Haunting the Tradition of the Novel:

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Examining Committee:

Chair: Prof Paul Budra

Prof Paul Delany
Senior Supervisor

Prof Samuel Wong
Department of English

Prof Paul Matthew St Pierre
Department of English

Prof Gail Faurschou
School of Communication
Faculty of Applied Sciences

Prof Sneja Gunew
External Examiner
Department of English
University of Victoria

Date Approved: April 10, 1995

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Haunting the Tradition of the Novel: Generic Double Play in Diasporic Fiction

Author:_____
    (signature)

           SHAN QIANG HE
(name)

         April 13, 1995
(date)

Abstract

Haunting the Tradition of the Novel: Generic Double Play in Diasporic Fiction grows out of an interest in current theories of colonial and post-colonial discourse, especially the work of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, as well as in global mass migrations and the resulting mixture of cultures that has contributed to the dynamism of new literatures in English. The dilemma for minority literature written under the hegemony of Western culture lies in conflictual impulses around the problem of representation: how to represent the subaltern through generic conventions of the novel that are inevitably implicated in a history of racial and cultural oppression. The dissertation traces this dilemma to the origins of the English novel in the colonial scene of early European modernity, and views the question of representation as a function of literary genealogy and of literary institutions operating without a clear center of authority. It discusses a particular feature--"generic doubles"--in diasporic fiction that plays with novelistic convention in subtle acts of repetition subverted by the specter of difference.

More specifically, the project explores generic doubles in four diasporic novelists: Timothy Mo, George Lamming, Hualing Nieh and Salman Rushdie. Mo's "realist" novels *The Monkey King* and *Sour Sweet* are read into the tradition of the eighteenth century novel, amid the generic expectations of the *Bildungsroman*, adventure tales and the providential romance and their ideological implications within European modernity, thereby resulting in a kind of cultural aporia between tradition and assimilation, between European "originality" and Third World belatedness. Lamming's *The Emigrants* is read as an engagement with the vernacular feature in the tradition of the novel. The rise of English vernacular in the eighteenth-century is both democratic in appeal and nationalist in its political construction, a split all the more obvious when inherited by diasporic writers like Lamming who introduces Black dialects into the novel and problematizes its language-constructed, racialized subjectivity. The novel as a cultural product of European modernity

is interrogated by the Chinese diasporic woman writer Hualing Nieh in *Mulberry and Peach*, which, through post-modern schizophrenic linguistic play, explores the juncture between patriarchy and modernity that splits the Chinese woman's psyche. The excitement and danger of generic double play are attested to by Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* as the epitome of migrant, diasporic fiction. Rushdie's text consciously mixes styles and genres, and turns both realism and (post)modernism into objects for representation in an attempt to evoke the anti-systemic forces of the migrant communities whose voices are all too easily appropriated in the postmodern age of media manipulation. Turned into a media event itself, however, the text also shows the limitations and the danger in appropriating European avant-garde forms and postmodern techniques. Thus, while the dissertation argues for generic double play as a post-colonial strategy of subversion within the double bind of Caliban's appropriation of Prospero's language, the play itself needs to maintain a supplementary space haunted by the other.

Dedication

To Ping and Daniel

Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed to my writing of this dissertation. I want to express my gratitude to my advisory committee for their patient and valuable work, to Paul Delany for his sustaining and nurturing encouragement over many years, and to Samuel Wong for his challenging and stimulating proddings and questions. Malcolm Page suggested the initial reading list of diasporic writers. Seminars with Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak at the School of Criticism and Theory at Dartmouth College (1993) revolutionized my thinking about post-coloniality and diaspora. Intellectual discussions and moral support from my fellow graduate students Chris Bracken, Scott McFarlane, Karlyn Koh, and Glen Lowry proved an invaluable source of joy and discovery. I also want to thank the graduate program of the English Department for various supports, teaching assistantships and awards. Last but not least, my gratitude goes to my wife Ping for taking care of the whole family and giving me the time and leisure for this project over many years.

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Introduction

Edward Said's recent book, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), an overview of colonial and post-colonial discourses from the days of European colonialism and Western empire to the contemporary politics of cultural difference, ends with a section on "Movements and Migrations":

> As the struggle for independence produced new states and new boundaries, it also produced homeless wanderers, nomads, and vagrants, unassimilated to the emerging structures of institutional power, rejected by the established order for their intransigence and obdurate rebelliousness....
>
> [I]t is no exaggeration to say that liberation as an intellectual mission, born in the resistance and opposition to the confinements and ravages of imperialism, has now shifted from the settled, established, and domesticated dynamics of culture to its unhoused, decentered, and exilic energies, energies whose incarnation today is the migrant, and whose consciousness is that of the intellectual and artist in exile, the political figure between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages. (332)

Central to this emergent phenomenon is the post-colonial space "in between," the space of *différance* as a site of cultural exclusion as well as subaltern resistance through various subject positions. Such key terms as "exilic energies," "the migrant," "the political figure between ..." or "the anti-systematic movements" do not point to yet another institution; instead they are incarnated in the "in-between" figure: the migrant and the artist in exile. It is a humanism qualified by homelessness. If Said's *Orientalism* exposes the European subjection of the Oriental "other," the migrant's self-subjectivation does not return an unproblematic "humanized" subject. An "in-between" homelessness means the subject is always differing/deferred, though this subject does have a historical specificity in an age of mass migration and displacement, of minority cultural resistance and political alliance across different subaltern subject positions.[1]

Since the end of World War II and the beginning of decolonization, migration from poverty-stricken Third World countries to First World centres has become a global

phenomenon. Students go to world-famous universities to receive the first-rate "globally recognized" education often unavailable at home. Labourers go to work abroad to make a small fortune and finance a fresh start back home; or to find a new home in the metropolitan centre. Political refugees escape war and death in their home lands after a perilous voyage on the sea or years of uncertainty in the refugee camp. "Economic refugees" find that their adventure is centuries too late when borders are closed and the freedom to move is not a universal birthright.[2]

Despite differences in race, culture and historical context, I believe there is a common experience for migrants who move from Third World to First World, and consequently dwell in between both. What would link, say, the Turkish peasant family trying to cross the Swedish border in the movie *The Journey of Hope*, Gish Jen's Chinese student as illegal immigrant in the U.S. in her novel *Typical American*, West Indian workers in London and Toronto in the novels of George Lamming, Sam Selvon, V.S. Naipaul, Austen Clarke, and Joan Riley, the metropolitan elites and Indo-Pakistani migrant communities in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*? Their common perspective, I would suggest, is of Western culture seen from the other end of "civilization," the experience of cultural and psychological survival in a life of being othered, and the sense of uncertainty under the shadow of the dominant Western nation and culture. Their otherness is felt all the more, the closer they come to European culture as the most predominant form of hegemony in the world.[3]

This migrant experience in literature has been diffused among discussions of race and ethnicity, Third World literature, Commonwealth literature, national literatures of various former colonies, literature of exile, various postmodern and post-colonial criticisms, and so on, in an ironic reflection of the status of immigrants themselves in First World countries. Immigrants do not form a distinctive social group with strong political leverage, and the specificity of their experience has often been "melted" into other experiences, making their literature an unstable field, not to mention the institutional prejudice prioritizing the canon

over minority literature and theory. The crisscrossing of various subjects over the immigrant experience is partly due to the fluid nature of the word immigrant itself: movement through time and space double-marks "identity" as a necessary evil of naming. The same problem of naming occurs at the institutional level of literary criticism. Does immigrant literature refer to literature about immigrants? Or to literature by immigrant writers? Who is the audience? Hyphenated nomenclatures such as "Asian-American" are really a political gesture of naming into existence in the future rather than a description as solid as "we (white) Americans." As Heesok Chang has remarked, "'Community' is above all a call for community" (224). The problem with naming suggests a literature of unbelonging about a writing/written experience of the "in-between."

The problem of naming illuminates the complexity and fluidity of a contemporary world of mass migrations, which has to be placed, through a post-colonial perspective, in the historical context of colonialism, racism and cultural imperialism. In such a context, "nomadism"[4] does not appear as a privileged male experience to the exclusion of those subalterns trapped in dire circumstances; nor does it deny the specificity of particular cultures and histories. What this post-colonial space suggests is a way of looking at, and remaking, a world in the process of decolonization[5] in a more fundamental way, as a complex zone of cultural translation as well as political contestation.

I will explore this post-colonial space of the "in-between" through the problems of migrant experiences and their literary representation in the genre of the novel. Three of the novels discussed are about Third World immigrants (Indian, West Indian and Chinese) in London, one is about Chinese in Hong Kong, and one is about the Chinese diaspora migrating from Mainland China to Taiwan and finally to the U.S. While the issues discussed are central to this post-colonial space of différance, this choice of texts is also strategically autobiographical for a Third World immigrant doing literature in the English Department of a Western institution. I am both claiming and undermining positions of

experiential immediacy and cultural authority over the texts, just as such positions have always been maintained by Western institutions in racializing English studies.

However, my choice of these texts is not reducible to autobiographical convenience. From my impulse to choose a field outside the more familiar terrain of the canon, from my refusal to confine myself to yet another division of knowledge along ethnic/nationalist lines (say Asian-American literature), I am carving out a critical and literary space through what Homi Bhabha calls "the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world--the unhomeliness--that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations" (*Location* 9). My purpose, then, is twofold: to explore in literary forms of representation the exilic energies of the post-colonial space in between, especially in the lives of Third World migrants between worlds, between cultures, *excessive* to the systems of modernity whose power relies on discursive exclusions, framings, and disciplines, and marginal also in terms of often intoned mantras of race, gender and class; to examine how that post-colonial space of différance affects realist and (post)modern forms of representation, mainly within the generic conventions in the history of the novel, but certainly exceeding the narrow definitions of genre as such. In other words, how do the politics of identity and identification interact with language as mimesis and as constitutive of our very selves?

My first chapter will discuss various positions in the field of post-colonial discourse bearing on the lives of immigrants as "in-between" figures in a newly emerging culture of the post-colonial world. Then I will briefly examine the novel as a prime genre of Western mimesis with a history haunted by cultural, racial and gender difference from the very beginning. In the subsequent chapters, I will discuss generic problems in five immigrant novels, and more specifically the tension between the great genre of the novel that accommodates with flexibility different kinds of experiences and the limits of language as representation. In the conclusion, I will consider the implications of this approach for post-colonial discourse now.

Notes

[1] The link between modernist exile and post-colonial diaspora as well as their respective representations involves a complex and intricate (af)filiation, to borrow Said's trope for modern literary orphanage and institution ("Secular Criticism"). Beckett, Joyce, Lawrence, Eliot, Conrad, Pound and Woolf are themselves "foreigners" to the English cultural tradition in terms of nation, class or gender, as Eagleton has pointed out in his book *Exiles and Emigrés: Studies in Modern Literature* (New York: Schocken, 1970). Raymond Williams thinks that the radical anti-bourgeois innovations in modernism in the metropole of exiles and emigrés (themselves divided between progressive and conservative tendencies) are institutionalized and canonized in post-war academia and *post-modernism* to exclude possible alternative traditions in the margin (*The Politics of Modernism*). For a Derridean, the difference would be institutional scholarship on Joyce on the one hand, and Derrida's nose-thumbing reading of *Ulysses* on the other ("Ulysses Gramophone" in *Acts of Literature*), or Spivak's "Unmaking and Making in *To the Lighthouse*" in her *In Other Worlds*. Conrad, on whom Said wrote his first book *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*, is a shadowy literary "father" figure in post-colonial discourse: Said's ambivalence, Achebe's anger, Lamming's ranking of him together with Hardy as the most influential writers on himself during his formative years in *The Pleasures of Exile*, Bhabha's invocation of the Conradian horror in his colonial discourse analysis, etc. Conrad marks the ambivalent and ambiguous (dis)juncture between Europe and its others, between modernist exile and post-colonial diaspora, between artistic innovation and institutional canonization. I see the above brief (but easily expandable) "historical specificities" as a kind of discursive "play" subsumable under Derrida's meta-discursive meditation on the nature of literature as a modern institution, which will be discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation.

[2] Habermas has called attention to the historical backgrounds of contemporary mass migrations and the sheets of imbalance between different kinds of migration: the present-day instability and poverty in the Third World countries cannot be seen in isolation from "the history of colonization and the uprooting of regional cultures by the incursion of capitalist modernization" (Taylor 141); between 1800 and 1960, Europeans made up 80 percent of intercontinental migrations, which benefited not only themselves as migrant Europeans but also the countries they fled; the post-war Third World migration to Europe contributed greatly to its reconstruction. See Jurgen Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic constitutional State," Sherry Weber Nicholsen trans. in Charles Taylor et. al., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (107-148). Habermas refers to P. C. Emmer, "Intercontinental Migration," *European Review* 1 (January 1993): 67-74.

[3] The sense of "otherness" is what bell hooks calls the representation of whiteness as terror in the black imagination, which, given the indiscriminate nature of racism against coloreds since colonialism, is shared by Third World immigrants as well. See bell hooks, "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination," in Lawrence Grossberg et al. eds. *Cultural Studies* (338-346). As her essay reiterates, there is nothing like reverse racism in this concept, since terror is an internalized survival response for blacks in their experience of racist violence. Some whites can also share this perspective once they switch sides and appreciate living under the shadow of the white Other.

[4] "Nomadism" is used in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, as a shorthand for investment and counterinvestment in the unconscious that will disintegrate Oedipus. There are both reactionary and revolutionary uses of nomadism: the former conforms to the interest of the ruling class ("I am of the superior race.") while

> [t]he revolutionary unconscious investment is such that desire, still in its own mode, cuts
> across the interest of the dominated, exploited classes, and causes flows to move that are
> capable of breaking apart both the segregations and their Oedipal applications--flows capable

of hallucinating history, of reanimating the races in delirium, of setting continents ablaze. (105)

One early feminist complaint is that nomadism is masculine mobility not always available to the subaltern woman trapped in dire circumstances. However, more contextualized analyses of different situations have shown so much variation in (im)mobility that it is almost meaningless to essentialize. The gender division of male mobility and female immobility is a Hegelian trope of necessity/freedom that needs to be deconstructed.

[5] It could be argued that de-colonization failed, or never happened, in the sense that the "white north" (plus Japan) still dominates the world militarily and economically, and differences of wealth between nations are increasing rather than decreasing, etc. On the other hand political decolonization happened *formally* in the 60s and 70s. Thus many critics have found fault with the term "post-colonial," and asked why "post-colonial criticism" suddenly becomes interested in colonial discourse while neocolonialism still exists. What I mean by decolonization here is part of the present movements to challenge Western cultural, political and economic dominance, and struggle for the rights of the oppressed in the world, including the minorities in Western countries. On the use of terms, see notes 1 and 2 in chapter one.

Chapter One: Generic Conventions:

Mimesis, Mimicry and Cultural Difference

The literature of Third World immigrants in the West is not "literature" in the sense of a canon; nor can it be approached like other literatures in their early formative periods-- through theme, symbol, the lived experience, the communal vs. the individual, the spirit of the nation, culture and race. These concepts are useful in one way or another, but have been primarily formed in the context of a literature about people abiding in the same culture, within the same nation, speaking the same language, or at most exiled in a limited way, and who, despite internal differences, are not minorities under the dominance of imperialism, colonialism and racism. Third World immigrants in the West find their culture ridiculed, themselves estranged from the "host" nation and coerced to conform to the dominant culture and speak the metropolitan language of power which can easily be turned against these accented or non-fluent speakers. The experience of being defined as the "other" in the long history of European cultural domination introduces an alterity that problematizes the very notion of individual, community, nation and culture. Thus, though endlessly particularized in their unique experiences crisscrossed by class, gender and race, Third World immigrant literature belongs as a body to minority literature in the contemporary West, and is often capable of forming alliances across these historical particularities with other marginalized groups in a sometimes uneasy politics of identification.[1]

"Third World literature," "post-colonial discourse," and "minority literature," then, are different names denoting a common field of literary and critical practice that has won academic recognition in the last decade.[2] It is an unstable field with different and competing perspectives and approaches that are themselves evolving, often in the context of a few well-known critical careers, as well as through the sometimes productive polemics between humanist tradition, gender studies, Marxism, cultural studies and literary theory. In this chapter, I will briefly outline my own position and genealogy amid these various

critical influences and polemics. Then I will examine the history of the novel in order to argue that the immigrant novel repeats--with a subversive difference--the great mimetic tradition in Western culture, rising out of a long history of global cultural encounters and heading towards a small world of crumbling borderlines and increasing interdependence whether in the form of bloody nationalist and cultural conflicts or in the shared anxiety of ecological disaster. The "other" as an object of exclusion and domination is paradoxically the most intimate within Western metaphysics and constitutive of the European humanism; the margins and the blank spaces define the proper text itself.

Terms of Difference

The heterogeneity of the post-colonial field precludes a narrative introduction or a coming-of-age story. Rather, a spatial disjuncture highlights radically different points of view with various vested interests. I will begin with a few definitions of words, not to avoid controversy, but as a kind of a defensive strategy against the suspicions common in this area of study.

Post-colonial theory, itself a controversial term, is particularly concerned with language as explored after the structuralist and post-structuralist linguistic revolutions. Much of the polemic surrounding this new theoretical enterprise has centered around the terms being used, although many of the terms are not new and have seeped through critical boundaries. Situating my position amid competing and mutually influenced theories serves the purpose of reducing excessive and ultimately distracting bickering over the use of words. Such words as marginalia, other, outside, and cultural difference started circulating with certain valence in cultural criticism and post-colonial discourse in the 1970s and 1980s. Though still used by well-known critics with their original force, they too often slip into an oppositional positivity that may provoke charges of cultural binarism or metropolitan elitism.

The term other, often translated into other cultures in this field, tends to recall cultural nationalism, binarism, and exoticism, and static divisions of the center and the margin-- terms that a critic like Sara Suleri wants to replace with her homo-erotics of the rhetoric of English India. As examples of "the rhetoric of binarism that informs, either explicitly or implicitly, contemporary critiques of alterity in colonial discourse" (3), she cites in a footnote Bhabha's "The Other Question," Gayatri Spivak's *In Other Worlds*, and more explicitly Abdul R. JanMohamed's *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa*. While the last work does suffer from crude divisions of "us" and "them" through a positivist use of "otherness," the other in the writings of Bhabha and Spivak is clearly Derridean, devoid of the positivist binarism that one may ordinarily associate with the term in common language usage. A Derridean would argue that the other resides in the most intimate space within Western metaphysics. It has an infinite chain of substitutes: excess, différance, woman, double, etc., since it escapes representation. Cultural difference cannot be translated positivistically into cultural others with concrete referents, though its effects have included genocides, colonization, destruction of other peoples, cultures, and lands in bloody conflicts not always translatable into the kind of homo-erotics Suleri champions. Suleri's argument, by erasing other, outside and margin, occludes the confrontational side of colonial relations. In contrast, the Derridean solution of seeing a strikethrough across other, outside and margin acknowledges the problem of linguistic representation, and avoids both binarism and a facile collapse of (the effects of) cultural divisions.

Yet the terms other, in-between, and difference should not suggest a pure space of oppositional authority occupied by critics supposedly free from the power structures which they are critiquing. This is a constructive lesson we can learn from certain radical critics for whom these terms denote a postmodern elitism, a conservative ideology that denies the validity of communal, nationalist and class struggles. The phrase "in between" in the quotation from Edward Said that opened this chapter and which is also used by Homi

Bhabha, belongs to the chain of substitution for "other." The term and its implied argument about the migrant consciousness of rootlessness are under attack in Timothy Brennan's *Salman Rushdie and the Third World*:

> [The cosmopolitan immigrant / Third World writers such as Vargas Llosa, Derek Walcott, Salman Rushdie, Isabel Allende, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Bharati Mukherjee] hover between borders, the products of that peculiar 'weightlessness' that Salman Rushdie saw in his and others' 'migrant' consciousness. No writer more than Bharati Mukherjee signifies that partial transfer. Born in Calcutta, she later studied in Iowa, taught in Montreal and has now relocated permanently to New York. As such, she has begun to describe in her fiction and in high-profile articles for the New York Times the art of being 'in-between':... (33)

What Brennan critiques in the "Third World novelist," Aijaz Ahmad extends to "Third World" critics such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha:

> Bhabha, of course, lives in those material conditions of *post*modernity which presume the benefits of modernity as the very ground from which judgements on that past of this *post-* may be delivered. In other words, it takes a very modern, very affluent, very uprooted kind of intellectual to debunk both the idea of 'progress' and the sense of a 'long past',... (68)[3]

The constructive lesson here is the warning against totally identifying "other" and "in between" with concrete individuals whose own subject-formation is not free from Western cultural hegemony. In this respect, Spivak's awareness of herself as not virgin enough to occupy the place of other and hence in need of unlearning certain ways of Western episteme is exemplary. However, if no one is pure, the binarism marking off metropolitan elites from other intellectuals supposedly more purely identified with nationalist and class struggles should also collapse, not least because the very notion of "representation" is problematic and all too easily leads to the politics of binary identity. Ad hominem attacks and biographical reduction will have very limited use, if any, in my discussion of race, gender and culture.

It is indicative of the volatility and heterogeneity of the field that the critical focus on the other, the in-between, the anti-systemic and exilic forces of cultural difference is often

attacked from different sides but for the same positions: too Eurocentric for its investment in post-structuralist theories; too particularist for its opposition to universality; Third Worldist for promoting a mystified unknowable other of moral authority; etc. Such attacks range from the most conservative to the most radical, and often argue on different conceptual terrains. However, such polemics do not exclude productive negotiations, and the critical attention to the other/"in between" itself depends on the hybridity and ambiguity of cultural performance in what Homi Bhabha calls "the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code" (*Location* 37). If difference escapes through a series of possible binary oppositions, the space in between is also a site of ambivalent identifications and psychic splits.

Much of the confusion in these theoretical polemics arises from the history of Orientalist discourse (extending beyond the "Orient" in any geographical sense), which works both through humanizing other peoples according to the model of European humanism, and through dehumanizing them at the moment of cultural difference in an asymmetrical relationship of power. In other words, there is an anthropological gaze seeking to define and dehumanize other peoples as a sum of verifiable facts, dreams and fantasies. The Foucauldian link of knowledge with power, which supplies the theoretical groundwork of Said's *Orientalism*, questions the very possibility of knowing and imagining the other without this concomitant will to power, which is borne out by Western Orientalist discourse in complicity with the history of imperialism and racism. The other, whether as a passive object for knowledge or as an unknowable abyss, serves to consolidate the Western subject in its position of selfhood. The performative complexity of this cultural hegemony demands oppositional positions beyond either/or models, and strategic ways of resistance as well as critical self-reflection.

This double bind of self/other has a decided Hegelian cast; it is created within the Hegelian paradigm of universality and particularity. History conceived as an evolution under the guidance of universal reason achieves its full realization through transforming particularities in the teleology of the Idea. The history of colonialism has shown that the "particularities" of other cultures and other peoples are either exterminated or "civilized," with no respect or tolerance for the other as such. Even in the more sophisticated arguments for the respect of "cultural specificities" today, the same will to *Aufhebung* ("lift up") others still lurks within the Hegelian paradigm. Terry Eagleton sees a reconciliation of the two through a dialectical progression:

> Ironically, then, a politics of difference or specificity is in the first place in the cause of sameness and universal identity--the right of a group victimized in its particularity to be on equal terms with others as far as their self-determination is concerned. This is the kernel of truth of bourgeois Enlightenment: the abstract universal right of all to be free, the shared essence or identity of all human subjects to be autonomous. In a further dialectical twist, however, this truth itself must be left behind as soon as seized; for the only point of enjoying such universal abstract equality is to discover and live one's own particular difference. The *telos* of the entire process is not, as the Enlightenment believed, universal truth, right and identity, but concrete particularity. It is just that such particularity has to pass through that abstract equality and come out somewhere on the other side, somewhere quite different from where it happens to be standing now. (30)

Eagleton's use of the term "has to" is reminiscent of the kind of Enlightenment coercion discussed in Foucault's famous essay "What Is Enlightenment?" The filtering may well be an epistemic violence transforming "difference" and "singularity" into positivistic "specificity." But there is no arguing against Hegel within his own philosophical paradigm, which Derrida sees as the telos of the selfsame at the expense of the other:

> The opposition between the contraries (universality / particularity, objectivity / subjectivity, whole / part, and so on) resolves itself in love.

> Love has no other: love your neighbor as yourself does not imply that you must love your neighbor as much as you. Self-love is "a word without sense (*ein Wort ohne Sinn*)." Love your neighbor as one (*als einen*) who is you or "that you is (*der du ist*)." The difference between the two statements is difficult to determine. If self-love had no sense, what would it mean (to say) to love the other as one that you is? Or who is you? One can love the

> other only as an other, but in love there is no longer alterity, only
> *Vereinigung*. Here the value of *neighbor* (*Nächsten*) foils this opposition of
> the I to the You as other. (*Glas* 64)

Thus the phrasing of the binary opposition universality / particularity has already presupposed its resolution according to the very hierarchy that accords universality to European culture. Its postmodern version is liberal pluralism through a kind of *discordia concors*.

In actual practice, whether in the history of anti-colonial resistance or in literary production by minority writers, the oppositional line is never so clearly drawn (except strategically) between Europe and its others in any positivist sense of binary divisions. A reading of Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, and C. L. R. James, for example, will show repeated claims for the universal rights of freedom from racial and class oppressions, values inherited from the great tradition of Enlightenment that were actually denied to the colonized during the long years of European colonialism. A persistent critique of European humanism starts exactly from its own grounds of universal human rights, from both their "successes" and "failures" in different contexts. Thus, the issue is not a simple one of being "for or against" Enlightenment, progress, modernity, nation, culture, etc.; but rather how we should live with these values that have shaped the modern world. To abandon them altogether--not that we could--would foreclose most of the venues through which the oppressed subalterns can gain their rights and freedoms, and would only lead to facile alternatives that have failed precisely for lack of critical self-reflection.

A persistently critical appropriation of European humanism would always be wary of its limitations as well as its valuable uses, for after all colonialism and racism have been created in the period of European modernity, and what Paul Gilroy has renamed "the Black Atlantic" by drawing on the cultural encounters via the routes of slavery and the black double consciousness testifies to the conflictual ambiguities within and across different cultural territories. Cultural limitations are not static of course, since borderline interactions

have been the defining features of any culture in its evolution towards its teleological perfection and rottenness.[4] Indeed, it is exactly the living quality of cultural borderlines that yields the contact zone of familiarity which Bakhtin says "is an extremely important and indispensable step in making possible free, scientifically knowable and artistically realistic creativity in European civilization" (*Dialogic Imagination* 23). The comical is central to this zone:

> One can play games with the comical (that is, contemporize it); serving as the objects of the game we have the primordial artistic symbols of space and time--above, below, in front of, behind, earlier, later, first, last, past, present, brief (momentary), long and so forth. What reigns supreme here is the artistic logic of analysis, dismemberment, turning things into dead objects. (*Dialogic Imagination* 24)

This quasi-erotic "zone of maximal proximity" includes a *quid-pro-quo* recognition of European culture as "other," which is experienced as death in its foreignness, as an object for mimicry.

The In-Between World of Migrant Minorities

Immigrants come from diverse national and cultural backgrounds that form part of the dynamics in such cultural contact zones. Far from blank slates, immigrants carry with them various "imaginary homelands" (Salman Rushdie)--their past, their languages, their own senses of nation, culture and humanity that have made them what they are. These cultural specificities are an indispensable aspect of any readings of various immigrant writers--the yin and yang of Timothy Mo, Maxine Hong Kingston's Fa Mulan woman warrior legend, Guan Gong in Frank Chin, Sam Selvon's dialects and Calypso lyricism, George Lamming's invocation of Black history and the ritual of conversing with the dead, the use of Indian English, various Indian references and myths, the contemporary Indian popular genre of theological movies, and so on by Salman Rushdie. There is no immigrant without a unique set of cultural specificities.

However, all migrant minorities, in Salman Rushdie's words, "have been obliged to define themselves--because they are so defined by others--by their otherness" ("The Location of *Brazil*" 124). This obligation sums up an asymmetrical power relationship which explains conflictual discourses of doubleness and splitting in the Enlightenment ideal, as well as in the contemporary politics of identity. If racialized discourses demand total assimilation of the other, they also demand preserving the authentic other to keep racialized subjects intact. While skinhead racists unleash violence against immigrants of colour in tandem with national polls showing the white majority's "intolerance," transnational corporation-style multiculturalism is also mass-producing ethnic images of various kinds for the late capitalist consumption of the global village. The in-between space of the minority other denotes the shifting uncertainty of being made and remade amid various racialized discursive formations and recodings: the contingency of negotiation in subject-constitution.

One of the major reasons why the minority other is obliged to dwell in the in-between space, excessive to positive systems of modernity, lies in the adaptivity of cultural imperialism in producing racialized discourses and maintaining racialized institutions. Racist culture reigns through hegemony, through the consent of the majority, through the epistemic violence of institutions and disciplines. What appear as fair, equal and universal standards may be racist in their actual effects and performance, intentions notwithstanding. Minority literature as a subject for study, for example, is obliged to situate itself as an "other" field. If its *raison d'être* is to represent minority experience "otherwise" as challenge to "universal" white values, cultural separatism is not feasible. The minority experience as the other resides in the enunciative modalities rather than in the énoncé: neither universality nor ethnic particularity, neither sameness nor positivized "difference," neither self nor "other" (exotic or repugnant), neither sense nor non-sense, excessive to the terms and oppositions produced by imperialist cultural discourses like Orientalism which, as Edward Said has said, "depends for its strategy on this flexible *positional* superiority,

which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand" (*Orientalism* 7).

Although minority discourse arises as a resistance to the virtual exclusivity of European cultural dominance, the immigrant and exilic experiences do not mean any reversal of exclusivity, such that only migrant minorities understand these experiences. Since they are outsiders having their identity defined as the other--what they are not rather than what they are--a certain critical negativity is inevitable in Said's sense of "secular criticism," in which "'[i]ronic' is not a bad word to use along with 'oppositional'" ("Secular Criticism" 619).

What is the migrant minority experience? As soon as the question is raised, "is" becomes a necessary evil. It is always more than "this" or "that," not quite / not right; any description will always slip into a chain of signifiers without a center, or around a center of absence, "elsewhere." Condemned to an inferior, impure, and fake/authentic Third World otherness, we might as well explore these qualities through an aesthetic of rootlessness, incomprehension, the suspension of lived experience and community, of language as impediment, a struggle with words, accents, in a word, of dwelling in the in-between space.

This aesthetic of foreignness is grounded in an ethics of alterity, in the sense that the hurry towards a certain teleology, a certain closure of subject constitution, or the subjection of the other to self-identity, and any grand narratives of dominant culture as crisis management should always be problematized, postponed, and denied. To borrow Spivak's warning against imperialist subject-construction of the "Third World Woman":

> Attempts to construct the "Third World Woman" as signifier remind us that the hegemonic definition of literature is itself caught within the history of imperialism. A full literary reinscription cannot easily flourish in the imperialist fracture or discontinuity, covered over by an alien legal system masquerading as Law as such, an alien ideology established as only Truth, and a set of human sciences busy establishing the "native" as self-consolidating Other. ("Three Women's Texts" 273)

Spivak's warning points to the inevitable problematization of the literary (self)representation of minorities under the hegemony of cultural imperialism, which

operates not only through silencing but also through production of Third World images. The image of the metropolitan migrant, moreover, is often turned into a representation of the entire Third World.[5] In this sense, any attempt to produce the "native" as self-consolidating Other only perpetuates violence through the *neo*-colonization of representation.

The problem of (self-)representation of migrant minorities entails a double-writing of ambivalence: the need to educate the reading public about other cultures and peoples, and at the same time to draw their attention to the limits of representation within the existing power structure. The urge to tell a story is haunted by the (im)possibility of telling; the narrating of the experience falls back on the problems of narration itself.

The suspension of experiential and cultural priority as the source of literary representation is echoed with particular force, I want to argue, in the nature and the origins of the English novel, which tells another tale of law, supplementarity and non-identity. What I have expounded in the dilemma of minority literature--the writing of the immigrant experience overdetermined by Orientalist and racist discourses as well as by the contemporary politics of cultural difference--has in fact always been inscribed in the history of the novel as a genre born in the great tradition of mimesis and the progress of Western modernity.

Mimesis in the Western Tradition of Representation

Whether in praise of the great canon or in setting down its limits, critics have generally agreed that the novel is a quintessentially Western literary form. Although there is no authoritative definition, the genre is often discussed in the various and occasionally interlocking contexts of the use of the modern individual, a sense of the nation and its destiny, print capitalism and the reading public, and a modern awareness of time and space evolving out of the hierarchies and timelessness of pre-modern eras. As such, the novel is definitive of European culture.

According to many accounts of the origins of the genre, the novel evolves out of pre-existent genres such as the Romance and the Epic. Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* begins with Homer and the Bible, with the intention of starting from "Plato's discussion in book 10 of the *Republic*--mimesis ranking third after truth--in conjunction with Dante's assertion that in the *Commedia* he presented true reality" (554). The basic thesis of this monumental and immensely influential survey of Western literature is that the imitation of reality as an organic whole has been revolutionized twice in history: once in the Christian works of late antiquity and the Middle Ages through *figura*; then again in nineteenth century French realism in rebellion against the classical doctrine of the levels of styles. It is necessary here, I think, to distinguish mimesis in general from its particularity in European humanism, an operation indispensable for any bilingual translation. The "realistic" representation of reality occurs in other cultures as well, independent of European influence, though it is the non-mimetic arts from other cultures that have received particular attention. In its narrow sense such as Auerbach describes it, however, mimesis can only be European. Though Auerbach asserts much difference between Christian *figura* and modern realism, his thesis is unified and suffused by his magisterial humanism with its careful examination and comprehension of life as an evolving, and expanding organic whole, which he thinks is under the threat of simplification and leveling in modernist literature. The distinction between these two great revolutions is of course secularization and the Enlightenment, what Michel de Certeau defines as a shift from religious systems to the ethics of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, which follows the pattern of the three great stages of ethics: politics, conscience, and progress (176). From these ethical values grow, among other things, bourgeois individualism and the enterprising mission to civilize the savages.

The evolutions of mimesis and modernity are admittedly immense topics; however, serious interrogation of them is necessary for any project on the immigrant novel. Immigrant novels can be seen provisionally as a reflection of the immigrant's life and

struggle. They inherit various traditions, native and Western, among which the tenets of Western mimesis are still very influential. The dialectical pairing of universality and particularity bears directly on the current debates over cultural difference and the rights of minorities. From a reception perspective, the writers are writing for an audience brought up in that great tradition and using its standards as their referential system for the repertoire (Iser). The critical attention to our Western cultural canon is also warranted by the milieu of this study (the English Department) as well as by the convincing arguments advanced by, among others, Edward Said that Western culture is not the monopoly of the elites, and that accessibility to culture has always been an important means of empowering the oppressed and underprivileged ("Politics of Knowledge"). As Aimé Césaire says, "No race holds the monopoly of beauty, of intelligence, of strength / and there is a place for all at the rendezvous of victory" (*Return to My Native Land*). An examination of the origins of the novel will locate the immigrant novel as a latter-day appropriation of the novel tradition from its constitutive colonial margins, an addition from a supplementary space that will disturb and subvert the power relationship in the cultural paradigm.

Theorizing the Origins of the Novel

Tracing the origins of the novel in the context of discussing new literatures in English inevitably smacks of seeking legitimation, as if a bastard were trying to find his true origins in the company of the great masters of the culture. There are basically two ways of claiming legitimation: one can trace unknown traits in the early novel so that the later texts are shown to be tributaries proceeding out of the great mainstream of Western literature; or in a parricidal rhetoric of radicalism, one can declare an absolute break with the past literatures and usher in new literatures in a prophetic mode. Often the argument becomes a duel: what is new in post-colonial literature that cannot be found in the great realist and modernist traditions?--an argument reminiscent of the seventeenth century quarrel between Ancients and Moderns. Rather than set up alternative camps and drawing up dividing lines

between "them" and "us," my procedure is eclectic: to absorb the fruits of the scholarly interrogation of the novel; to see how they are useful and clarify at what moments miming the great masters becomes mimicry.

Auerbach's *Mimesis* is remarkable for evoking a humanist sense of history in all its breadth and depth. Whether treating Dante's *Commedia* or explaining Balzac's *Comédie Humaine*, his key aesthetic and cultural term is "the mixture of styles,"[6] a Christian utopian embrace of life in all its complexity and perplexity. The representation of reality should combine both an artistic attention to the details of everyday life and a humanist vision of cultural values and meanings that inform those details. In Balzac's works, for example, "what we see is the concrete individual figure with its own physique and its own history, sprung from the immanence of the historical, social, physical, etc. situation; ..." (475).

A similar embracing of life in its totality can be found in Bakhtin's theory of the novel, which defines the genre as a heteroglossic discourse of different voices and different languages engaged in an open-ended dialogic imagination and inter-illumination. The novel emerged during a very specific rupture in the history of European civilization, when "[a] multitude of different languages, cultures and times became available to Europe, and this became a decisive factor in its life and thought" (*Dialogic Imagination* 11). There is a populist appeal in Bakhtin's idealized version of the genre as well as in his idea of the folk cultures that lie at its origins. Timothy Brennan's evocation of the nationalist longing for form as a more authentic version of Third World literature (in distinction to the metropolitan version), for example, uses Bakhtin's theory in just this way. Indeed, Bakhtin's theory of the novel can provide a kind of ready-made space for the new voices and languages of the immigrant novel, and minority literatures can well claim that their voices and dialects are also constitutive of the novel as representing life as a whole process, even though in Bahktin's writings there is no mention of women's voices or those of racial minorities.

What we see in Auerbach's account of the great mimetic tradition, in the most popular uses of Bakhtin today, and in Eagleton's substitution of cultural particularity for cultural

difference, is the humanistic vision of Hegelian dialectics. Cultural difference can thus be talked about in terms consonant with traditional criticism of the novel. Since the novel was born with the onset of modernity and of European encounters with other cultures, colonial discourse can provide a mediating point between versions of histories in the eighteenth century and our present concerns with cultural difference which inevitably inform historiography today in the Nietzschean play of effective history.

Auerbach's humanism has also informed Ian Watt's apparently sociological approach to the novel. According to one critic Pat Rogers, we are still in a "neo-Wattian" position regarding the sociology of the emergent novel despite recent criticisms of Watt's thesis (xi), which proposes "formal realism" as characteristic of the genre and traces its rise to the rise of the middle class with their capitalist practices and ideologies. Watt defines "formal realism" as follows,

> Formal realism, in fact, is the narrative embodiment of a premise that Defoe and Richardson accepted very literally, but which is implicit in the novel form in general: the premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and places of their actions, details which are presented though a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms. (32)

In one strain of novel criticism derivative of Watt's thesis, the rise of the middle class serves to account for many sociological concomitants accompanying the rise of the novel and endowing it with its characteristic ideological traces: public literacy, leisure, and purchasing power; the popularity of newspapers; economic individualism; Puritan ethics; the consolidation of the modern family; the persuasiveness of Lockean philosophy, etc. These traits of the novel seem to provide the basic "facts" upon which variations of interpretation can only develop, and more "facts" uncovered, even in dispute of Watt's thesis.

More importantly, it is not just the facts and their theses, but the humanist tradition of dialectics that have lent enduring vitality to the complementary visions of Auerbach and

Watt. For example, in Watt's account, literary realism is linked to "philosophic realism" characterized by "the rejection of universals and the emphasis on particulars." (15) On the other hand, verisimilitude has to be informed by its vision of truth whose ancient form is timeless but whose modern form is dialectical progression through time. The net of the dialectical pair particularity / universality works to catch and conserve life in all its complexity. So powerful is this old paradigm that "particularity" needs to appear just by itself for an invocation of the whole, a tactic that keeps surfacing in current debates on "cultural difference," as I have shown in discussing the earlier cited quotation from Terry Eagleton. There are of course other pairs working towards the same humanist end. Economic individualism is balanced by social relations, just as tales of adventure are by the domestic novel. Individual freedom, unleashed by modernity, can be celebrated or condemned in the context of community and tradition. The private experience as both the subject of the novel and the process of its construction and enjoyment is itself treated as an important public step in the grand march of History emancipating men and women from previous bonds of tradition and empowering them to gain their individuality.

In taking stock of these dialectical pairs I am not only anticipating the usual kind of humanist inquiry that characterizes considerations of the novel, but also examining my own subject-formation in the humanist context of the English Department. No one has escaped its influence; disavowal and dismissal of this great tradition may bespeak greater unconscious entrapment. What has been found inadequate in this tradition by post-colonial critics is the other question--the blanks and gaps in the great texts where subalterns are made the silent object of imperialist epistemic violence. This is the point made by Gayatri Spivak in her famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Her reading of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, for example, looks at the text in the context of colonialism, as constructing the English subject to the annihilation of other subject positions. The other question seems to escape dialectical pairs such as the individual and the society, in which Charlotte Brontë can

be described as "taking lonely personal desire to an intensity that really questions the conventions by which it is opposed" (Williams, *Long Revolution* 68).[7]

The drama of raising the question of the other sometimes results in a kind of critical apologetics: recapitulating and re-codifying pairs of contradictions as explanations of historical reality grounded in good / bad intentions of individuals, such as the conflict between slave traders and Christian anti-slavery missionaries. In part, this historicist explanation reacts against Manichean aesthetics of demonization that sets up evil / innocence, colonizer / colonized dichotomies following the Hegelian structure of masters and slaves. In so far as there is a dialectical pair of the West and its others, the polemics often turns into "us" vs. "them" accusations and explanations, with love not far behind as a future promise of resolution. The deconstructive move, which will characterize this study, follows closely the Hegelian pairs in an eternal affirmative "yes," repeats the great masters with a difference, and arrests from within the dichotomization and resolution at the moment when the other is about to turn into a consolidation of the self. This, I think, is the performative play shared by many post-colonial critics despite their stated differences.

Let us look at how this performative play may engage some of the more recent contributions to the origins of the novel.

Lennard Davis's *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (1983) makes two challenges to Watt's theory: the novel is a mixture of facts and fictions (instead of Watt's "full and authentic report of human experience"), which cannot be neatly separated; the novel originated in news reports, especially of criminal activities, and indeed in its mixture of facts and fictions in the battle with official licences and laws, the novel borders on criminal subversion. The facts marshalled in this account are not new; what is new is Davis' use of a Foucauldian model that sets up certain discourses as introducing new configurations and breaks in history, contradicting the old historicist model of regarding, as Watt does, literature and ideology as reflecting social development in history. Thus, instead of using sociological terms like the "middle class," Davis adopts "modern" to

explain the same kind of phenomenon in history. And his focus is typically Foucauldian, drawing on the analyses of criminals and laws developed in *Discipline and Punish* (1977). Yet Foucault has been criticized for neglecting colonialism in his discussion of European, and mainly French, history. Davis seems to have inherited this silence in his account of the internal contradiction and ambivalence between law and criminality in the origins of the English novel.[8] The criminal at a public execution, while made a spectacle of the omnipotence of the king's power, also tends to rouse the masses with his defiance pointing towards the boundary of the law. The same ambivalence applies to the novel as a genre which, as Davis concludes, contains

> the unity of news, novels, ideology, history, fact, and fiction. One might also observe the transformation of that unity through the meticulous workings of lived experience and the vagaries of material life.... Thus the moment of ambivalence can lead to a moment of reconciliation, but only through the most complicated dialectical wanderings from windmills to desert island, from country to city, from revolt to resolution, and back again. (223)

How would this pairing of law and criminal translate when the criminal and the middle class entrepreneur are the same person, as in John Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (1728) and Brecht's *Three Penny Opera* (1928)? Since England kept on dumping its criminals onto the colonies, the ambiguity in the margins of the empire was that the outlaws became heroes quite easily on this side of the racial barrier. The primitive accumulation of capital happened overseas in a state before the law of free trade and commodity exchange as normal capitalism. The colonial scene thus has the miraculous function of "resolving" Davis' (and English cultural) dialectical pairs through providing happy endings to the personal journeys of spiritual and material salvation.[9] The pair fact / fiction is potentially subversive, of course. Yet this is also the way colonial discourse works to the greatest of its efficiency. Developing from Edward Said's distinction between manifest and latent Orientalism, Homi Bhabha sees the ambivalence in the center of colonial discourse, "Fixity, as the sign of cultural / historical / racial difference in the discourse of colonialism,

is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition" (*Location of Culture* 66). The scientific collection of data about other peoples is always informed by stereotypes of fantasies and fetishism in a mixture of Foucauldian "Pouvoir/Savoir" and Freudian psychotic production of the other as mirroring one's own fear and desire of racial and sexual difference. The subversive ambivalence of fact and fiction is also the very economy of colonial discourse. Thus what Davis develops from his examination of the *internal* contradictions within the origins of the English novel is not strictly speaking negated in the colonial scene; it acquires a strange validity in illuminating problems not so easily sublated because they arise from the shadow and double of these dialectical pairs.

Watt's model works analogically in linking the rise of the middle class with formal realism. In *The Origins of the English Novel: 1600 - 1740* (1987), Michael McKeon adds another analogical pairing of aristocratic values and romance, which persisted socially, ideologically and aesthetically in the novel and modern society. The progression of history finds its explanation in the dialectical contradiction around the dyad truth and virtue between Fielding and Richardson, romance idealism and naive empiricism, aristocratic ideology and progressive ideology, all of which are resolved on a higher level in Fielding's and Richardson's repetition of each other, in the one's extreme skepticism and the other's conservative ideology.

This dialectical pairing of aristocracy and middle class has been formulated in adventure tales by Martin Green, who posits Defoe and Scott as representatives of merchant adventurers and aristo-military caste respectively, though the latter is also implicit in Defoe. By the time the genre reached Kipling, the aristo-military primitivism of saga and epic had completely replaced the merchant prudence as the empire became gigantic. The persistence of the old regime, to borrow the title of Arno J. Mayer's book on imperialism, is a familiar story to students of colonialism.[10] Indeed, colonial discourse, racism, nationalism, and imperialism as supra-nationalism are all invented in an organic combination of the most

modern rationalism and the most ancient fantasies. Nineteenth century science provided rational objective facts to support hierarchies of races and classes. Economic sense of racial exploitation in the colonies made fantasies of the other a profitable discourse to sustain. Even nationalism, "imagined communities" born of print capitalism, the novel and the rise of vernaculars in Benedict Anderson's account, is rooted in an eerie sense of the primordialness of "an as-it-were ancestral 'Englishness'" (145). Such inventions as the novel and the nation turn out to be a repetition of an "as-it-were" origin, somewhat like the first law in human society, the incest taboo, which is built upon "as-it-were" parricidal myths like that of *Totem and Taboo*. We need to ask the Derridean question, "Who finds himself or herself excluded from this scene of invention? What other of invention?" (*Acts of Literature* 316).

It is by dwelling on the excluded positions of otherness that Firdous Azim examines what she calls "the colonial rise of the novel." She acknowledges the dyad heritages of the genre: "The novel is a bourgeois capitalist form, in the manner of its production as well as in the themes that it contains" (25).[11] "The novel is an imperial genre, not in theme merely, not only by virtue of the historical moment of its birth, but in its formal structure-- in the construction of that narrative voice which holds the narrative structure together" (30). Setting up the Lockean subject as central to the realist novel (following Watt's model of formal realism), Azim launches a persistent critique of subject constructions in the novels by Behn, Defoe and the Brontës, highlighting the subversive plays in excluded categories such as madness, disease, criminality, gender and racial differences. In this kind of Spivakian deconstruction of the colonial encounter, the others are not turned into yet another term in a dialectical pair marching towards reconciliation. This move can be achieved, paradoxically, by refusing to turn the other into the Manichean opposite of what is being deconstructed--in this case the Lockean subject and the English realist novel. The provisional "The novel is ..." is bound to raise hackles with canon-defenders and humanist experts who hate to see their field thus simplified and deprived of dialectical defenses.

Since the other is not the exact opposite, we can always give an affirmative "yes" to yet more dialectical apologies and explanations of the humanist enterprise, and work with them to reveal yet more others at once marginalized from, and most intimate to, those categories.

Edward Said has pointed out "that the novel, as a cultural artefact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other."[12] He suggests the link not only in Defoe's adventurers but also in other novelists' "common values about contest, surmounting odds and obstacles, and patience in establishing authority through the art of connecting principle with profit over time" (70). The colonial origins of the domestic novel are more solidly demonstrated by Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse in *The Imaginary Puritan* (1992), which nominates Richardson's *Pamela* as the first typical novel and one that should be seen in the context of the early modern inventions of the author, the family, the individual, and the nation. The bourgeois interiority invented and explored in the domestic novel originated in the captivity narratives of the American colonies by English women such as Mary Rowlandson. In contrast to the outgoing proto-nationalist adventurism of Defoe's masculine heroes including female entrepreneurs, the captivity narrative

> asked its readers to imagine being English in America. Although it is an ordinary voice--and most often a female voice at that--the voice of someone captured by Indians speaks with authority because it speaks out in isolation and testifies to the individual's single-minded desire to return home. Such a voice predisposes us *not* to think of the English as intruders who were decimating the native population and driving them from their homeland. (205-206)

The invention of the individual, disempowered in bondage and empowered by writing, is played out in the context of the invention of the nation outside the nation, by domesticating the native lands of America, reminiscent of Freud's play on "homely" and "unhomely" in "The 'Uncanny'" (1919). Humanism is thus haunted by the dehumanized other in Armstrong and Tennenhouse's new history of the origins of the novel. Martin Green's call for more attention to the adventure tales than to the domestic novel in the great English

tradition needs to be seen as making a distinction between two tributaries that are actually conjoined at their origins of the eighteenth century inventions of nation, author, individual and family from outside England proper. Indeed post-colonial readings of *Jane Eyre* and *Mansfield Park* further confirm the connection to the "origins" of an elsewhere identifiable with neither the author nor the nation nor the national language.

Armstrong and Tennenhouse use intellectual labour as a mediating force to account convincingly for a version of the origins of the personal life as well as the novel. In their analysis, they draw equally upon Marxist historiography and Foucauldian discourse theory, thereby acknowledging both capitalist modes of production and discursive materiality of ideology. Yet they are forced to set up a problematical construct, the Imaginary Puritan as the origin, out of which the novel can be born; it is in turn erased by the colonial scene through "the logic of supplementarity" (216) in an obviously Derridean strategy. Moreover, the whole idea of labour belongs to the capitalist system of exchange, in which the captivity experience can be turned through literary production into commodities of spiritual autobiographical memoirs to be consumed by, as well as to shape, the reading public, the constructed private individuals in their collective imagination of the nation. The silent other, such as the native Indians, belongs to another belief system outside capitalist exchange and therefore cannot be turned into a positivity without difference in a new historical account of the origins of the novel, or for that matter, the origins of the European encounter with the New World, although their potlatch practice has been at the origins of the theme "gift," which is used by critics such as Bataille and Derrida to account for the madness of capitalism.[13]

Armstrong and Tennenhouse use the idea of intellectual labour derived from Marx and Gramsci to explain the role of writing in its Foucauldian discursive production of nation, family, and the capitalist. What is interesting for my purpose here is not whether the intellectual preceded the capitalist historically.[14] Rather, intellectual labour as part of the capitalist system of exchange is also traced back to the colonies out of an experience of

colonial encounter. The discursive violence of disappropriating the native Indians of America is part of the European colonial genocide and plundering that cannot be explained within the classic capitalist mode of production. Here we have an originary story of discontinuity. In Marx's account of capitalist production,

> ... the accumulation of capital presupposes surplus-value; surplus-value presupposes capitalist production; capitalist production presupposes the availability of considerable masses of capital and labor-power in the hands of commodity producers. The whole movement, therefore, seems to turn around in a never-ending circle, which we can only get out of by assuming a "primitive" [ursprünglich: *originary*] accumulation ... which precedes capitalist accumulation; an accumulation which is not the result of the capitalist mode of production but its departure. This primitive accumulation plays approximately the same role in political economy as original sin does in theology. Adam bit the apple, and thereupon sin fell on the human race.[15]

It is well known that originary accumulation also involved colonial violence outside the classic law of capitalist production. The origins of the novel as a discourse born with capitalism and modernity are similarly haunted by the other scene that splits the "originary" line of demarcation.

Amid these competing old and new histories of the origins of the novel, it is tempting for me to claim that the colonial version of Azim, and Armstrong and Tennenhouse is the true one, drawing a line of descent down to the immigrant novel as the colonial chicken coming home to roost through "reverse colonization." Yet a more fruitful approach should see the rise of the novel as the rise of new historical forces largely defined by the emergence of new dialectics shadowed and hollowed by various others--criminality, disease, madness, natives, women, children, vernaculars eliminated in the formation of a democratic national language, and so on. This affirmative "yes" opens up my analysis to various visions of the other that have informed originary theories of the genre and to the historical transformations in the grand narratives and to their limitations haunted by a plethora of silenced and excluded others.

The Derridean affirmative "yes" is adopted here to accommodate contradictory claims about the origins of the novel. The novel has been viewed as a bourgeois form and discussed as descending from the aristocratic epic and romance. It has also been hailed as coming from below, from subversive popular cultures (Bakhtin), from criminal confessions (Davis). What is more exasperating is that none of the new histories has convincingly refuted other versions and offered one authoritative version. Although I can settle conveniently for Said, Azim, and Armstrong and Tennenhouse as closest in theme to my work in post-colonial theory, I find Derrida's theory on literature as a genre and an institution more reflective and perceptive of the politics in the discussion of the novel within the literary institution as well as offering a genealogical explanation of the above-mentioned contradictions.

Derrida's essay "Before the Law" (in *Acts of Literature*) does not discuss the novel proper; however, what Derrida calls literature includes the novel as a privileged genre of modernity, with characteristics such as "authorial property," "individual signatures," and "[t]he principle ... of 'being able to say everything'" (40). The history of the conventions of literature is very recent and European.

> [The law of literature] "that regulates problems involving property rights over works, the identity of corpora, the value of signatures, the difference between creating, producing, and reproducing, and so on ... became established between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries in Europe. (215)

Obviously, Derrida here is engaging the same questions that Foucault raised in his essay "What is an Author?", questions that Armstrong and Tennenhouse try to solve in the English context involving the origins of the novel. Derrida's particular concern is phrased in a double question that cares less about the origins of literature than about the actual functioning and effect of the law of literature: "'Who decides, who judges, and according to what criteria, that this relation belongs to literature?'" (187)

The attempts to trace the origins of the novel all carry (the effect of) an implicit assumption about the nature of the genre such as "bourgeois," "criminal," "folk," "imperial" or "generic mixture." The polemics among academics on its origins testifies to Derrida's view of literature as an institution: "To be invested with its categorical authority, the law must be without history, genesis, or any possible derivation" (191). The origins have to be repressed, or endlessly multiplied through new histories of particularities and mentalities. The historical narrative of the origins of the first human law on incest and murder is told in Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1912): the sons murdered their father to take his place, and their failure to replace him results in remorse and guilt--the basis of the first law. Derrida thinks this can only be fictional, for remorse itself is an effect of the law; it cannot generate law. Therefore narratives about the origins of literature and the law can only be a "quasi-event," a "fictive narrativity" (199). The question of origin then revolves around the enigma and the abyss of factual fictions, of the logic of supplementarity:

> Within the play of supplementarity, one will always be able to relate the substitutes to their signified, this last will be yet another signifier. The fundamental signified, the meaning of the being represented, even less the thing itself, will never be given us in person, outside the sign or outside play.... The festival *itself* would be incest *itself* if some such thing--*itself*-- could *take place*; if, by taking place, incest were not to confirm the prohibition: before the prohibition, it is not incest; forbidden, it cannot become incest except through the recognition of the prohibition. We are always short of or beyond the limit of the festival, of the origin of society, of that present within which simultaneously the interdict is (would be) given with the transgression: that which passes (comes to pass) always and (yet) never *properly* takes place. (*Of Grammatology* 266-267)

That is why Davis' narrative of the origins of the English novel ends up in factual fictions, in the ambivalence between the law and its transgressions, while Armstrong and Tennenhouse's work ends in a Derridean logic of supplementarity.

The origin of *différance* is co-related to the accessibility and inaccessibility of the law, to its non-essence, to the historical position of literature "that is always open to a kind of subversive juridicity" (Derrida, *Acts* 215-216).

> This subversive juridicity requires that self-identity never be assured, nor reassuring; and it supposes also a power to produce performatively the statements of the law, of the law that literature can be, and not just of the law to which literature submits. (Derrida, *Acts* 216)

The actual performance of this subversive juridicity is shown in Derrida's reading of Kafka's story "Before the Law" and its framing narrative in his novel *The Trial*. The law controls by hiding its essence and origin, so that meaning always eludes the inquiring mind. What seems obvious is that in the framing story, the priest has more exegetical power than K. over the interpretation of the text. It is equivocal that K. is complicit in submitting to such power and that the priest may just be repeating what he thinks is the truth from a higher authority which he submits to. As Derrida says,

> [The] "guardians," critics, academics, literary theorists, writers, and philosophers ... all have to appeal to a law and appear before it, at once to watch over it and be watched by it. They all interrogate it naively on the singular and the universal, and none receives an answer that does not involve différance: (no) more law and (no) more literature [*plus de loi et plus de littérature*]. (*Acts* 215)

This familiar scenario happens between "radicals" and "conservatives," between students and professors, and within each of us as well through ambivalence and Lacanian mirror identifications. The interest in the origins of the novel is bound up with a definition of the genre. If we admit that the novel has a history, then no definition is possible since "only that which has no history is definable" (Nietzsche, *Genealogy* 80). Nietzsche says,

> the cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart; whatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it; ... (*Genealogy* 77)

What operates in this interpretative battle is a will to power. What lies at the origins of the novel and defines the nature of the genre has less to do with pure facts than with the polemics and the politics *since the beginning and now*. Therefore Derrida's discussion of the performance of the law in the institution of literature is very useful in this context: it

directs our attention not to what is there--"the thing itself"--but to what is at stake in insisting that the novel is or is not ..., to our political positions towards the canon and minority literature. Of course, positions are never simple and clear-cut, since the law performs without showing its identity. Even Derrida's discussion itself wavers ambivalently between what is and what should (not) be, itself a performative blur of *use* and *mention*, which Derrida uses to deconstruct the law of genre (*Acts* 221-252).

A similar ambivalence has also been shown in concepts such as nation/alism,[16] culture/alism[17] and humanism,[18] born in the same period of modernity and often used as paradigms for reading the novel. All three can be happily deconstructed and shown to be historically complicit with European racism and colonialism. They have also been claimed as "our nation," "our culture," and "our humanity / agency" of subaltern resistance that sees the limits of "anti-essentialism" in the everyday cultural practices of struggle and survival. The ambivalence is nicely summed up in Homi Bhabha's quip on nation as narration in his essay "DissemiNation," a title which he says owes something to Derrida's wit and wisdom (*Location of Culture* 139).[19]

Acknowledging and affirming the *différance* of literature is neither celebratory nor defeatist; it just opens more avenues of dialogue with those who are intent on the incommensurability of cultural difference as well as those with a genuine belief in universalism, historicism, and humanism. In fact, as Gayatri Spivak has often emphasized, deconstruction is never purely destructive. A minimum reason has to be kept with/in risk, just as language is both gift and poison. Indeed, an imitation does not exclude the possibility of mimicry. In fact, the more perfect the copy, the more threatening it is to the original. Who can say, and according to what criteria, that Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* is not a sympathetic portrayal of a rare English butler remarkable for his loyalty to his employer and duty to his profession? Whatever *excessive* parody one may read in the text also derives exactly from this sympathy for this *as-if* real character in the great tradition of Englishness.

In conclusion, cultural difference, the anti-systemic forces in between, the other question, and the non-origin / non-identity of the novel--define a theoretical and methodological context for our discussion of the immigrant novel. As Homi Bhabha says,

> To enter into the interdisciplinarity of cultural texts means that we cannot contextualize the emergent cultural form by locating it in terms of some pre-given discursive causality or origin. We must always keep open a supplementary space for the articulation of cultural knowledges that are adjacent and adjunct but not necessarily accumulative, teleological or dialectical. The "difference" of cultural knowledge that "adds to" but does not "add up" is the enemy of the *implicit* generalization of knowledge or the implicit homogenization of experience, which Claude Lefort defines as the major strategies of containment and closure in modern bourgeois ideology. (*Location* 163)

"Anti-systemic" conclusions, if there are any, are more rhizomatic than arboretic in Deleuzian terms, more like a groundwork without center than like a skyhook of transcendence. This model does not exclude grand narratives of reason, Enlightenment, Marxism, humanism, and liberationist discourses; rather it puts them to critical use. Democracy, equity, human rights, equal opportunities, freedom of speech--we cannot afford to lose those values, nor can we afford not to continue questioning them *otherwise*.

Modus Operandi and Methodological Impossibility

By now, after showing my dissatisfaction with the novel genre and the literary institution, I am constrained by academic convention to offer a *modus operandi* as my contribution to the field of the immigrant novel and post-colonial discourse. One conventional way of choosing a *modus operandi* is to argue for or against a certain literary genre: realism, modernism and postmodernism. Unfortunately, none of these terms is satisfactory for my project, and postmodern euphoria is particularly suspicious, not because I believe in any pre- or non-Western purity, but because there are no pure and safe methods to begin with. Empirically, any genre can be used to produce the effects of racism, and postmodern works of art and critics are no exception. As a methodology of reading, I would likewise hesitate

to copy a list of deconstructive techniques (or post-colonial techniques for that matter),[20] because I believe that a deconstructive reading experience is an event, a performance whose significance lies precisely in its exceeding pedagogic rules. I can also imagine a paragraph in which "subversion," "intervention," "mimicry," "heterogeneity," "diversity," "multiple," "decentered," "relational," and other latest jargons are recycled for an eloquently phrased *apologia*, while rhetorically erasing its deconstructive "origin." Indeed, these terms are increasingly becoming the common property of criticism used by various critics working with fundamentally different agendas and beliefs. As Kobena Mercer says, "No one has a monopoly or exclusive authorship over the signs they share in common: rather, elements from the same system of signs are constantly subject to antagonistic modes of appropriation and articulation" (292). My difficulty with articulating a *modus operandi* is a difficulty with language itself, its sense of "too much and not enough." A performative event resists pedagogic abstraction.

In my previous discussion of the origins of the English novel, I have turned the question of origins into a genealogical function of the literary institution which works without a clear center of authority. What happens at the origins is exactly the dancing of a Derridean trace that refuses to be restored to any positivity, not even in our present-day postmodern diversity and multiplicity. Thus generic conventions, as they have evolved over different historical periods since modernity and bearing imprints of various kinds, need to be seen as part of the sign system of the literary institution that works through re-incorporation and re-codification in response to various changes inside and outside. A *modus operandi* cannot prescriptively assert any particular style of writing in the age of postmodern multiplicity; nor can it pronounce certain generic conventions as inherently conservative or radical. A brief look at the various literary texts read by Derrida, Spivak, and Bhabha would confirm this view. As Derrida describes,

> The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the
> outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim,

> except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them *in a certain way*, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work. (*Grammatology* 24)

Derrida's "in a certain way" highlights the uncertainty in the play of deconstruction, for it is a play with / of the other, the trace, *différance*, excessive to any *modus operandi*. In this dissertation, I propose to read the immigrant novel as generic double play within the great tradition of the English novel. Each chapter, focussing on one novel, carries on a dialogue with certain conventions of the genre. The immigrant novel, inheriting the tradition and the burden of (mis)representation, is a double writing that both borrows from master narratives and challenges the very possibility of representation. It is like Freud's scene of writing, traces "constituted by the double force of repetition and erasure, legibility and illegibility," "[a] two-handed machine, a multiplicity of agencies or origins ..." (Derrida, *Writing and Difference* 226). The play of difference is like a ghost haunting the tradition of the novel, and in my texts, the ghosts are the immigrant other, native other, and woman as other, as historical entities victimized by racial and colonial oppression in which the novel as a modern imperial genre has been implicated, as agents of historical emergence in various local and global struggles for sovereignty, and as signs in the text to insert a supplementary space of absence, repetition, and exteriority.

My second chapter discusses Timothy Mo's novel *Sour Sweet*. Here I start from the most basic question how the novel carries on the tradition of mimesis. Immigrant novels, considerably smaller in number than novels about the life of mainstream culture, have to carry on the task of reflecting the life of the immigrants, are in fact expected to do so by the readers, unless textual difficulty is greatly foregrounded as in Theresa Cha's prose poem *Dictee* (1982). *Sour Sweet* is a sympathetic portrayal of the Chen family as immigrants struggling for survival and economic prosperity in London. In showing their adventurous

entrepreneurship as well as their insularity and interiority of the domestic space, the novel repeats both streams of the great tradition as a paean to the rising middle class. Its portrayal of the Chinese criminal world inherits the criminal confession tradition lying at the origins of the novel, except for one "cultural difference" that there is no obvious burden of Christian morality. However, the novel also supports readings that show mimesis of life as a self-conscious mimic and turn domestic interiority *uncannily* inside out in the aporia of Western culture vs. Chinese culture, assimilation vs. cultural nationalism, and that sees reality splitting into a series of yin/yang doubles shadowing and fracturing the very mirror of (self-)reflection.

The third chapter on Timothy Mo's *The Monkey King* takes us to the prosperous colony Hong Kong. Again great themes are repeated: the rise of the individuals in tandem with the historical transformation of Hong Kong from tradition to modernity; generational conflicts happily resolved through compromise and productive labour; criminal business turned into legal, and modern financial management; boys' fantastic adventures turning the unknown miraculously into controllable reality. Mo's text is situated in the (dis)continuous tradition of early English realist novels and later colonial novels, in the time-lag of both textual and cultural secondariness. My argument is that the later addition, following the Derridean logic of supplementarity, also shows the lack in the original, and subverts the modernity myth of masculine temporal priority masquerading as logical priority. If *Sour Sweet* argues with the Hegelian paradigm of particularity and universality in both novel criticism and cultural criticism through dramatizing moments of cultural incommensurability spatially in two characters, then *The Monkey King* does so temporally, assuming cultural miscegenation as already there or bound to come.

The fourth chapter on the use of languages in George Lamming's *The Emigrants* sees the tension between a cosmopolitan English and a more local West Indian language (both self-divided with local variations of course) in the tradition of the vernacular in the origins of the novel. The rise of the novel happened during the same early modern period as the

rise of the English vernacular, the English culture, and nation as "subversive" forces against the Latin cosmopolitan culture, all alongside the familiar story of the rise of the middle class. The Lockean subject relies on a theory of language acquisition through memory, association and social consent. A simple and plain prose style was promoted as more immediate to reality both objective and subjective--hence its democratic claim. In the history of criticism, "cultural particularity" may find its justification in differences in language, which results from the radical break between signifier and signified, a recognition that Hans Aarsleff and others have traced from Locke to Saussure. Cultural relativism, however, may be perfectly compatible with cultural and linguistic essentialism and hierarchism as in Locke.[21] Drawing on the views of Fanon, Ngugi, Brathwaite, and Bakhtin, as well as Dillard's research on Black English, I argue for an anti-essentialist dialogic subjectivity of heteroglossia that produces a Fanonian subject/body in question in the relations of power and resistance. Language is the site of making and unmaking of identity and identification.

Chapter five on Nieh Hualing's *Mulberry and Peach*, written in Chinese by a Chinese American woman writer about a female Chinese migrant whose itinerary runs from Mainland China to Taiwan and eventually the U.S., is both defensive and exploratory. It explores the productive potentialities of Western theories, post-colonial discourse and feminism as they move across the borders of language and nationality, following the critical work of post-colonial feminists and in anticipation of charges derived from what Spivak calls "varieties of reactive nostalgia such as an unexamined adulation of working class culture, an ostentatious rejection of elitist standards, a devotion to all non-Judaeo-Christian mythologies, or the timid evocation of 'poetry being written in Nicaragua'" (Spivak, *In Other Worlds* 172). I am not suggesting the universality of any theories. Specific work in specific contexts demands different kinds of critical attention. The chapter explores the "in-between-ness" of gender and race caught between patriarchy and modernity, of the woman's body as the last instance that is elsewhere (Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching*

Machine 79). The interstitial space between gender, race and nation is central to the novelist tradition initiated by Aphra Behn (according to Firdous Azim) or Samuel Richardson (according to Armstrong and Tennenhouse), though Nieh's novel works through "postmodern" feminist poetics rather than Mo's realist/parodic comedy.

It may appear that I have been discussing immigrant novels in terms of postmodern aesthetics that lies outside the realist novel tradition with its Lockean notion of language and subjectivity. However, my definition of the novel follows Derrida's view of the nature and the origins of literature as (non-)identity, so that the so-called "decentered" subjectivity of postmodern aesthetics is not held as the last word beyond racism, sexism and class exploitation. Chapter six discusses Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* as a self-conscious evocation of the emergent immigrant communities in between realism and postmodernism. The mélange of styles comprehending many layers of realities, fantasies and histories is comparable to Auerbach's sense of totality in mimesis, in this case as a summation of the immigrant novel at the end of a long history. The text as a bold and failed attempt is also symptomatic of the risks taken with *any* style in representation, whether realist or postmodern. Thus Chapter six ends the dissertation as exploring ways of reading the immigrant novel without offering a definitive final model for novel writing and criticism. What remains is a persistent critique of the novel tradition without facile rejections in toto which may always turn out to be partial in the institution of literature.

Notes

[1] I am aware of the problems of naming in using "Third World," "marginalization," etc. Since new terms cannot escape the trap of naming anyway, and my argument is exactly the necessity of description as well as "deconstruction," I do not see any need of playing the language game to keep up with the newest terms.

[2] The terms are not perfect, of course. See Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Postcolonialism'" in Francis Barker et al eds. *Colonial Discourse / Postcolonial Theory* (253-266). The usual complaints about the use of terms ("minority"? Who is a minor in the legal sense?) can lead to endless self-reflections without settling on perfect alternatives, which is no surprise to a deconstructive distrust of language as both gift and poison. This note hopefully will make any further (half-)deconstructive or sociological coat-trailing about terms unnecessary for a fruitful reading of this dissertation. The terms, still used by Said, Spivak and Bhabha, are to be understood as a provisional writing under erasure, and I am open to queries into actual (ab)uses when erasure is forgotten and the terms become "pitfalls."

[3] For a detailed response from various critics, see *Public Culture*, 12, 1993. Here I would like to add some notes on the role of Marxism in post-colonial discourse. Marxism in its classical sense is not too sensitive to issues of race, nation, and culture. Even the contemporary Marxist critics like Jameson, Eagleton, Ahmad and Benita Parry are not as persuasive (to me at least) as Said, Spivak and Bhabha in the field. However, there have also been cross-hatchings between Marxism, deconstruction, and post-colonial discourse in the works of Spivak, Derrida, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Cornel West, and the whole tradition of the British cultural studies, and Marxism has always been indispensable to the older generation of anti-colonial theorists like C. L. R. James, Amilcar Cabral, and Frantz Fanon. Anthony Wilden's book *System and Structure* (New York: Tavistock, 1972, revised 1980) brings together compatible elements from Marx, Lacan, Freud and the early Derrida among other theorists for a new communication and information science. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida admits to the temptation

> to recount what was for me, and for those of my *generation* who shared it during a whole lifetime, the experience of Marxism, the quasi-paternal figure of Marx, the way it fought in us with other filiations, the reading of texts and the interpretation of a world in which the Marxist inheritance was--and still remains, and so it will remain--absolutely and thoroughly determinate. (13-14)

The specters of Marx still haunt various "post" theories and revisions, and Marxism itself is heterogeneous. Though it is futile to trace "origins," this dissertation owes much to the quoted theorists who are themselves influenced by Marxism like Derrida's generation of intellectuals and their filiations, not to mention my own Marxist education via Maoism. My lack of quotations from Marx, however, can be read both as a distrust/dissatisfaction with more orthodox and more easily understood Marxisms, and as a respect for a more profound and useful Marxism that remains pedagogically (for me) on a higher level than the quoted theorists. Ahmad's recent engagement with Derrida ("Reconciling Derrida: 'Spectres of Marx' and Deconstructive Politics" in *New Left Review* 208) points out the Marxist ghost that haunts Derrida, acknowledges "the fact that it [Derridean deconstruction] was *not* a discourse of the Right" (97) and ends with "a deconstructive solidarity" of agreeing to disagree while remaining political allies against the New Right. I think postcolonial discourse deserves the same gesture of solidarity from Marxists such as Ahmad and Arif Dirlik, not to mention the fact that the dialogue between Marxism and deconstruction is essential to Spivak.

[4] Kenneth Burke says in his essay "Definition of Man," "Man is ... goaded by the spirit of hierarchy and rotten with perfection" (*Language as Symbolic Action* 16). In Burke and Bataille, the sacred is always shared by the profane. The state of rottenness and decay is the logical end and beginning of organicism. In a later note of revision, Burke has changed "man" to "humans."

5 Gayatri Spivak is particular sensitive to this collapsing maneuver occluding the subaltern woman in her global perspective. See Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, p. 12; and her critiques of *The Satanic Verses*, and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*.

6 This "mixture of styles" is repeated by postmodern diversity/pluralism and post-colonial hybridity/migrancy (Bhabha). Bhabha's hybridity, though inadequate to deal with the international division of labour and transnational capitalism in a way that Spivak's transnational cultural studies can, still needs to be distinguished from the liberal ideology of diversity. On the theoretical level, the former merely borrows terms from the language of deconstruction; while the latter is more rigorous in its deconstructive methodology. Perhaps, Derrida's critique on the decentered subject can throw some light on the difference: "one can doubtless decenter the subject, as is easily said, without challenging anew the bond between, on the one hand, responsibility, and, on the other, freedom of subjective consciousness or purity of intentionality. This happens all the time, and is not altogether interesting, since nothing in the prior axiomatics is changed: one denies the axiomatics *en bloc* and keeps it going as a survivor, with minor adjustments *de rigueur*, and daily compromises lacking in rigor. Thus coping, thus operating at top speed, one accounts, and becomes accountable, for nothing: not for what happens, not for the 'why' of assuming responsibilities when lacking a concept" (Derrida, "The Conflict of the Faculties," in Richard Rand, ed., *The Conflict of the Faculties in America* [Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, forthcoming]; quoted in Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* 287). It seems that Auerbach is as different from Derrida as postmodernism is from post-colonialism, unless one chooses to consider deconstruction as a sort of negative theology (and Bhabha a post-colonial mystic). The recent popularization of Bhabha's hybridity (as in Buell's *National Culture and the New Global System* and in Robert Young's *The Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* [London: Routledge, 1995]) makes Bhabha into a postmodern liberal in the tradition of the humanist Bakhtin (who also uses the term "hybridization" in *The Dialogic Imagination*). I think Bhabha is too Foucauldian and Derridean to be translated into a humanist. Only in the ambivalence of Edward Said can we possibly establish a link between the exilic energies of Auerbach and those of the anti-systemic post-coloniality. But Said's ambivalence towards Auerbach is implicated in his preservation of the humanist subject, which has been critiqued by both Bhabha and Spivak.

7 I understand that critics have already questioned Williams' exclusive focus on the English culture without adequate consideration of the Empire and the colonies. But Williams is also the most influential Marxist cultural critic, an important founder of the British cultural studies project that has become now, under Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, a major tradition in post-colonial criticism *avant la lettre*, and an alternative voice to deconstruction. My quotation is meant to show how pervasive dialectics and its blindness are even within a radical tradition, which has had formative influences in my own education.

8 Cf. Edward Said, "Yet while distinguished studies of eighteenth-century English fiction--by Ian Watt, Lennard Davis, John Richetti, and Michael McKeon--have devoted considerable attention to the relationship between the novel and social space, the imperial perspective has been neglected" (*Culture and Imperialism* 70).

9 For a brief mention of the colony as providing "magic" / real solutions to capitalist contradictions, see Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* 66-67. A more detailed discussion of the novel and the empire can be found in Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (62-97).

[10] Mayer's thesis that imperialism is a leftover of Europe's *anciens régimes* representing the interests of aristocracy instead of the entrepreneurial industrial capitalists carries on Joseph Schumpeter's disagreement with traditional explanations of imperialism as the mature stage of capitalism. This being no place to argue extensively, I can only recommend the reader to the work of Gayatri Spivak, who, as Robert Young has pointed out in *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990), persists in locating and critiquing imperialism at work not only in the New International Division of Labour and the asymmetrical relationship of power between the First World and the Third World, but also in the complicity of Western culture and institutions in the global hegemony. Here I will briefly outline two familiar modes of thinking about East/West, Black/White relations. One is historicist: the age of imperialism and colonialism has been replaced by a global economy and culture of disjuncture and difference. One is theoretical: the simplicity of binary opposition has been replaced by the complexity and heterogeneity of race, gender, and class (the leftist mantra), or of some postmodern interpenetrations and weightless flows (the conservative and liberal route of escape similar to postmodern diversity and multiplicity). Despite my great admiration for various historical or new historical investigations into complex situations and particular contexts, I choose to maintain a deconstructive vigilance on the politics of historiography and critical responsibility.

[11] Toni Morrison says the same about the origins of the novel and contrasts it with black music. ("Rootedness: the Ancestor as Foundation," in Dennis Walder ed. *Literature in the Modern World* (326-332). Anthony Appiah says the novel is primarily a Western form and contrasts its pessimistic realization in Africa with more optimistic African art forms such as sculpture in his book *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. Paul Gilroy argues for Black music as central to his Atlantic culture in contrast to excessive textuality of current critical trends in his book *The Black Atlantic*. Such casual remarks about the novel as a middle class, Western art form made by famous subaltern critics warrant that Ian Watt's thesis still holds true in the post-colonial context if one does not have enough space for further elaboration. It is a thesis easier to disprove than to replace. Actually Georg Lukacs suggests the same type of historical division when he says that "the great novel of world literature stands at the beginning of the time when the Christian God began to forsake the world;" (*The Theory of the Novel* 103). The same idea can be traced back even to Hegel, according to Bakhtin: "In Hegel's definition, the novel must educate man for life in bourgeois society" (*Dialogic Imagination* 234).

[12] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 70-71. "Narrative and Social Space" (62-80) is a discussion of the English novel and imperialism.

[13] See Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, Vols II & III; Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*. Christopher Bracken's Ph.D. dissertation "White Gift: The Potlatch and the Rhetoric of Canadian Colonialism, 1868-1936" traces the route from the potlatch practice of the First Nations in Canada through anthropologist Franz Boas and Marcel Mauss to philosophers Martin Heidegger, Georges Bataille and Jacques Derrida, and deconstructs Canadian white colonialism in its antipotlatch postal literature (government archives and letters between the Indian reserves and Ottawa). Spivak finds Derrida's use of Marxian economic terms problematic and proposes to read difference in such loci as the primitive (originary) accumulation and use-value. See "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value" in *In Other Worlds*, and "Limits and Openings of Marx in Derrida" in *Outside in the Teaching Machine*.

[14] This is another question of origins whose narration has to be taken with a grain of salt. In Althusser's analogical treatment of theoretical practice, a concept is "the result of a complex process of elaboration which involves several distinct concrete practices on different levels, empirical, technical and ideological" (*For Marx* 191). Simple reversals of idealist and materialist accounts are still bound within Hegel. The problem with narration of origins is how one can imagine an original difference within a language which is a result of that difference. In Milton criticism, it is how Milton can restore that pristine pre-lapsarian world and narrate its transition in a post-lapsarian language.

[15] Marx, *Capital I* 873. Quoted by Spivak in "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value," in *In Other Worlds*, 160. She thinks Marx displaces questions of origin into questions of process following his general Hegelian heritage. This heritage is followed via Marx in McKeon's *The Origins of the English Novel*, "Introduction" (14-22).

[16] For a Marxist demystification of nation, see Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*; and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. For a Third World challenge to Eurocentric theories of the nation, see Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought in the Colonial world: A Derivative Discourse?*. The ambiguity of factual fictions in the formation of nation is best expressed in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, in which the historical account of nation formation as imagined communities is balanced by a quasi-mystical feeling of belonging in the historically constructed mother tongue, "an as-it-were ancestral 'Englishness,'" for example, "if English-speakers hear the words 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust'..." (145). See Homi Bhabha's reading of Anderson in his essay "Dissemination" in *The Location of Culture*. Zizek suggests that we should enjoy nation as we enjoy ourselves, as a Lacanian other (*Tarrying with the Negative*). Isaiah Berlin says nationalism is like unrepressible sex, following an un-Foucauldian repressive model of course. Andrew Parker et al eds. *Nationalisms and Sexualities* shows the ambivalence from different angles derived from grassroots movements such as feminism, Black Nationalism and Queer Nation, but "the notion of a 'Feminist Nation' (a contradiction in terms?) seems much less likely to mobilize women's gender-intransitive political work" ("Introduction" 8)

[17] Culture preceded modernity, but the discussion of different cultures and the speculation of the origins of culture / nature division received particular interest in the works of modern writers like Rousseau and Herder. Herder's cultural particularism, as distinct from Diderot's universalism, is both populist and anti-imperialist in pitting more natural folk cultures against the imposition of a supposedly "superior European culture" (See Williams, *Keywords*, "culture"). The contemporary ambivalence towards culture is shown in the difference between Williams' organicism of a common culture and Said's exilic critique of culture as imperialism. In Williams' discussion of culture (*Keywords*; *The Long Revolution*), the term often tends to cross the line to its opposite, nature. His term "structure of feelings" catches well the wavering ambiguity between the models of organicism and structuralism, insideness and outsideness, use and mention,--the same kind of ambiguity and ambivalence with "the prison house of language." We are back to Derrida's reading of Rousseau on the origins of language, culture and society in *Of Grammatology*!

[18] This extends to all the problems of anti-essentialism, subjects (textual, psychological, ideological, legal), identity, and agency. The polemics can also lead to productive negotiations of course, and the issue of agency has been explained well within a deconstructive framework by Spivak, Bhabha and Judith Butler (for the project of gender studies).

[19] Theoretically, deconstruction should also be interrogated *outside* its own terms of reference. For the postcolonial project, this task is how to go beyond Spivak's work. I do not think I can at this moment, and wish I could some day. I am also wary of facile claims and simplistic tit-for-tat arguments "beyond deconstruction." But deconstruction is itself developing. One of Spivak's latest works, "Afterword" to Mahasweta Devi's *Imaginary Maps* (Gayatri Spivak trans. and intro., New York: Routledge, 1995), adopts a by now more political Derrida who has extended the series of différance to include "justice" and "responsibility." Spivak's work pays more attention to the concrete struggles of the subalterns, to the First Nations' notion of "nature" and ecology, etc., in addition to (not instead of) high theory.

[20] For such a list, the most convenient beginner's introduction is Bill Ashcroft et al., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989.

[21] See note 5 in Chapter Four.

Chapter Two: Tradition and Assimilation:
Timothy Mo's Agonistic Yin and Yang in *Sour Sweet*

Timothy Mo's second novel, *Sour Sweet*, presents a curious mixture of the Taoist philosophy of yin-yang battle, old-fashioned realism, and a series of dialogic and deconstructive doubles that belie its mimetic surface and raise ironic questions of cultural (self-)representation. *Sour Sweet* describes the Chen family--emigrants from Hong Kong to London--as they struggle for survival between the cultures of the mother country and its Far-Eastern colony, tradition and modernity, assimilation and alienation. In this clash of cultures, the text itself becomes a battleground between pragmatism and yin-yang metaphysics, a "native informant's" presumed authority of mimesis and a deconstructive suspension of generic assumptions about cultural representation. The textual oscillation between *yin* and *yang* involves the characters in a quagmire of moral ambiguities that yield multiple readings and subvert any conventional sense of cultural certainties through a series of unexpected doubles.

Realism and Culturalism

Sour Sweet has been described by reviewers as naturalistic in style, similar to "the severe approach of a French 19th century novelist" (Barber 27), clinical in tone (Constantinidi 19), and akin to the comic realism of the early Naipaul (Gorra 61). There is no question that Mo's style in *Sour Sweet* (as in *The Monkey King*) is realist or naturalist, if we understand these terms in a general way as a "truthful" or "scientific" portrayal of ordinary people's lives and their struggle for survival, in contrast to fantasies, dreams, improbable stories, abrupt narrative breaks, and other phantasmagoric postmodernist techniques.[1] However, realism is also a term for a mimetic presentation of life governed by the teleology of Truth (Bhabha "Representation"). In that sense, the term is problematic for Mo's text,

which brackets the link between "reality" and the teleology of either universalism or cultural essentialism.

Yet in approaching an "ethnic" writer like Timothy Mo, we need to suspend mimetic cultural assumptions: that ethnic writers seamlessly represent their own cultures, and tell the naked truth about their ways of life. In an interview with Michael Barber, Timothy Mo has insisted, "... I don't write from personal experience. Everything I write is invented" (Barber 27). Although he admits a link between his half-Chinese origin and the Chinese subject matter in his novels, he says, "but I don't know the kind of people I write about, nor have I had their experience" (Barber 27). Beyond a certain basic level of probability which the reader expects from the genre of the realist novel, his text, I want to argue, offers a contested space for a non-realistic *yin / yang* dialogism. If anything, this philosophical and metaphysical agonistic belief constitutes the problematic "Chineseness" of his text, the denial of a monologic Chinese essence. As Julia Kristeva points out in her poststructuralist reading of Bakhtin's dialogism, the realist novel works within the narrative logic of 0-1, which is God, Law, Definition, Aristotelian analysis, and monologism; while the dialogic novel follows the 0-2 poetic logic, which is also the *yin-yang* "dialogue" in the linguistic tradition of Chinese ideograms (Kristeva, *Reader* 41).[2] The 0-1 logic means there is only one Truth, that A does not equal non-A, or that narrative is meant to be a reflection of reality, the only correct version of facts. The 0-2 poetic means that versions of reality are dialogic with other versions so that language becomes the object of representation, that A can be both A and non-A, and that there is always the I-Thou relationship in language. In Derridean terms, the 0-2 logic is the arch-trace, the originary supplement as the place of initial split and doubling, the other (death) that one encounters in and through writing, and différance as anterior to, and erasure of, Being.

Traditional assumptions about the workings of the realist novel have predominated in criticism of Mo's *Sour Sweet*: a few short book reviews and in one long essay by John Rothfork, "Confucianism in Timothy Mo's *Sour Sweet*." Book reviews, though lacking in

the more thoughtful elaboration of an academic paper, may reveal popular reactions to an ethnically sensitive text. One reviewer writes, for example:

> The prevailing theme of the book is the unwillingness of Chinese society to adapt to English ways; the Hung family looks to Hong Kong for authority, and feuds only with other Chinese; Lily Chen organizes her life on precepts learned as a child in China and does not wish to change. (Constantinidi 19)

Another reviewer writes:

> Mo writes about a world within a world, that of Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong who are intent on retaining their national and cultural identity while being economically dependent on their host country in various ways, both legal and illegal. (52)

These quotations reveal cultural assumptions and prejudices that need some attentive questioning. The adaptivity of certain minority groups cannot be discussed in isolation from a less than tolerant immigration history and the continual imbalance of power in race relations. The description of immigrants as "being economically dependent on their host country" ignores the historical fact that the post-war British economic recovery relied on the cheap labour of immigrants from the former colonies. The complaint about the unwillingness of the Chinese to assimilate and their "dependence" on the host economy is reminiscent of "the unpleasant excuses" in the history of immigration in Britain, the U. S. and Canada. The reviewers have singled out certain characters in the novel as representative of their community, presumably following an implicit logic that "adaptive" immigrants are no longer Chinese. It is a logic of the work of mourning: assimilation (cannibalism) or annihilation.[3]

John Rothfork's essay offers a more sophisticated interpretation of the text. In analyzing the characters, for example, Rothfork perceptively rejects Mui's way as too submissive, too *yin*, leading to a complete loss of identity. It is Lily, according to Rothfork, who will inherit the "authentic Confucian heritage" which is not orthodoxy but creativity.

> Obviously, it is Lily, who at the end of the novel feels that "she had found a
> balance of things for the first time, *yin* cancelling *yang*," the old, authentic
> Confucian programme applied to modern conditions.... (63)

Thus the ideal is a kind of equilibrium between *yin* and *yang*, a creative use of

Confucianism under the new conditions in England. Rothfork's reading improves upon

the monologic assimilationist reviews. However, his balanced reading of *yin* and *yang*

reduces worldly and asymmetrical relations of power to an idealized synthesis of opposites,

and misses Mo's ironic distance.

This equilibrium, which is announced by the omniscient narrator in the last paragraph of

the novel, is presumably achieved by Lily's submission to her husband's disappearance

and a false hope of his eventual return. Lily's hope is similar to Kurtz's fiancée's at the

end of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The "still point of equilibrium" that she finds might as

well be a sense of death felt by a fighter after all the opponents have fled. There is also

ambivalence in Lily between excessive sentimentality and a strange sense of relief. In the

novel, yin-yang balance is rare, and is often presented in a tongue-in-cheek way. At one

point, Chen decides to play with Man Kee so that his son will not be influenced by the

women too much, "Let *yang* balance *yin*" (110). Since Chen is passive and stolid (even in

love-making), there is apparently not much *yang* left in him in the first place. The irony of

this *yin-yang* equilibrium is more obvious when, after his sudden disappearance, Chen is

put on a pedestal as an idealized role model for Man Kee. The omniscient narrator says

wryly,

> Overnight, Chen had become a secular saint, a household deity to rival god.
> Never so revered when physically available to his family, Chen was
> becoming a paragon of all the traditional *yang*-type virtues and not a few of
> those more usually thought to be under the influence of *yin*. He was far-
> sighted, strong, resolute, kind, magnanimous, and brave; he was also
> considerate, unselfish, sympathetic, tender, and gentle to his loved ones and
> especially his son, Man Kee.
> 'Why has he gone away and left us, Mar-Mar?'
> For this piece of impertinence Man Kee got a slap... (274)

The ideal balance of *yin-yang* belongs to the official orthodoxy that brooks no questioning. It can only be attached to a murdered father piously deified and jealously guarded.

Rothfork is following a similar path of reification and logocentrism, though his comments on the text are often perceptive when he stops using paradigms of Confucianism and treats the characters not as typically "Chinese." One major problem with his reading is that he posits a so-called authentic Confucianism, as distinct from Neo-Confucianism, which is oppressive and dogmatic. His thesis is that authentic Confucian principles have formed, or can form, a true Chinese identity which can hold its own against the so-called "post-Christian values in the West" (51). And he thinks Mo shares this thesis.

I am very suspicious about claims of a true Chinese identity excavated from the past and imposed on a living culture. Edward Said has complained that Western Orientalism imposes a constituted entity "Islam" upon all the Muslim people, occluding "a dynamic encounter of sorts" "[b]etween the people and 'Islam'" (*Orientalism* 276). A similar positivity for Chinese cultural essence in the form of an "authentic" Confucianism is suspect, and needs to be examined as an ideological construct and in historical context. For example, to praise Confucianism as the foundation of Asian capitalism (which is the basis of Rothfork's discussion of Chinese culture meeting the Western challenge) occludes the internal social contradictions within Asian societies, such as the ruthless exploitation of labour by capital. Histories are written by ugly winners, who tend to uphold various traditional ideologies as the secret of their success: thereby gaining the power of a culture they have transformed if not destroyed.[4]

Indeed, the yin/yang ideal is aporetic in Rothfork's analysis: "Exactly how this [the ideal balance, authentic Confucianism in England] can be done requires another novel from Timothy Mo. In a deeper sense, it cannot be specified, only experienced" (64). Another novel can never be written, in just the same way that Coleridge can never write his letter on imagination as divine correspondence (Spivak, "Letter" in *In Other Worlds* 3-14). The logos cannot be written. That "it cannot be specified, only experienced" reminds one of

Raymond Williams' "structure of feeling" in his definition of culture, "only fully accessible to those living in that time and place" (*Long Revolution* 48).

While problematizing claims of authenticity in realist and culturalist readings of Mo's novel as the symptoms of an Orientalist gaze that persists even in sophisticated readings of ethnic texts, I do not think that the text has entirely lost its function of reflecting immigrants' life and their culture. What demands our critical attention is something else besides the sense of realism and cultural tradition, the silent workings in between the lines that subvert our realist and culturalist assumptions.

Sour Sweet and the Great Novel Tradition

Auerbach traces mimesis to two different styles, the Homeric and the Old Testament:

> The two styles, in their opposition, represent basic types: on the one hand fully externalized description, uniform illumination, uninterrupted connection, free expression, all events in the foreground, displaying unmistakable meanings, ...; on the other hand, certain parts brought into high relief, others left obscure, abruptness, suggestive influence of the unexpressed, "background" quality, multiplicity of meanings and the need for interpretation, ... (23)

After a fashion, both styles are employed in *Sour Sweet* (without the Western cultural specificity of Christianity). Lily's thoughts and actions are presented fully while Mui's tend towards obscurity with suggestive gaps and breaks. It is understandable, then, that a culturalist study like Rothfork's focuses on Lily as the representative case for the anthropological gaze, encouraged in part by the text's apparent reversal of the usual Orientalist discourse in which the assimilationist is allowed full humanity through clear presentation while the cultural nationalist is banished to the realm of femininity and dehumanizing fantasy. Orientalism persists through simple reversals of its terms, so long as its basic power structure of positional superiority and the maintenance of cultural boundaries remain. The crucial strategy in Mo's reversal, however, is not to make the Chinese other masculine and superficially familiar, but to make the assimilationist strange

as a threatening, mirrored copy of the "authentic" English. Mo's mixing of styles--a device
greatly valued by Auerbach in his study of Western mimesis--generates an infinite series of
ironic doubles (Western/Chinese, familiar/strange, human/inhuman, inside/outside,
masculine/feminine, etc.) hardly containable within any immanence of a logos, or a
dialectical unity.

Indeed, any quest for an authentic ideal (Western or Chinese) in the novel is bound to
fail because, as Lukacs says in *The Theory of the Novel*, "The novel is the epic of a world
that has been abandoned by God" (88). In his model, the Hellenic experience embodied in
the epic world of essence and immanence is lost in the God-forsaken world and has to be
recovered by the novel through the dialectics of form. As Paul de Man sees it, however,
Lukacs' ideal of mimetic homogeneity and totality is betrayed by his use of irony as a
structural category for transcendence:

> For if irony is indeed the determining and organizing principle of the
> novel's form, then Lukacs is indeed freeing himself from preconceived
> notions about the novel as an imitation of reality. Irony steadily undermines
> this claim at imitation and substitutes for it a conscious, interpreted
> awareness of the distance that separates an actual experience from the
> understanding of this experience. (56)

In *Sour Sweet*, irony undermines and postpones the ideal of cultural authenticity and
yin/yang balance both thematically and formally in the play of the seen and the unseen, the
familiar and the strange, the homely and the uncanny.

That the ideal of yin and yang has to be hoisted *post*humously onto a dead deified man
in *Sour Sweet* can be read allegorically as the inevitable other in any idealist conception of
the novel. Lévi-Strauss describes the birth of the genre as a deteriorative process:

> The past, life and the dream carry along with them dislocated images and
> forms, by which the writer is *haunted* when *chance* or some other necessity,
> contradicting the necessity by which they were once engendered in the
> actual order of reality, preserves in them, or rediscovers in them, the
> contours of myth. Yet the novelist drifts at *random* among these *floating
> fragments* that the warmth of history has, as it were, melted off from the
> ice-pack. He collects these scattered fragments and re-uses them as they

come along, being at the same time dimly aware that they originate from some *other* structure, and that they will become increasingly rare as he is carried along by a current *different* from the one which was holding them together. [The novel says] not only that it was born from the exhaustion of myth, but also that it is nothing more than an exhausting pursuit of structure, always *lagging behind* an evolutionary process that it keeps the closest watch on, without being able to rediscover, either within or without, the secret of a forgotten freshness.[5] [Italics mine]

What is interesting and revealing in the passage is not the implied normativity, but the siting of the novel as haunted by ghost meanings on the one hand and bursting apart from any structure on the other through the structuralist labile language of soliciting and dislocation.[6] Logos is not to be restored through the dialectics of form, but to be disseminated by its other that is both inside and outside, by the destructuring of force in any exhausting pursuit of structure.

Yin/Yang Drama

The fully presented and the obscure styles in the Western tradition of mimesis can be translated into yang and yin styles in Chinese literature, thus formally complementing the thematic play in Mo's novel. *Yin-yang* as used by Timothy Mo in *Sour Sweet* constitutes an agonistic pair in Chinese culture commonly used to describe metaphysical, social and natural changes through dialectical struggle. Generally speaking, *yin* and *yang* connote such dialectical oppositions as darkness and light, coldness and warmth, winter and summer, night and day, femininity and masculinity, earth and heaven, descent and ascent, inaction and action, absence and presence, submission and dominance, softness and hardness. While moralists such as Dong Zhongshu[7] eulogize *yang* and demonize *yin* through moral manichaenism, on the whole there are more ambiguous uses in various alternative and non-orthodox philosophies and beliefs. There are well-known Taoist sayings such as "Softness can overcome hardness," "Drops of water outwear the stone," and there is the Confucian parable about the soft tongue surviving the hard teeth.

The *yin-yang* battle belongs to what Frank Chin calls the warrior tradition in Chinese culture, permeating such classical novels as *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms,* and *Water Margins*, as well as military thought from the ancient military strategist Sun Tzu to Mao Zedong, the creator of guerilla warfare--"people's war" (79) as the narrator facetiously describes Lily's strategy with Chen. The Chinese feminine philosophy has also been shared by martial arts masters, such as in Red Cudgel's description of eye attack as yin attack (120).

The yin-yang pattern in *Sour Sweet* follows the Taoist philosophy, with a fatalistic, cyclical ring, that the dominant and strong will topple while the weak and submissive will rise. In the Hung family, the martial arts master and enforcer Red Cudgel is toppled by the more sinister and brainy White Paper Fan, his strategist. In the Chen family, the bossy traditionalist Lily has her authority undermined by the submissive assimilationist Mui. The yang position of dominance is constantly threatened and shaken by the yin position of change. As Mui says, "Nothing stays the same for ever" (206). To avoid easy simplification from such binary oppositions, though, we should bear in mind that these are relative positions, that no absolute moral values should be attached, and that there is a tension between the historical context of the human struggle of immigrants in the gap of cultures and the paradigm of yin and yang in the novel. If we ignore the idealistic balances of a static morality, then *yin* and *yang* shifts from the pedagogical (*yin-yang* balance) to the performative (*yin-yang* battle),[8] from questions of essence to questions of speech-acts, from monologic to dialogic, from culture as a way of life to culture as a way of struggle, from identity to difference.

Between Tradition and Assimilation

Mo starts the novel by posing familiar issues of tradition and assimilation:

> The Chens had been living in the UK for four years, which was long
> enough to have lost their place in the society from which they had emigrated
> but not long enough to feel comfortable in the new. (1)

"Chen had lost his claim to land in his ancestral village." He is only remembered for his monthly remittances to his father. "But in the UK, land of promise, Chen was still an interloper." He feels like "a foreigner," "a gatecrasher," though he has "no tangible reason" for this, for he has never been assaulted, only overlooked as if invisible, by the English. Thus, the narrative establishes an ironic distance between the Chens and the two worlds of unbelonging. The significant distance between subjective and objective realities raises a crucial question in the novel: which is more real? and what is the price for failing to follow "objective reality"? Chen remains a person of unbelonging throughout the novel. When the Chen family move out of their flat into a suburban house which also serves as their business premises, "Chen felt at home and yet not at home. He had been more comfortable rootless" (135). Such feelings of alienation from the two worlds and from reality itself are vintage "immigritude," present in many immigrant novels. Mo situates this personal drama of tradition and assimilation against the background of the immigrants' own history and tradition.

Chinese history is facetiously thrown in during a description of the Chens' sex life, in which Chen, the male superior, is made to feel dominant by the athletic and manipulating Lily, the female inferior,

> Towards Lily, later, Chen felt grateful, guilty, a little superior despite her odd accomplishments; proud of her in the way that a barbarian conqueror of a highly civilized people might draw an avuncular glow from the collective attainments of an apparently subjugated race, unaware all the time that the one who was being absorbed, subverted, changed, was himself. The pattern, in fact, of Chinese history repeated in microcosm. (15)

Mo is referring to such incidents in Chinese history as the Hun invasion, the Mongol conquest, and the Manchu conquest, in which the barbarian conquerors acknowledged the superiority of Chinese civilization and got themselves sinicized. Even as Mo conflates Chinese history and sexual strategy, we are made aware of the ironic fate of a once irresistible process of assimilation. Modernity also marks a break of historical specificity in any analogy between pre-modern conquests and modern European colonialism and

imperialism. Can Lily continue to practice or improvise her Chinese ways of doing things in England and hope to survive, given her limited command of English? The question is not only how much change they *will* inevitably undergo in order to survive, but more importantly, how much change they *can* undergo, before "assimilation" becomes coercion, and produces victims as well as ersatz copies of the "authentic" English.

Lily and Mui's father Tang Cheung Ching the kung fu master is a more immediate example of the dilemma of tradition and change. "[A] student of the *Hung gar* style of *siu lum*, a hard-line sect which laid emphasis on brute power and savage gripping and gouging techniques" (11), he follows his flawed shadow-boxing sets mechanically, and will not consider absorbing the Northern gymnastic style. Though later he is defeated by a Northern style boxer, he does "not think of blaming his limitations on the tradition he had been brought up in" (13). He is a victim of tradition. Resolved to take revenge through his disciple, he trains Lily like a son in the *Hung gar* style, until he sees that Lily's movements become more and more like those of the northern stylists. He has to give up. After the above quoted passage about Lily's tactics of people's war, the narrator continues,

> Here, as in other things, she showed herself out of sympathy with the head-on *Hung gar* traditions so proudly espoused by her father, that perspicacious man whose decision to discontinue her teaching might not have been so arbitrary after all. (79)

These second thoughts about the old man suggest that he may have realized that the *Hung gar* style is not perfect and that his daughter should not be subjected to and victimized by one tradition, though he himself can never break out of that tradition, or he is just too old to change his style. Lily has the natural ability to absorb the northern style while her father did not have it or whatever little he once had has already been suppressed through long years of mechanical training. The dilemma between tradition and change is finely balanced: it is not only the willingness to change, but also the ability to change, that is at stake. The boxer's personal tragedy is mirrored in that of the whole Chinese nation in her modern history of humiliation,

> Lily remembered Father impressing on her how no serious boxer could ever
> use guns in a private affair. One would have to be a traitor to the entire
> tradition. (He remembered the patriots of 1900, whose spells had not been
> proof against foreign lead.) (157)

Thus whether as a personal story, or as a cultural and national allegory, Mo's text treads a fine line between the progressivist march of assimilation and the nostalgic longing for tradition. The question is never a simple one for or against tradition, modernity, and progress. Instead, it is ambivalence that raises problems in the process of cultural assimilation and resistance, an ambivalence that permeates our very assessment of the characters in the novel in their personal and moral gains and losses.

The Rise and Fall in the Yin/Yang Battles

Sour Sweet presents a series of images of the yin/yang drama in which personal struggles mirror the larger background of assimilation and cultural tradition. Characters take different positions as they are reflected in a magic mirror, with every slight tilt producing different images of personal victories and moral defeats. At first, Lily seems to have combined yin and yang effectively in her self. She is more flexible in her tactics than her traditionalist father. Her husband is no rival for her feminine will and manoeuvres beneath her demure exterior. She can adapt well to the different circumstances (yin) and still manage to reach her goal (yang). She admits that her Chinese food is not authentic (158) and she even humorously doubts if she has mixed up her father's liniment for toughening his calluses with his patented internal draught which she insists that her husband should take: tradition suffers through failed memory (87). It is not certain which is stronger in her: tradition or her personal will. They are often mixed in her, making her a yang-ish woman, who metaphorically emasculates her husband at one time during her passive campaigns, "swirl[ing] the nozzle [of the vacuum cleaner] insolently between Chen's feet like some surrogate mechanical penis" (78). In this battle of the sexes, Chen seems defeated: she has taken the dominant yang position while the husband is in the

submissive yin position. Yet she also feels disappointed, because "[i]t was his function to oppose, part of the natural order of things, the cycle of constant fruitful opposites" (45). Victory and defeat are so easily reversible.

Later, he opposes the excessive and smothering female dominance through forming a father-son male bonding in gardening. He is working the land (yin), discovering and following Man Kee's natural inclinations (yin), and helping Man Kee take roots to the alien land like the miraculously growing tropical fruit stone despite Lily's ethnocentric predictions that a tropical fruit cannot grow in the land of snow and ice (169). He plays with his son, without a definite purpose, unlike Lily's early forced training in martial arts, where her father also imparts his own cultural frustrations (111). By taking the route of nature (yin), he subverts Lily's high-handed cultural (yang) insistence that Man Kee should attend the Chinese school in Chinatown, and learn mechanically by example and repetition (237). When Chen's laissez-faire attitude leads Man Kee to say that he wants to be a gardener, Chen says, "Be a gardener if it makes you happy" (255), while Lily gives her son a cuff on the head.

Chen has earlier had expectations of bringing Man Kee up as a restauranteur. His laissez-faire comment not only shows his passive personality, but also bespeaks a troubled mind that wishes a peaceful life for his son, unmolested by the Triads. His forced yin position under the bullying of the Triads is pathetic, making him more submissive, more observant and more emotional, and highlighting Lily in her yang-ish way of high-handed ignorance and cultural insistence.

Lily's exasperated dominance presages her downfall. When she violently uproots Man Kee's mango fruit plant (255), Chen and Man Kee go outside to burn Chen's father's coffin (which the old man has earlier shown and advertised to horrified old English people) and Man Kee's uprooted plant, a symbolic act of making a fresh start. Lily follows to apologize, and gets her foot hurt by "[a] jagged lump of green grass" (258). She has denied her son's bonding with the land and is now punished by the land in a way that

recalls the word <u>Oedipus</u> ("swollen-foot") as nature's affirmation that man is born of the earth.

However, Lily is also justified in demanding our sympathy. Chen has failed in his fatherly duty of education when he lets Man Kee succumb to a vegetable life, which has no future in England anyway. Chen's life is warped in the beginning when he hides his secret of getting money from the Triads and sinks under their blackmail and his own conscience. Lily is left to hold the male burden of moral support for the family, against what she feels is the conspiracy of Chen, Mui and Man Kee (258).

A similar pattern of rise and decline can be found in Lily's rhetoric of naming. On one hand, naming gives the namer the inaugural power to make the world according to her will. On the other hand, however, since she is also entering a pre-existing linguistic world, a breach of the rules can also make a fool of her. For Lily, to call her husband "Husband" or "Ah Chen" in order to split him into two functions is manipulative (40); to call Coca Cola "Whore Lock" and drink it boiled with a sliver of lemon is comic (146); to treat the Christmas turkey as if it were a Chinese "beggar's chicken" is simply disastrous (178). Lily is more successful working within the Chinese linguistic code than without; Chen is dumb in both and wins through silent and physical male bonding; it is Mui who, though, or because, she is timid and withdrawn in Chinese, seems to gain a different self in English.

Mui is brought up as a total opposite to Lily:

> Four years Lily's senior, Mui had been brought up as a girl with the not unreasonable end in view that she should become a woman: uncomplaining, compliant, dutiful, considerate, unselfish, within her limits truthful and honourable; and, needless to say, utterly submissive to the slightest wishes of her superiors which included women older than herself and the entire male sex, including any brothers she might acquire in the future. (10-11)

In their girlhood, they are complementary to each other: the martial arts student Lily escorts her home, while she puts Lily to bed. In their cultural adventure in England, there are moments of cooperation, as when the more observant Mui tells Lily the functions of the different parts for driving a car, while Lily has the male dexterity and presence of mind to

learn driving first. Yet for the most part, they undercut each other, with the assimilationist Mui winning the battle over the traditionalist Lily.

Mui's strength lies in her ability to adapt to the new master / environment. She has acquired working English as a servant before she comes to London. At first, she shuts herself inside the apartment, watching TV all the time, until one day, through a miraculous accident, she rouses herself from the initial stupor of culture shock. In that accident she saves Man Kee's life, and gains a life for herself. The previous period of TV watching can thus be compared to a kind of incubation. From TV, she learns about Indian corner stores and challenges Chen: why can't the clever Cantonese do the same (79)? From TV, she learns to read different facial expressions on the Westerners' faces, and argues with Lily who thinks Westerners all look the same and calls them pigs and bears (137). She mixes with the lorry drivers and brings a lot of business to their takeaway counter. As Lily's will gradually loses control over life and the people around her, as her tradition seems more and more harsh and out of touch with reality, Mui's points gain in weight for their very "truthfulness" and practicality: Lily should not teach Man Kee martial arts to fight back against the school bullies; Lily should get a driving licence first and should not try to bribe the English police officers (though in practice, at least one of them accepts Lily's "tea money"); Lily should not insist on sending Man Kee to Chinese school on weekends. On this last point, though, we do not know for sure if she is following her assimilationist ideology, or if she is simply out to frustrate Lily, perhaps both, just as we cannot separate Lily's traditionalism from her strong will.

Mui's final victory is her decision to get married, open a fish and chips restaurant, and take out citizenship. Her husband Lo will get unemployment benefit as his *right*. They have the wealthy Chinese widow Mrs Law as their sleeping partner, and all the lorry drivers are willing to sign their names for Mui to borrow money from the bank. It all sounds somehow like one of her favourite TV dramas coming true in reality, a happy

romance ending after all the hardships she has undergone, while Lily is proven wrong in her earlier warning that "Life is not a TV programme" (152).

The victory of assimilation is traceable to the victory of Mrs Law. Before this "happy ending," Mui has become Mrs Law's protégée. Mrs Law is a kind, magnanimous, and well-mannered rich widow who takes pity on her poor Chinese compatriots, showing her sympathy and extending her help in a way that makes everyone comfortable. She is almost impeccable. Perhaps because of this, Lily sends her pregnant sister to Mrs Law's place, desperate to avoid a scandal and taking her hospitality for granted. After hearing of Lily's ill treatment of Mui from the victim, even the magnanimous Mrs Law cannot help slighting Man Kee for a moment, seeing him unreasonably as Lily's representative. Later, she makes a difference between the mother and the son which reveals a not so kind, deeply buried will:

> And before long she had seen that, after all, he was just a little boy and,
> later, that his aspirations were not his mother's, whatever she might think.
> In that might lie her punishment, Mrs Law thought without vindictiveness.
> (207)

The narrator's qualifier "without vindictiveness" has a chilling effect. *Law* is impartial, merciless, and effortless in effecting punishment. What can be more severe than alienating a child from his doting mother? Is Mrs Law's motive in assisting Mui's fish and chips restaurant all that altruistic? Is there not a will to play with other people's destiny, from a very powerful position? If Lily is a victim of her father's yang-ish training, what has the yin-ish Mui found in this adopted mother? Submissive by her upbringing, Mui has totally surrendered herself to *Law*, to her step-mother / tongue, to the clichés from TV. And this seemingly impartial Law of the social Symbolic is driven by a mirror-stage narcissistic aggressivity in its apparently Samaritan aid to the other (Lacan, "Mirror Stage" 737).

Mrs Law reveals her *desire* in the quasi-romantic and "almost entirely sexless attachment" (51) between her and Lo, Chen's buddy and co-worker, though the quasi-omniscient narrator says difference in social status and temperament makes romance

impossible between them. Negation often leads to compensations of various kinds. When Mrs Law and Lo come to visit the Chens' house, Lily wonders about their taking one taxi together, while Mui jokes that they should pretend to be married. Mrs Law counters by asking if this should be a *marriage of convenience* (127). The term would be more appropriately applied to the marriage of Mui and Lo, announced suddenly at the end of the novel, without the readers being first told of the courtship process. Indeed, we know more of the subtle relationship between Mrs Law and Lo than that between Mui and Lo. Mui announces her impending marriage and "fish and chip restaurant" in close succession, as if they were part of a single deal. "'Mrs Law is lending us money. She is our "sleeping" partner.' Mui laughed" (276). The *double-entendre* "'sleeping' partner," like "marriage of convenience," is obviously spoken in English and sounds as if it came from Mrs Law. Mui is duped; her earlier joke comes home with full force. The old ambiguous *ménage à trois* of a Chinese take-away is replaced through Mrs Law's desire by a new one of a Western restaurant.

Uncanny Doubles

The yin/yang drama is embodied in a series of mirror images that threaten the social symbolic with endless splittings and ironic (self-)reflections. The sisters are mirror images of each other. Both are victims, playing the game of control while being played by forces beyond their control and beyond their awareness. This is why in one scene they find themselves being reflected in a series of mirrors, which produce strange simian images of the sisters, the long and thin Lily becoming the dwarf and fat Mui and vice versa.

> Chen was pleasantly surprised, though, by this trick of revelation, which gave him a freak insight into the shared physical inheritance of the girls, seemingly so different. Now he knew they really were sisters. He smiled, and a fiendish grin came over the face of the thick-set, bandy-legged simian in the mirror. Lily turned away from the nasty family of grotesques, insulting specimens of humanity. (She was sure westerners didn't come out like that!) (157)

The pair of yin-yang sisters as alter egos, mirror images of each other, have more in common than they realize. Mui has a daughter by an unknown father who has probably left, and who might as well be dead; Lily has a son by a father who is dead but is presumed to have left. Mui's husband Mr Lo is as stolid as Lily's dead husband Chen, both being easy prey in the hands of their manipulative wives. That leaves Chen *excess*, a pathetic figure who has to disappear in the novel, since he is really neither yin nor yang, with "a fiendish grin" at the symmetry of yin-yang pattern. Lily is the victor in Chinese; Mui wins out through English; Chen is silenced in both, disappearing without a trace. As excess, he haunts both worlds.

Yet Chen may not be so innocent as he appears. There are suggestions in the novel that he may be the father of Jik Mui, Mui's illegitimate daughter. The suggestions are not strong, but tantalizing. Lily has suspected but immediately dismissed this possibility, concluding that there are signs of Western ancestry in Jik Mui's cheekbones. But she is a bad reader anyway, especially towards the end of the novel. Mui seems to be teasing her all the time around this issue, with uncharacteristic daring. Initially questioned about her pregnancy, she is not thrown off guard, but asks Lily the prurient and moral interrogator, "You don't ask *who*, Lily, only where? and when?" (185) The biggest shock for Lily would not be fornication with any of the lorry drivers, but with Chen. When Lily tells an all too obvious lie about Mui's move to Mrs Law's place, "Husband made no fuss,..." only suggesting, "Take the car, she shouldn't have to go on the bus or train" (188). As if he has known everything! After Mui's delivery, Mrs Law sends a postcard, an open letter for Chen to read without rousing the wife's suspicion. When questioned by the unsuspecting Lily about his feelings about Mui's misdemeanor, "Chen shook his head. He was silent. His adam's apple worked" (201). When Lily conveys Chen's invitation for Jik Mui to live with them, Mui declines and says meaningfully, "Younger sister, it is you who does not understand. It is better for her to stay in Mrs Law's House"(202). And she adds later, "Better for everyone" (202). The reason she offers is, "There is no place for a girl in

this family" (203). As we know later, she does not give up her baby for Mrs Law to adopt. The subtext for her reason is that she knows or supposes that the traditionalist Chen is obviously disappointed by a daughter. Viewed in this light, the reason why Chen is suddenly so willing to let Lily take Man Kee to the Chinese school and why Mui so stubbornly refuses to drop Man Kee off at the Chinese school on the way to her weekend visit to Mrs Law is that they want some time together in the house without Lily. After Chen's death, Mui brings Jik Mui to live in the house: "'Lily' - she hesitated. 'No reason why she shouldn't live with us here?' She was going to add 'now' but was able to stop it tripping off her tongue" (273). "Now" would mean "now that Chen has gone."

All these suggestions are manipulated by the narrator slyly, for he does not reveal all of the characters' thoughts. Often, an obviously omniscient voice drifts into a third person limited point of view, as in this example:

> Mui was quiet as ever. She and Chen had been brought closer together by the recent changes. There was sympathy between them. There was nothing said; no open demonstration of feeling. Their growing regard could not be ritualised into empty forms of address or behaviors: Chen got no extra bowls; Mui didn't wait on him at table. Her regard for brother-in-law was not necessarily stronger than Lily's conventional veneration of the old man, nor yet more genuine, but it was less looked for, more accidental and spontaneous and for that reason more vulnerable and therefore, perhaps, more precious. Chen was less stolid with Mui. Once Lily was almost certain, she heard him singing with Mui to the strains of the rejected transistor radio in the kitchen: either that or Mui had a frog in her throat, which was unlikely in high summer. Extraordinary! And sometimes she would go to the bathroom and find the two of them talking together - only god knew what about. Lily thought it might be *her,* for they veered away quickly to their chores when *she* came in. (227-28)

The irony is that Lily is not totally wrong. It is a *her*, not Lily, but Jik Mui. The narrative style both covers and reveals, with tantalizing suggestions.

Such a reading adds yet more doubling to the yin/yang pair of Mui and Lily. Lily is the legitimate wife; Mui the illegitimate mistress. The half sister/brother pair Jik Mui and Man Kee would share a common paternity, the common phallus as the object of contention

between their mothers. The doubles would then be attracted or traced to an origin, to the silent Same, which is also an object of desire that has to recede and disappear. For both women, Chen has become superfluous. For Lily, Chen is conquered and silenced anyway, while for Mui, Chen has served his function as an ally in her rivalry with Lily, and has somehow disappointed her with a daughter. The secret *ménage à trois* has reached a critical point, with everyone in an awkward position. Chen probably feels the sisters' parricidal will. As a pawn in the sisters' yin/yang battle, he has to disappear after serving his function, to be replaced by a deified Chen. As the father figure (origin), he is revealed, erased, and overwritten by the sisters. Thus, this reading does not rule out the possible Western paternity of Jik Mui; the dual parentage hovers as a yin/yang double around the obsession of the absent origin.

Earlier, Chen grins at the double image of the sisters in the mirror, probably relishing a childish sense of control over them. But he himself cannot escape the fate of doubling. The sisters have pampered his appetite, reducing him to the status of a child:

> Under these circumstances it was difficult not to think of Chen as a greedy little boy. Of course, the girls forgave him, never allowed themselves to see it in quite such terms, but there was no doubt Man Kee had undermined his father's authority in the most innocent way possible, by analogy. (41)

Through doubling of father and son, the sisters have emasculated him. No wonder "[his] skin was as smooth as a child's" and the only razor in the house belongs to Lily (16). His physiognomy is itself a grotesque mirror of double:

> ... there had formed under his cheeks and around the jowls a thin film of subcutaneous fat which while it did not entirely obliterate the planes of the bone beneath did have an effect of blurring them, so that there was an impression of wrong focus, fuzzy double images marginally unmerged as yet into one in the range-finder of the kind of sophisticated camera Chen's Japanese customers would carry. (16)

Chen would even see his wife in a double vision: she is not beautiful according to Chinese standards, but he knows Westerners are attracted to her. This doubling of vision is echoed in the double characterization; Chen's doubling image bespeaks a double life: he

lives both in the underworld and in the upperworld, and he sleeps (I have argued) both with the yang Lily and with the yin Mui. His death is authorized by the yangish Red Cudgel through the plot of the yin-ish White Paper Fan, an unnecessary, absurd ending as a result of the yin/yang power struggle within the Hung family. Ironically, he is also a pawn in the yin/yang struggle of his own family. As the father figure, his death is somewhat like that of Lily and Mui's father, leaving behind a couple of yin/yang offspring. There is also a similar sense of betrayal by the two sisters, just as their own father has been disappointed and betrayed by Lily's sexual and cultural (kung fu style) difference.

There is one more uncanny doubling in the novel, that between the Hung family and the Chens. Towards the end of the novel, the yang Lily is hurt in the foot; the *Hung gar* style fighter/enforcer Red Cudgel is crippled by the rival gang through the conspiracy of his strategist White Paper Fan. Red Cudgel is yang in his brawny style of head-on confrontation through gang warfare. The colour red and the phallic connotation are definitely yang. In contrast, White Paper Fan is a brainy conspirator, the nickname having all the yin connotations. As the power shifts to the new generation of criminals, the Hung family is also modernized: White Paper Fan abandons his abacus in favour of a slim battery calculator for his new line of business (loans and interests), and uses a more impersonal and "objective" language with terms like "analyze" and "communication" (260). The difference between the old (yang) and the new (yin) in the Hung family, as White Paper Fan comments, is that the old still take "'the oaths seriously - as they are meant to be taken'" (264), while the new ones are unprincipled and unscrupulous in pursuit of their own self interest. Even White Paper Fan may one day be toppled by his more yin underlings for still retaining some of the old principles (264). This would be a grotesque doubling of Mui's assimilationist ideology. If one is coerced to conform, then there are always new forces that one will join to survive, and where is the limit? In the traditionalists, there are still some principles to follow, pathetic and ludicrous as they may appear in a changing world that outmaneuvers their will. In the assimilationists, we have

ersatz copies and mimicries of whatever happens to be dominant, like the postmodern L. A., the city of quartz.[9]

In presenting the yin-yang battle, the narrator uses a third-person limited omniscient point of view, which follows Lily's thoughts more than it does others'. Lily is shown to us with all her compassions and weaknesses. Whatever is yang is obvious, open and above board. Even her yin-ish manipulation of her husband is shown frankly and openly. Her flaws are easier to see because some of her ethnocentric values are so obviously "wrong" or problematic, leading to quixotic disasters. In contrast, Mrs Law's and Mui's thoughts are more difficult to figure out because, where they do appear, they happen to be "correct" and "fair" at the moment, all the more powerful for being "correct" and "fair," untroubled by their double of "wrong" values and *excessive* passions, and all the more powerful for being somehow less visible, less knowable, less fathomable, but more hegemonic, and embodying Enlightenment values of a coercive normativity.

In his essay "What is Enlightenment?", Foucault identifies "Enlightenment" as "a political problem": it is not just an ongoing process, but also a task, an obligation. The question, as Foucault sees in Kant's text, is "how the use of reason can take the public form that it requires, how the audacity to know can be exercised in broad daylight, while individuals are obeying as scrupulously as possible" (*Reader* 37). From this problematic of the Enlightenment, we must see the production of individuals not as a release into autonomous selves, but as a coercion of modernity upon man "to invent himself," "to face the task of producing himself" (*Reader* 42). Modernity entails the break with tradition, the exercise of reason, and the search for the truth of what is real. Within this modern attitude lies a prescriptive injunction to conform to normality, to essentialize the present, and to occlude its own limits. Since we are products of Enlightenment and are still within modernity, Foucault warns against falling into the trap of being either for Enlightenment or against Enlightenment, and suggests local, strategic oppositions.

Applying Foucault's insight to Mo's text and its context, one can appreciate the difficulty, the subtlety, and the ambiguity with which Mui's liberation from tradition is handled. The third-person limited omniscient narrator stays back from fully exploring her psyche, and withholds information about the paternity of her child. She "emerges" with a "new" voice different from Lily's, and overwriting Chen's silence, a voice more in tune with reason, individual rights and the official version of English mainstream culture. There are more blanks in Mui's portrait than in Lily's, and between the two sisters, there is an unbridgeable gap. In the plot development, Lily falls from her traditional dominance, while Mui gradually emerges, but they remain each other's double, and ironic shadow. Mo dances between tradition and modernity, side-stepping narrowly what Foucault calls "the 'blackmail' of Enlightenment" (*Reader* 42).

Sour Sweet is a historical novel dealing with the ambivalence and ambiguity of modernity for immigrants coming from a colonial, backward and traditional society. Writing in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Mo situates the story in the mid to late 60s or early seventies, a time when it was still possible for the poor in the Commonwealth to go to the mother country, when Hong Kong was still very traditional in culture and poor in rural areas. The contrast between tradition and modernity is stronger than in the movie adaptation of the novel, which puts the scene in the contemporary 1980s, with a bespectacled Chen and resultant loss of plausibility. Through this backward projection, Mo avoids the spatial postmodern, multi-cultural superficiality and probes deep into the juncture of tradition and modernity, the gap in which "emergence" becomes a myth through a series of ambivalent and ambiguous doubles. In this light, the not quite realist, not quite (post)modernist choice is a deliberate stylistic intervention.

The thematic ambiguity and ambivalence carry into form as well. Let me return to the passage about the distorting mirrors. Realist novels are supposed to reflect life through mimesis, much like a mirror. But then its mirror function would really render itself superfluous, though things become complicated if the viewer does not see what s/he likes,

or does not like what s/he sees, of the self in the mirror and blames the mirror instead. If the mirror merely serves to confirm our sense of reality, then it is something added on, dispensable. If it is used to discover reality, then we would have no means to prove its reliability. The novel occupies a similar uneasy position towards reality. It gives us a double which problematizes the "original," without replacing it. And this "original" is itself a sense of the original, never the thing itself. As Derrida points out in discussing the self-duplication within mimesis,

> ... perhaps it is in the strange mirror that reflects but also displaces and distorts one *mimesis* into the other, as though it were itself destined to mime or mask *itself*, that history--the history of literature--is lodged, along with the whole of its interpretation. Everything would then be played out in the paradoxes of the supplementary double: then paradoxes of something that, added to the simple and the single, replaces and mimes them, both like and unlike, unlike because it is--in that it is--like, the same as and different from what it duplicates. (*Dissemination* 177)

The literal-minded Lily turns away from the "unkind caricature of the real life" Chens, while the child-like, non-verbal husband makes "a fiendish grin" with delight. The mirrors have shown them as freaks and grotesques, which are the return of the repressed, somewhere between normal humans and the other. This function has been common in Western and Eastern myths and superstitions: the mirror reflecting ghosts and monstrous shadows not seen by the human eye, especially in stories of the double.[10] It is a yin ("shadowy") function, bringing up the unseen to problematise the seen, digging up the repressed to haunt the dominant, inserting the strange within the familiar.

In my reading of the text, I have been focusing on the freakish, dark and uncanny side of life, Mo's ironic devices that subvert the realistic texture of the novel. What reviewers have called "19th century realism" or "naturalism" in Mo is actually a deceptive and disingenuous use of earlier traditions of realism, a formal doubling of realism.

On the most obvious level, the novel can be read as documentary realism in telling the reader how the Chinese live, how a Chinese restaurant is run, and the various character sketches in chapter two, for example, lend an air of authenticity with such meticulous

details that some reviewers feel the novel moves too slowly, at a leisurely pace befitting the readers of the previous two centuries. Mo's surname would also lend authenticity and authority as a "native informant." To some extent, this style suits the subject matter of Third World immigrant life, since the characters come from a more traditional culture, and they live a secluded ghetto life: there is not much contact with the outside world and things go slowly in an orderly fashion. Yet the telling is often deceptive, tinged by a limited and not very reliable omniscient point of view. One can even say that Mo is somehow flaunting the stereotype of the "inscrutable Chinese." What really happens behind Lily's back, no one can tell for sure. Mo the half-"native informer" invites the reader into his Borgesian yin/yang labyrinth to experience existential perplexity, moral ambivalence and cultural uncertainty--the uncanny doubling of reality. The Chinese immigrants and their life are not just objects presented for the reader's scrutiny; instead the camera lens gets blurred and double focused.

Many realist and modernist novels create characters of historical emergence: they rise from old traditions into an individualist self-identity, with a distinctive voice of their own. One thinks of George Eliot's *Middlemarch,* or even of D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, in which a self is negotiated out of conflicts with others. But in Mo's text, there is no evolution of character. They do change, but they also remain the same. Promises are given, but they fail to realize. At first, Lily appears like an adventurous woman determined to make a new home in the new land, only to reveal herself as too traditional to adapt in the new culture. Mui gains a new voice that seems to work well towards a new future, except that it sounds too much like the words of other manipulative forces. Individual identities are thus dissolved and submerged by social discourses that speak and control "individuals." But these discourses are in turn doubled and parodied, in an endless series of double-focused mirroring images. Any distinct identity, any paradigmatic origin, and any crystal-clear reading, are, like the paternity of Jik Mui, erased, blurred, disseminated.

The narrative structure oscillates in *Sour Sweet* between the story of the Chen family and that of the Hung family, between the above world and the underworld. The ordered, at first symmetrical breaks impress the doubleness and aesthetic distance into the reading experience. Reviewers have noted that the stylized ritual and the portrayal of one dimensional villains make the underworld less real. Yet paradoxically, the underworld is depicted in a crystal clear way, almost hyper-real, with for example, the vignettes of various villains and their histories in chapter two. The clarity/obscurity reversal twists the readers' conventional expectations of the two worlds. Yet the hyper-real can produce an eerie effect, such as we can feel in the detailed rituals of the triads, Red Cudgel's and Iron Plank's kung fu instructions, etc. In the scene when the triads attack Jackie Fung, the description is minute, its tone clinical:

> A chopperman struck awkwardly at him across the table. Jackie Fung swayed six inches to the right. He threw the neat brandy in his neighbour's glass into his assailant's face. The misdirected blow smashed a rice bowl. He seized the man's wrist, broke the glass and scraped the jagged edge over his nose and eyes. He grabbed the man's testicles savagely and then disarmed him. Armed now with the cleaver, he pushed the table over. As he did so, a swordsman struck at his head. Fung parried late with the chopper which was jarred out of his hand but just caught his attacker's sword-arm as it went back. The man went for the knife in his belt. Jackie Fung threw his palm over the swordsman's face, found the socket with his long thumb, and gouged into the eyeball. (132)

The passage consists of neat, simple sentences. Details such as "six inches" are carefully noted, showing a kung fu master at his best. Mo said in his interview with Barber that he knew street fighting and had given accurate descriptions in *Sour Sweet*. What stand out from and against this super-real description are the clinical details--clinical in another sense: face-scratching, testicles-squeezing, and eye-gouging, all told in a style bled of excitement, hilarity, or, pathos. The sheer neatness of the fight sounds like a text-book case, which in turn undercuts the sense of reality through stylization. If "Asian gang" is an expected element in a novel about the London Chinese community, then Mo's super-realistic description unexpectedly turns the detail into a generic stylization. Mo is flaunting

the generic conventions of crime fiction which lies at the origins of the English novel. Red Cudgel harks back to Captain Jack, Jonathan Wild, Mac the Knife, the Godfather, and so on, arch-villains who both abide by and flaunt old-fashioned codes of honour. Except in the very beginning and the very ending, all the villains are referred to by their colourful nicknames, as if they were actors in a play, say a Peking Opera which has standard roles such as "red face" and "white face." Nicknames and numeric rank titles are a sign of masks and double identities, which are in turn standard repertoires in drama. In this light, the vignettes of characters in chapter two read like an introduction to characters before a play is staged, and the headings such as "Red Cudgel (426)" read like standard roles in a dramatic genre. The stage is the location for mimesis of reality, as well as for "mimicry or simulation, 'reference without a referent'" (Derrida, *Dissemination* 181).

To continue my dramatic metaphor, Lily's performance is stagy, her and Mui's sentimental outbursts a spoof of Victorian family values such as appear in Dickens' novels in a grotesque light. Equally grotesque is the contrast of family values with suggestions of *ménage à trois*. The most grotesque scene of all, replete with a kind of Dickensian humour, occurs when a Chinese coffin inspires British senior citizens to sing grace and "abide with me" (254). Besides, the double plot of the above world of middle-class family values and the underworld of criminality can also be found in Dickens. The novel ends in a mixture of tragedy (Chen's "heroic" acceptance of death), comedy (Mui's marriage), absurdity (the reason of Chen's death), and farce (Lily's image-making of Chen).

Both in form and in theme, the text plays in between yin/yang doubles, neither here nor there, not quite / not right / not white. The reading experience is best summed up in the title as a linguistic sign. Sour Sweet refers to a popular Chinese dish in Western cities (which in the novel Lily would admit is not authentic Chinese food anyway). In the Chinese language, we refer to this dish as "tang (sugar) cu (vinegar)." Through translation, naming by ingredients is replaced by naming by tastes: sweet and sour. Mo switches the order and omits the conjunction, making it *Sour Sweet*. Translated back into Chinese,

these two words are the first two characters of a four-character proverb: suan (sour) tian (sweet) ku (bitter) la (pungent)--all the tastes of life's weal and woe. The meaning is not lost on English speakers, since sour sweet all too obviously breaks into two conflictual gustatory feelings, the "real-life" delicious taste being thus pulled apart and distorted through the mirror of another language in a novel written by an "Anglo-exotic."[11]

Reviewers have compared Mo's fiction to "Chinese menu, and that can't, of course, fail to satisfy" (Cunningham 58). Exotic novels, exotic peoples, exotic foods. They are supplementary and secondary, to be tasted, seen and read before one returns to the more quotidian, mainstream stuff. Such is the more common, more genteel, and "enlightened" way Western nations have been treating minorities inside and the Third World outside. *Sour Sweet* leaves a strange and gingerly taste in the mouths of those who make the occasional excursion into the exotic.

Notes

1 Realism and Naturalism can be used interchangeably in a very loose way. The textbook definitive distinction is that the former is mimesis reflecting truth while the latter seeks to show scientific laws behind daily details. There is a similarity in style and whether truth or scientific laws are revealed in a particular text can be subject to different readings.

2 The realist novel in this context means more than just a writing style. In linking dialogism with Chinese yin-yang, Kristeva may be accused of fantasy and idealization about the other, as she does in *About Chinese Women*. However, what is "China" if not a series of inventions anyway. As I will argue later in this essay, a dialogic reading of yin-yang is plausible.

3 According to Christopher Bracken's Ph.D. dissertation "White Gift: The Potlatch and the Rhetoric of Canadian Colonialism, 1868-1936," this rhetoric of mourning was also adopted by the Canadian government towards the First Nations people at the beginning of this century. The "work of mourning" comes from Derrida's reading of Freud. See page 178 of Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International for a list of his works that have discussed this Freudian concept.

4 This is part of the so-called Confucian revival in recent years among some Chinese intellectuals both in the West and in Asia. As Arif Dirlik has critiqued, "the effort takes the form of articulating to the values of capitalism a Confucianism that in an earlier day was deemed to be inconsistent with capitalist modernization. Hence Confucianism has been rendered into a prime mover of capitalist development and has also found quite a sympathetic ear among First World ideologues who now look to a Confucian ethic to relieve the crisis of capitalism" ("The Postcolonial Aura" 341).

5 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Origin of Table Manners: Introduction to a Science of Mythology: 3*, John and Doreen Weightman trans. (London: Jonathan Cape, [1968] 198), 129, 130-131. Quoted in McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel* 5-6.

6 See Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, "Force and Signification," 3-30.

7 Dong Zhongshu (179-104 B.C.), ancient Chinese philosopher and administrator responsible for institutionalizing Confucianism into ethical and political principles for the use of feudal bureaucracy.

8 The pedagogic and the performative are borrowed from Homi Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation," and "'Race', time and the revision of modernity," in Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

9 This phrase is borrowed from the title of Mike Davis' book, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. I have in mind his analysis of the political use of showcase multiculturalism by politicians and multinational corporations.

10 See Otto Rank, *The Double*, for a list of such works in Western romantic and modernist literature. But the theme of the mirror and the double, as Rank has shown through citing anthropological studies, is cross-cultural.

11 The word is commonly used for Rushdie, Ishiguro and Mo. See Michael Barber's interview with Timothy Mo in *Books and Bookmen*, Jan. 1984, "Fighting Talk." 26-27.

Chapter Three: Colonial Modernity in Timothy Mo's
The Monkey King

Timothy Mo's first novel, *The Monkey King*, depicts the family saga of the Poons as

they prosper amid the general transition of post-war Hong Kong into "modernity." In his

Times Literary Supplement review, Peter Lewis attributed its appeal to "the novelty of its

subject," and praised Mo for

> ... present[ing] Chinese society from the inside, maintaining an amused
> detachment from the Poon family at the centre of the novel while generating
> considerable sympathy for several of its members. *The Monkey King* was
> frequently comic without being a comic novel, and claims that Mo was
> doing for Hong Kong what V. S. Naipaul had done for Trinidad in his early
> novels were almost inevitable. (Lewis 502)

Like other critics, Lewis splits Mo's position as an ethnic writer between thematic

originality as an exotic native informant, and formal secondariness in doing for Hong Kong

what V. S. Naipaul has already done for Trinidad and comic realists like Charles Dickens

did long ago for England. *The Monkey King* is presented as an Eastern subject packaged

in a Western form, and this disjunction has serious implications for any reading of the

novel. To separate subject and form, what is exotic and what is already familiar, ethnic

raw material and metropolitan forms of representation, reiterates the power relations

between the centre and the margin, and the time lag between an advanced West and a

belated Third World. Indeed naive realism is itself problematic in representing the Third

World, because it too closely resembles the scientistic empirical method in which the

powerful Western "eye" has viewed the "natives" of the world. Rey Chow describes the

untheoretical approach of realism "as sharing an *episteme* with primatology" (*Writing*

Diaspora 3), while Trinh T. Minh-ha questions the role of Western fe/male scholars in

reifying, fixing, and stereotyping non-Western, primitive natives (47-78).

Post-colonial Calibans who are obliged to write in Prospero's language may choose to

transform the master's discourse--as Mo does--through a critical, dialogic entanglement and

interrogation. Refusing either a slavish imitation or a simplistic opposition (which might well be reduced to an inverse repetition of the master's narrative), the post-colonial writer embraces the inevitable historical legacy of belatedness and secondariness, and rewrites, writes back, and thereby "splits" the original in the master narrative. What Mo does with the English realist novel is exactly the trick of the mythological Monkey King's myriad ways of transfiguration and transformation—what Mary Louise Pratt calls "transculturation" in the cultural contact zone (34). Mo's novel needs to be seen as innovative in form through a subaltern parody bearing upon larger issues of European modernity and Third-World belatedness.

The theme of Mo's text is colonial modernization; the form, the already modern and endlessly fluid English novel. In different degrees, Mo's text absorbs and rewrites earlier texts, notably the English providential romance *(Tom Jones)*, the adventure novel *(Robinson Crusoe)*, a spoof of the travel genre *(Gulliver's Travels)*, and a West Indian post-colonial novel *(A House for Mr Biswas)*. The emergence of the individual figures prominently in the English novels as a thesis and a problem of modernity. How does this model apply in the (post)colonial scene, the "other" scene of European modernity? Mo's novel shadows the emergence of the individual by dwelling on the ambiguities between tradition and modernity, the individual and his destabilising double, European beginnings and colonial secondariness. The intertextual relations between *The Monkey King* and the above novels render the synthetic model of universality an impossibility because of the intrusion of an original "other" constitutive and deconstructive of the myth of the modern individual.

Novelistic Traditions and Thematic Echoes
The Monkey King is an apparently realist novel. In tracing its origins and influences, we cannot find many hard and fast evidences of deliberate parodies and imitations, hence its apparent realism, the portrayal of real life with its essence of humanism. However, realism

assumes an essentialist universalism in an all too familiar thematic of tradition and modernity, which celebrates the emergence of the individual from an oppressive and outdated tradition. Somewhere between Mo's text and the reader's expectations in the context of the novelistic tradition, there are distant echoes of bourgeois individualists as heroes making the first break from tradition and making their fortune and redemption through dreams of adventure and deeds of empire. To what extent can this tradition be repeated in a different time and a different scene? Will colonial modernity be a mere mimic parody of the European model, as a gloomy Naipaul meditated long ago? Or is there a more original universality in the "copied" version, high-lighting modernity and its other both in the periphery and in the center? I will use Defoe and Fielding as a familiar archetypal pair to frame Mo's post-colonial re-writing of the genre.

Ian Watt accounts for the rise of the novel in the sociological context of the rise of the middle class. The genre does contain many signs of the individual, whether in the form of the reading public, in the portrayal of individual heroes and heroines, or in the cultural background of bourgeois values informing the development of the novel right from the beginning of modern capitalism. The emergence of individuals from tradition for self-definition and redemption through creating a new world and a new self is part of the problematic of modernity. For the realist novel in particular, the destiny of the individual is bound up with entering or creating what Bakhtin calls a new chronotope (time/space), a space of light and visibility overriding the romantic shadows and repetitions of the past.[1] If we put the self-invention theme in the context of colonialism, the self-image of European humanism is further problematized by scenes of slavery and inhumanity, by questions such as Edward Said poses about the source of income for Mansfield Park (*Culture and Imperialism* 80-96).

One archetypal image of bourgeois individualism in early English novels is Defoe's remarkable hero, Robinson Crusoe. Crusoe breaks away from a constricting homeland and is exiled on a desert island. Through hard work and Christian faith Crusoe finally

builds up his own fortune and finds his own redemption. There is, of course, one cannibalistic native servant, Friday. This archetypal image is perhaps extreme to the extent of absurdity: questions have long been raised as to how free Crusoe is in survival and self-invention economically, socially, culturally and linguistically. Crusoe's real life model was reduced to a half-mad and inarticulate "savage" and, as Armstrong and Tennenhouse have pointed out, the irrational territories of the mind "hopping with demons and fraught with violence" (191) have always been constitutive of Crusoe's contradictory spiritual and economic activities. As an allegory of bourgeois individualism and capitalism, *Robinson Crusoe* provides an interesting myth that is no less real as a cultural ideology that lies behind much reading of the realist novels that follow in the wake of Crusoe.

The "synthesis" of Protestant God and individual self-invention (in apparent rebellion against the biological father's warnings) in Defoe is narrated in the language of providential romance in the presence of the father in Fielding's *Tom Jones*, in which the hero's adventures--chiefly of a licentious kind--are finally redeemed in a reconciliation with his father, so that individual free will is revealed to be part of God's providential design. Unlike Crusoe, Tom Jones does not redeem himself through diligence and faith; instead, he throws himself into various misdemeanors until he sinks deep into the nadir of life, whereupon his essential goodness is rediscovered and he is finally reconciled with father and fortune. Both novels, seemingly so different from each other, dwell at the origins of the English novel tradition, and repeat the contradictory discourse of modernity's self-grounding with the shadow of God somewhere in the background.

While Defoe's heroes enact a "morality" that combines salvation with money-making, Fielding's novel tries to make a fine distinction between morality and Mammon. According to Martin Battestin,

> the meaning of *Tom Jones* turns upon the presentation of two major and complementary themes: these are the doctrines of Providence with respect to the macrocosm and of Prudence, the analogous rational virtue within the microcosm, man. (142)

Providence in the novel ensures that divine justice will prevail over chaos and control the series of events and coincidences threatening the fate of our innately good hero. This God, as many critics have argued, is none other than Fielding himself as the literary creator, the author/ity, the omniscient narrator who is not only the obvious manipulator of events, but the centre of moral judgement (Battestin 143). As to Prudence on the microcosmic level, the word prudence, Martin Battestin argues, contains an ambiguity between the original positive meaning of "the supreme rational virtue of the Christian humanist tradition" (prudentia) and the later corruption of "reason in the service of villainy" or "worldly wisdom" used by the middle class to replace the original prudentia and reconcile Mammon and morality (Battestin 175-76). Fielding's novel makes fine distinctions out of this ambiguity in order to assert the Christian humanist tradition. Already in his day, the attempt at moral distinctions was an irritant to many, including Dr Johnson, with, for example, the incongruity between the hero's licentiousness and his final salvation--which in Defoe's *Moll Flanders* would be blatantly tongue-in-cheek. The corrupted later meaning of prudence is not so easily chaffed away from the pure, original prudentia. And Fielding's author/ity as the moral judge is just part of the tradition of literary paternity questioned and challenged by post-structuralist and feminist criticisms as logocentric and patriarchal (Said, *Beginnings* 83; Gilbert 486-98).

A question then can be posed in this way: if the origin is already tainted in the word prudentia, how can colonial modernity follow the same model through any authentic revival of a native moral doctrine "analogous" to Christian humanism, as John Rothfork argues in his essay on *The Monkey King*? Rothfork poses the familiar liberal question of tradition and modernity, and evaluates Confucianism according to whether it "hinders the Chinese from fully participating in the modern world" (50). Beyond the liberal binary opposition of the blackmail of Enlightenment, we need to ask, "What if hybridity has already taken place?" And who has been othered in this modernity process, and made excessive to official versions of tradition and modernity? In a world already "modernized,"

"Westernized," and "colonized," any apologia for modernity through a non-Western religion/philosophy is bound to double what Christian humanism has already done for European modernity. Purity is a later invention, often used for export.

Rothfork's essay pursues a pedagogic paradigm focused on how to modernize as a nation and how to make oneself a modern individual, a process that cannot but be Eurocentric. The subject of the novel is also a pedagogic subject, when one recalls that *Robinson Crusoe* is Rousseau's prime book of education for Emile. Tales of adventure have always been standard boys' reading for an imperialist education. The Lockean subject has informed realist novels in English from the very beginning, with a strong pedagogic "notion of consistency and constancy of growth" (Azim 21); while English as an academic discipline arose out of the imperialist need to educate colonial subjects in India (Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*). Thus by following the *Bildungsroman* genre, *The Monkey King* is playing with "education" on several levels, from a pseudo-growth of a boy/man to a pseudo-emergence of a colonial modernity. In addition, Mo has also built in the providential romance genre through a father figure / God who ensures that everything will turn out to be all right, thus complicating the simplistic model of self-made modern individuals. Out of these two contrasting genres represented by Defoe and Fielding, Michael McKeon sees a dialectical progression of the English novel. *The Monkey King* mimes the dialectics of history into a colonial nightmare, coming after the development of the novel into its colonial and post-colonial doubles.

The thematic of tradition and modernity, when transposed to the colonial world, becomes a symptom of what Homi Bhabha calls "counter-modernity," the unfreedom of individuals without the assurance of the providential design. Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas*, to which Mo's *The Monkey King* is often compared for realistic portrayal of their respective (post-)colonial worlds, reverses the usual theme of individual emergence and shows individuals as the "little man" trampled by tradition and left behind by modernity; the combination creates a nightmarish scene of unfreedom with neither individual success nor

divine redemption (whether Christian or native). Mr Biswas marries into a traditionalist communal house of wealth, but as a good-for-nothing husband, he has yet to earn his place and status. Whether in the communal house, or in the outer field where he is supposed to prove his worth, Biswas fails to secure his own house, which would serve as a symbol of his establishment. Unlike Defoe's heroes and heroines, Biswas remains unhoused and landless until his death. He fails to catch up with the modernity process, and his defeats in business and writing have been read as symptomatic of "colonial fantasy," "repetitive chaos," "castration and loss" (Bhabha, "Representation" 116). In this light, according to Homi Bhabha, the usual forms of the bourgeois novel--universalism, mimeticism and nationalism--are deconstructed in the endless repetitions and fantasies in the text. Biswas's dreams of a new self-identity remain in the pages of Samuel Smiles' self-help books, the exported model from the metropolitan centre.

Situated after the novelistic traditions of the mother country and the colonial traditions of another former colony of the empire, Mo's novel tackles the legacy of universal as well as literary modernization and poses questions somewhat different from those already posed by Naipaul's novel. In my reading of Mo's text, parallels and analogies are ultimately linked by common thematic concerns around the secondariness and supplementarity of colonial modernity created after the European model, and realized in the sly deconstruction of the generic features of the realist novel.

The Monkey King is the *Bildungsroman* of a modern financial manager. Wallace Nolasco, a Macau native of Portuguese descent, marries into the family of Mr Poon, a self-made Chinese businessman, rebels against quaint traditions, and finally matures into a new type of businessman. Though unique in its dealing with modernity in Hong Kong in English, the novel does recall other texts and traditions. Its plot is similar to Shaw's *Major Barbara*: Undershaft has to pass his business on to a foundling, just as Mr Poon gets his business thanks to his father-in-law and passes it down to his son-in-law. In both texts, idealism and practicality are synthesized, while a tone of cynicism lurks underneath the

apparent success story. The conflict between Wallace's individualism and his in-laws' communalism is similar to Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas*, in which Mr Biswas has to fight humiliations as a son-in-law married into a rich and mean big family. Both novels deal with the dilemma between modernity and tradition embodied in sons-in-law and extended families, though Mo's novel pushes beyond failures towards an ambiguous success story. In that respect, *The Monkey King* opens its own dialogue with early English novels depicting individual heroes and deeds of adventure. Robinson Crusoe breaks away from his father and family and makes his own fortune in a new world. Mr Biswas and Wallace Nolasco cherish a similar dream of making it by themselves. In *The Monkey King*, Wallace, the self-made hero, finds in the end that his father-in-law's Buddha-like design may well lie behind his every move, just as the legendary Chinese Monkey King was subdued and converted by the omniscient and omnipotent Buddha. Thus there is also a structural analogy with Fielding's providential romance controlled by the father/God/author and treading the thin line between prudentia of Christian virtue and middle-class prudence.

Tradition and modernity, already ambiguous in the original European model, are often clearly segregated between native and Western in culturalist paradigms. In Mo's novel, however, there is no clear-cut distinction between East and West: what is Western is sinicized and what is Chinese is also Westernized through a cultural hybridity and translation. Instead of the usual myth of the synthesis of the best of both cultures, however, this hybridity creates an agonistic yin/yang battle in which colonial violence is perpetuated in a series of images of animals, beheadings and cannibalism. Tradition and modernity are further mixed in the ambiguous emergence of an individualist son-in-law (the monkey king) under the shadow of a Buddha-like father-in-law, traditional at first sight but Westernized in his own way. In this play of light and shadow, the success story of an individual entrepreneur going through his apprenticeship and catching the wave of modernization that swept Hong Kong in the 1950s becomes a double rewriting of the

realist genre of bourgeois individualism. In the larger cultural context, colonial modernity writes back to the original model of Western modernity through a secondary supplementarity that problematizes Western enlightenment and its universalist pretensions.

Hybridity and Colonial Violence

The Monkey King opens with an outsider's view of the Chinese in Hong Kong and Macao: "On the whole Wallace avoided intimate dealings with the Chinese" (3). There is an immediate irony, for he has been instructed by his father to marry a Chinese--what greater intimacy can there be? In fact, the very distinctions of ethnicity are under assault, because, as the last sentence on the first page tells the reader, the Portuguese are said to look similar to the Cantonese through "centuries of mixed marriages." Wallace's metaphor for his own love-hate feelings is that he and the Chinese are a chain-gang of prisoners, "descendants of the original convicts," while his schoolmaster father tells him: "Understand the English and you will understand the Chinese, too." Rather than a facile universalism, this warning disorients the usual East/West culturalist dichotomy and its ethnocentric bearing.

This uncertainty in our reading of the novel appears on many levels, from the comedy of cultural (mis)understanding to the evaluation of character and plot development. When Mr Poon beats up his good-for-nothing grown-up son on carefully selected spots, Wallace intervenes, only to be offered authoritative quotations from the Bible as well as the sanction of Chinese custom. Wallace also learns that in proper circles, milk is not taken with tea: "all the time the Chinese way had been half of the right way"(44). Though Wallace enters the Poon household with no identity of his own, his earlier education is a Western one in engineering, received in Foochow, Mainland China. His upbringing and language are just as Chinese as his physiognomy.

On a more serious level, the East-West fusion is suggested in images of beheading and cannibalism. Early in the novel, the reader is introduced to the Nolascos' love-hate rejection of the Chinese, the ironic play between conscious detestation, fear, fascination,

and willy-nilly identification. The elder Mr Nolasco has a celebrated Victorian photograph of British officers with the bloody severed heads of pirates piled in the foreground, one of which is unmistakably "Oriental." The photograph can be seen as a symbol of colonial conquest, in which civilization reverts to barbarity, to Conradian "horror." Wallace secretly counters this image of Western power with memories of the British incarceration by the Japanese during the Second World War. The two barbarisms of colonialism herald later ways of beheading and cannibalism which may well be more subtle, more "civilized," and more efficient than either the literal beheading or the latter-day British bureaucratic rule of inefficiency.

The echo of colonial violence is figured in the trap laid for a British bureaucrat, Allardyce. After Wallace has done some mischief by Westernizing May Ling with *Reader's Digest* and stealing Mr Poon's watch, Mr Poon recommends him for a government job through a contact of his business partner Mabel. Then he invites Wallace's boss Mr Allardyce to dinner. Mr Poon and Mabel's scheme is to land a government contract through bribery, by implicating and using Wallace and Allardyce. Thus the latter two "Westerners" are led into a trap, much like the monkey king who has his head bound with an iron band by his master to subdue his wildness (69).[2] Allardyce is first led to visit the Tiger Balm Garden, to be shocked by grotesque sculptures of beasts in anthropomorphic contexts, and scenes of hellish torture by devils. While Allardyce thinks it is some scene from Taoist mythology, a local interpretation is that the foreign devils (*gwai los*) are meeting a condign punishment. Later, after Allardyce angrily intervenes in some boys' harassment of a caged monkey, Wallace's Chinese colleague Major comes up with a clever explanation: that the English have special feelings for the monkey because he is their ancestor (93). All these animal images, which blur the distinction between human and non-human and leave Allardyce muddle-headed, prepare the reader for the final trap of the night when Allardyce is seduced by Mabel, a very ugly woman to boot. Thus the battle

goes on through tricks, collaborations and traps, without clear moral distinctions between an innocent victim and an evil victimizer, colonizer or colonized.

When Mr Poon advises Wallace to go into exile, he also emphasizes how much the family loves him for his sacrifice.

> Wallace swallowed a lump. Through watery eyes he thought he saw a shadow or a small animal in the corridor. When he blinked there was nothing. (100)

Wallace's emotions are ambiguous. He has just called Mr Poon "Uncle," as if he was beginning to appreciate Mr Poon's meticulous care for the whole family including himself. But this is also the point of no return for Wallace: he is deeply implicated and has to go along like a trapped animal under Mr Poon's direction.

The monkey image wraps up the final entrapment of Wallace himself at the end of the novel. His nightmare is presented in the uncanny half-light of a banquet. "The other diners were in shadows, their faces familiar but not quite recognizable. He sat in the place of honour" (214). It turns out that they will be eating the brains of a live monkey at the banquet:

> The drape was pulled off the box to reveal it as a cage. Inside the cage, immobilised with manacles around its feet and hand, an iron band clamped around the top of its head, the dome of which protruded through a hole in the top, was a young monkey. (215)

Here the monkey king myth is translated into a popular Chinese rumor (or supposedly real indulgence of the rich) of eating monkey brains by punching a hole in a live monkey's skull. When Wallace wakes in the middle of a rainy night, "[b]eside him May Ling swallowed in her sleep" (215). That monkey is the uncanny double of the successful modern financial manager that Wallace has turned into. The cannibalistic nightmare harks back to the Victorian photograph, at the beginning of the novel, of British officers with dripping severed pirates' heads. The irony comes full circle, with sinicization the shadow of Westernization.

The Rise of the Individual and His Double

Reviewers have often compared Mo to Naipaul in their humorous realist depiction of their native domains. *The Monkey King* recalls *A House for Mr Biswas* in many ways. "Hanuman" in the Hanuman House presided over by Biswas' mother-in-law refers to the monkey-god in *The Ramayana*, who was translated and sinicized into the monkey king in Chinese mythology. Both Biswas and Wallace are individualist rebels married reluctantly into communal houses of wealth and tradition, against the historical background of (post)colonial modernity. The in-laws in both novels have saved on dowry, and treated these two outsiders as non-entities, good-for-nothing husbands who have yet to earn their places in the house, for they are without wealth or status, hence the trial of apprenticeship that marks their progress through the novel. Mr Biswas is the "little man" who always blunders and always fails. In contrast, Mo's novel tells a "success" story about the rebel son-in-law running the family business and becoming a new type of law-abiding financial manager, much like Michael Corleone, in Mario Puzo's *Godfather*, legitimizing the illegal family fortune.

The apparent differences in the protagonists' personal fortunes may be attributed to the differences in wealth between Trinidad and Hong Kong (seen in retrospect in the late 1970s). But we should also remember that authors create their own worlds and that a Mr Biswas in Hong Kong is not impossible. A more fruitful comparison is in the ways the authors pose different questions through their created worlds. In Naipaul's novel, Mr Biswas is alienated from both worlds, old and new, though on the surface level he identifies more with individualism, with Samuel Smiles's self-help books as inspiration for creating a new identity. Hanuman House is the ultimate symbol of repression, meanness, benevolent despotism, Hindu tradition resisting in vain the process of Creolization, until it falls into decay to be swept away by selfish rivalries and new economic pressures. The general mode in the novel is cultural antagonism. There is little room for cultural

adaptation, and hybridization is often laughed at sardonically. Religion is a good example, as summarized by one critic :

> [Mr Biswas] quickly spots the contradiction in the "gods" doing Hindu puja and wearing crucifixes at the same time. In the same way, Chinta later comes to use Hindu incantations in combination with candle and a crucifix. When sickness strikes, Hindu prayers, Indian and African superstition and Western science are all called upon to contribute their complementary offices. (Warner-Lewis 97)

In contrast, Mo's novel has the protagonist transformed across cultures in an arguably deeper and no less ironic mode, espousing neither an obsession with cultural authenticity nor a facile celebration of cultural syncretism.

In his essay "Confucianism in Timothy Mo's *The Monkey King*," John Rothfork posits a normative model as the moral basis for the text--a return to what he calls "authentic Confucianism":

> Crucial in Mr. Mo's answer is the differentiation between early Confucian philosophy, which resisted "legalistically codified and objectified norms," from later Neo-confucianism with its "stultifying moral zeal". This distinction lays the basis for the struggle between Wallace and his father-in-law, Mr. Poon, in which Wallace triumphs because he discerns authentic Confucianism, its spirit, whereas Mr. Poon can do no more than sporadically and ineffectually follow the dead letters of ritual and tradition. (50)

This so-called authentic Confucianism is, for Rothfork, an idealistic synthesis, "a balance between East and West," "a fusion of the best elements in Chinese and Western cultures" (51). Under this moral rubric, the critic's work is to construct and distinguish good Confucianism from bad Neo-Confucianism as illustrated in each character and event. The text becomes a simple moral allegory with an eastern "touch": Rothfork identifies triumphs and defeats in discrete places and often in a contradictory way, without seeing ironies and reversals of triumphs and defeats, their doubles and shadows.

What Rothfork sees as lack of authenticity in Poon is actually Poon's, and the text's, fictive ambiguities that destabilize the usual culturalist borderlines between East and West, purity and impurity, good and evil. Mr Poon belongs to the Baptist congregation. The

amahs in his household are indulged to "worship his Christmas tree as a potent phallic symbol" (22). "In his own room a sadistically technical crucifixion reclined across the belly of a chubby bronze Buddha" (22). His motto for such hybridization is, "You could be better safe than sorry" (22-23). Even his funeral is presided over by a Catholic priest, a Buddhist monk and a Taoist priest. Mr Poon may be laughed at, but not easily dismissed, for he embodies real power throughout his life and even after death. Whatever its moral ambiguities and ambivalences, his is a hybridization that works in spite of the superficial incongruity, and yet without a celebratory fusion of "the best of both cultures." The difference between Naipaul's and Mo's novels is highlighted in the titles of the two novels. A House for Mr Biswas emphasizes a house, any house of his own, other than the Hanuman House of mythological Hinduism. The Monkey King is a sinicized Hanuman, a rebel who gets subdued, translated, converted. The indefinite article "a" suggests something new, to be striven for; while the definite article "the" refers to something known, already there. Mo's "already-there-ness" explores an aspect of colonialism different from Naipaul's obsession with purity, though Naipaul's is a complex obsession with ambivalent identifications. In Mo's novel, Westernization and sinicization are given, and the reader is thrown in the middle of hybridization.

Mr Poon is the all-inclusive paragon of hybridity. In *The Monkey King*, providence is embodied in the patriarch, Chinese ancestor, and father-in-law Mr Poon as Buddha (26), who commands a variety of religions and masks. After his death, Wallace finds that he "must have had over twenty European names: Henry, Harold, Alfred, Guy, Kenneth, Jeremy amongst them" (199). Despite his traditional way of ancestor-worship and domestic tyranny, he is already Westernized. Wallace's monkey mischief of letting May Ling put on cosmetics and read *Reader's Digest* looks paltry in comparison. In fact, Mr Poon has known his theft and pawning of the watch (178), and may have used his Westernization mischief (socialization with the Westernized Mabel) to lay the trap for Allardyce and Wallace, as Wallace wonders after Poon's death, "'He was knowing whole

time, hah?'" (212) Poon's posthumous presence looms large in the foresight of his will that sees to it that his family will live in ease and be well looked after. Even Wallace's son "looked like Mr Poon, reincarnated" (210). Wallace's newly acquired authority is cast in shadow: is he just a stud horse, like the husbands in the Hanuman House in Naipaul's novel? With this hind-sight of Mr Poon's omnipresence, how should we read the apparent good deeds performed by Wallace and May Ling: diverting the flood, developing the tourist industry and resolving the blood feuds--in a word, modernizing the backward village? What is the providential, and Mr Poon's, design in this case?

The answer may be suggested in the figure of daughter/wife/mother May Ling, who dwells literally and metaphorically in between the two men, playing her own game of nurture and control as Wallace's ambiguous helpmate. At first, she appears jejune and shy, an inexperienced girl physically and intellectually underdeveloped. It is in the country that she gradually rounds out, develops a personal intimacy with Wallace and proves a resourceful helpmate to him. If the novel is the *Bildungsroman* for the hero, she is the heroine who also grows with him and even helps him grow. Yet her growth is not along the lines of *Reader's Digest*, or the lady sophisticates like Pippy and Mabel, as Wallace has originally designed in his mischief. It is in the family tradition of passing power through women onto sons-in-law.

May Ling's identity is more difficult to gauge than Wallace's. As his wife, and with less education, she is the lesser on both Chinese and Western accounts. As her father's daughter, however, she sides with the larger, unknown and omnipotent presence. One scene of them playing checkers together after a typhoon is illuminating. Wallace says the village headman is a hero to venture out and look after them. May Ling replies,

> "Like Ah Dairdee."
> Wallace stamped, crushing a Tiger Balm top. "No, not like Ah Dairdee. Get it into your head. We was here alone by ourself. No Dairdee, no family, no nobody. We did it ourself, hah?" (123)

The exchange highlights two views: paternalism vs. individualism. Wallace's assertion of manhood is more illusory than real. After he has lost ten consecutive games of checkers to her, he even hits his wife; but May Ling only titters in a propitiating way, defuses his anger, and gets to wipe his face with a handkerchief. She wins the marital battle by playing the mother. Wallace's rise to financial success has been foretold by May Ling in her village tales of rags-to-riches.

> Wallace scoffed. "You think the big-shot go and let themself be took over like that? ... You thought I could make myself boss of your father house just like you were saying? Thing just didn't ever happen like that."
> May Ling was quite obstinate. "No, it could happen." (116)

The heroine again sees further than the hero. In the final twist of Wallace's nightmare, it is a pair of female hands that prepare the cannibalistic banquet and bring down the hammer on the monkey's skull. The heroine is less than the hero in the mundane world; in the uncanny double of the dream world, she is more than the hero: less than one, yet double. She doubles his moves and casts a shadow of doubt upon his "originary" deeds of adventure.

Re-Writing Tales of Adventure

Wallace's exile to the countryside repeats the familiar genre of Defoe's adventure stories (with the addition of Mo's phantasmagoric quality, of course) in which men and women of exceptionally enterprising spirit (Robinson Crusoe and Moll Flanders) go overseas and redeem themselves through industry and colonization. Wallace modernizes the backward and superstitious village with enlightened ways of earning a living (tourism) and resolving conflicts (sports). The series of good deeds starts in an ambiguous tone, with Wallace's inadvertent desacralizing of the village ancestors' bones. At first, Wallace feels like a child playing the game of adventure: "The world seemed empty" (117). He suggests to May Ling there is "'[m]aybe pirate gold in there'" (118) in a hill which later turns out to be the ancestors' tomb. "Flushed with the reconnoitring zeal of his forebears, Wallace swaggered

in" (118). The whole incident can be read as a ludic foreshadowing of what Wallace will do later in the village, disturbing the old ghosts by introducing modern life. He is scared by his own blunder, and is persuaded by May Ling to offer his expensive watch (significantly stopped during the incident) to placate the ghosts. Here, the symbol of Western technology accedes to old superstitions, though by pissing there, Wallace also shows his comic and childish defiance.[3] May Ling plays the role of the mother / witch, officiating at the rite of sacrifice. Thus she behaves like the old women in the village to the patriarchal headman: "Despite all efforts made by the headman to stamp on panicmongers, the old women began to circulate stories of evil spirits" (110). Women relate to the primordial, the anterior *Being* against which the patriarchal order is constantly subverted like a child's sandcastle. Before Wallace can establish himself as a "Western" adventurer/reformer, he has to know that this land is not empty, nor is history (or more appropriately, herstory) void. He has to kowtow to the ancestors in acknowledgement of their anteriority.

May Ling's story is not wholly revealed and Wallace (to whose mind the third-person limited omniscient narrator allows more access) is often puzzled as to what May Ling is up to behind his back. Hers is the untold story of growth doubling the hero's *Bildungsroman*. Need we say the shadow is more powerful and more terrible, in this case maternally generating and encompassing the man's story? Indeed, May Ling's maternal identity explains the change in Wallace's attitude as a husband. One can say that he refuses sex for the sake of dowry, and has sex only after May Ling has proved herself a gift beyond price. One can also say they develop a real romantic love after marriage, to be consummated by sex and offspring. But Wallace's childish behaviour suggests another reason: he is looking for a mother in marriage. At the beginning of the novel, his father is introduced as a widower, and there has been no mention of his mother. His father dies after arranging the marriage with the Poons. Wallace is thus an orphan in need of parents to complete his education: Mr Poon is the new father; while the scrawny and girlish May Ling has to

mature physically and emotionally through rustic female bonding before she is accepted as wife in bed,[4] and mother in other ways. May Ling starts as daughter, just as Wallace starts as son. They both end up being biological parents and symbolic patriarch/matriarch. Between themselves, May Ling starts as a daughter, to be remade like Frankenstein's monster, or Galatea, whom Pygmalion will fall in love with later. She ends up remaking Wallace like his mother.

The gender distinctions in this novel work much like those in Mo's second novel, *Sour Sweet*, a battle of agonistic yin and yang without any moral schemes or "positive images." While the Chens in *Sour Sweet* are pathetic, in *The Monkey King* the Poon family is apparently happy and successful. Yet this does not suggest that gender or class oppression of colonial modernity has been erased. On the contrary, the hollowness within the apparent success story of "synthesis" only accentuates the haunting sense of doubling, of something wrong elsewhere that the text both reveals and covers in such loose ends as the unwelcome poor relatives and the death of a baby (May Ling's nephew). The "patness" of May Ling's upper hand in the yin/yang battle does not mean the final voice of another moral goodness.

If Wallace represents Westernization as modernization, he is not rejected *tout court*, merely transculturated. After all, Wallace is needed to revitalize the village and the Poon family. What is questioned is, among other things, the "Western" man's presumption to paternity as the originator/creator of a new world. As May Ling lays aside Wallace's fear (and pride of his original trespass) by way of superstitious explanations, her question suggests an always anterior violence at the origin: "Who had broken up the pot before you go in?" (125-26) Her question has a historical validity in this local village of migrants and trespassers, "usurpers" and "squatters": "Genealogies had been manipulated and the two [warring] groups [i.e. original inhabitants and squatters] had located a focal but mythical ancestor in the tenth generation: a sensible compromise" (104). Just as there should be no primordial tradition demanding absolute loyalty, no particular historical change should

claim to be foundational, for the ground will always reveal an anterior crack of an originary différance/violence that has never happened.

Wallace's exile is reminiscent of the 17th century travel genre and its satiric burlesque *Gulliver's Travels*. Wallace takes refuge in the village against his will, just as Gulliver is thrown to strange lands by fate. Wallace and May Ling remain outsiders to the "natives" in the village, just as Gulliver is distanced from the Lilliputians. We only hear "villagers," "headman," "geomancer" and so on (like "the king," "the minister" in Swift), never particular personal names with their own personalities. The natives remain almost mythical, like Lilliputians in bowdlerized versions of Swift, all too easily persuaded and manipulated by Wallace and May Ling. Their reforms are like child's play, or like Gulliver's description / proposal of ideal ways to correct human vices. In their first good deed of diverting the flood, they get inspiration from children's games to build a miniature model in order to convince the headman of their ingenuity. In their second good deed of starting a tourist industry, they think up various ways of entertainment / play. The third deed of resolving conflict through games, though referred to as a Goan Indian practice, sounds too good to be true, too much like a child's fantasy, or a Swiftian rationalist solution practised by Houyhnhnms. Rather than to Swift, though, Mo's intertextual dialogue is directed more to individualist adventurers like Robinson Crusoe, to the success stories of white men in transforming the natives and their lands. In all those accounts, the natives are not individuated, not named; they are to be represented, and reformed. Aren't Wallace's three great deeds much like boy scouts' fantasies? After an extended field trip, "Boy" Wallace becomes "[h]omesick for the Poons!" (168), like other boys such as Robinson Crusoe and Lemuel Gulliver, though he is luckier, with a nurse / wife / mother May Ling to keep him company. The voyage home is also the generic ending of adventure stories from Homer down to the space conquest in science fiction.

Seeing in Mo a Swiftian version of ironic distance from the cultural paradigm of individualism does not mean his novel inherits Swiftian misanthropy or humanism,

depending on which critics one believes. Nor does it mean a rigid demarcation between Mo on the one hand, and the novel tradition of Swift and Defoe reconciled on the other. Hybridity in post-colonial literature works in another direction: inevitable borrowings highlight the problems of knowing and representing the other under specific historical contexts while indefinitely postponing the moment of final revelation in any supposedly native form of mimesis or transgression. Hybridity is repetition with a difference.

Parricidal Beginnings

The Monkey King can be seen as a series of parricidal moves and counter-moves. When Mr Poon is dying, May Ling brazenly wears provocative applications of Western cosmetics, which in Wallace's words is "to kick a man when he was down" (183). They both behave in a carnivalesque manner during the funeral, while scrupulously carrying out Mr Poon's instructed eclectic rites for fear of losing their inheritance. Mr Poon gets reincarnated in his grandson, exerting his will from beyond the grave. Wallace's success makes him the patriarch of the Poon household: the death of Wallace's father-in-law ousts a real father Ah Lung, renders Wallace the adopted father of Ah Lung's two sons, and leads to his own fatherhood. But his crown as the king of the household resembles too much the iron band on the head of the monkey king. His son/daughter is also his father/mother.

Cannibalism, monkey, parricide--the story echoes paradigmatic origins of morality as developed by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*. In primitive societies, according to Freud drawing on anthropological sources, the chief and the king are often foreigners and taboo figures viewed with ambivalence: both sacred and sacrificial. Freud speculates from Darwin's observation of the behaviour of one male ape monopolizing a horde of females that the earliest morality of incest and parricide taboos resulted from the guilt after the young exiled generation collectively murdered their patriarch and turned his body into a totemic meal. The sons' ambivalence towards the father means that the best way of keeping him alive and infinite is to murder him, and the best way of killing him is to keep

him alive and finite (Derrida, *Acts of Literature* 198). Mr Poon and Wallace as "king"/father figures embody this paradox. Poon's property is divided with a view to ensure its perpetual survival, in the same way that he gets reincarnated as if his body were eaten up by his descendants in a primitive ritual comparable, according to Freud, to the Christian communion. Wallace, on the other hand, is being eaten alive as both the new patriarch and the sacrificial animal, as the live double of his dead father-in-law, perpetuating the growth of his property as if the fragmented body kept on growing while being eaten by his descendants. The father / son-in-law are the living dead of colonial capitalist family romance.

The same parricidal doubling applies to *The Monkey King* as a later text rewriting *Tom Jones* and the travel genre, to the corruption of *prudentia* by middle-class prudence, and to (post)colonial modernity shadowing the original European modernity. Naipaul's excessive gloominess over colonial "inferior" mimicry of the Western original is turned into affirmative joy in Mo's deconstruction of the original through doubling, supplementarity and secondariness, for it is precisely the original myth of purity and self-grounding creativity/authority that has contributed to the colonization of the mind and culture. As Kenneth Burke has pointed out in his essay "De Beginnibus," beginnings are a theological metaphor, for "in the strict sense of the word, only God can 'create'" (32).

The self-grounding myth of European modernity is just another theological myth, if we follow Burke's semantico-theologico-philosophical play on "beginnings." Modernity's urge for self-creation and desire to transcend physical limitations are echoed in the Faustian myth, epitomized by Goethe's *Faust,* which Burke suspects "might be the beginningest work in all history" (30):

> ... Faust reads, "In the beginning was the Word"; he modifies this version of a beginning three times, "In the beginning was the Thought (*Sinn*)," "In the beginning was the Power (*Kraft*)," "In the beginning was the Deed, or Act (*Tat*)"... (30)

The myth, developed by Goethe through the prefix *Ur-* in "the spirit of German idealist metaphysics" (31), is built on the ambiguity "between beginnings in the 'temporal' sense of the term and 'beginnings' in the sense of the logically prior" (32). Divested of their theological metaphoricity, temporal beginnings may come after logical beginnings, which become a series of beginnings initiated in different enunciative modalities in the Foucauldian sense, in a pure play of commentary to "say, for the first time, what has already been said, and repeat tirelessly what was, nevertheless, never said" (Foucault, *Archaeology* 221). That *originary* oscillation is, according to de Man, literary modernity's almost impossible rejection *and* repetition of literature in his reading of Nietzsche and Baudelaire, what Kenneth Burke suggests as "the principle of woman" ("more of a conceit than a conception") in his reading of Goethe's "eternal feminine" (30), "woman" as a catachresis for *différance* in Derrida's reading of Nietzsche (Spivak, *Outside* 121-140).

Modernity started in European culture and tradition, yet with universal pretensions, which are implicit in culturalist constructions of cultural specificities guided by a teleology of modernization. Rothfork sees Mo's novel as posing the question "if Confucianism is a relic of Oriental culture, which fosters xenophobia and hinders the Chinese from fully participating in the modern world" (50). Such a reading of the novel as "national allegory" (Jameson, "Third World" 69) has a universalist presupposition: just as Christianity has guided the West through capitalism, Confucianism can also deliver Asian modernization. The content is different, the form identical; identical precisely because of separation. Yet, I would argue that just as many historians have pointed out that British capitalism is unique because it is the first, modernity in the Third World cannot be a repetition of modernity in the West. The difference does not lie in cultural diversity, but in cultural difference (Bhabha, *Location* 32), in being secondary and belated in a world where modernization has become a coercion from without, from the "originary" West, where nationalism can no longer build upon the classic model of capitalism and colonialism, while transnational corporations and the hegemony of the West have been exerting new forms of global

imperialism and colonialism. Max Weber's question why outside Europe "the scientific, the artistic, the political, or the economic development ... did not enter upon that path of rationalization which is peculiar to the Occident" (25) should be turned upside down to reveal, between Europe and its other, what Homi Bhabha calls the "time-lag" of modernity as cultural difference that opposes both cultural pluralism and cultural relativism:

> The problem of the articulation of cultural difference is not the problem of free-wheeling pragmatist pluralism or the "diversity" of the many; it is the problem of the not-one, the minus in the origin and repetition of cultural signs in a doubling that will not be sublated into a similitude. What is *in* modernity *more* than modernity is this signifying "cut" or temporal break: it cuts into the plenitudinous notion of Culture splendidly reflected in the mirror of human nature; equally it halts the endless signification of difference. (*Location* 245)

Now that modernization is spreading to the rest of the world, isn't it time to see its post-colonial pseudo "beginnings" in the Burkean sense of the logically prior ("universal") coming on what Said calls "the voyage in" (*Culture* 239) from former colonies and Third World countries to rewrite, translate, and deconstruct the "original" beginnings in the Western myths of modernity? In this sense, Timothy Mo's *The Monkey King* sets up a post-colonial historical universality that particularizes and anthropologizes the West through an uncanny reversal and displacement of center-margin power relationships.

The first two chapters of this dissertation discuss Mo's two "realist" novels in the tradition of Western mimesis and the English novel. I anticipate a few questions about my choice of the author and texts, their order of presentation as well as their role in my overall theoretical argument. I will offer answers in the following space that is, properly speaking, an interlude, neither within a chapter nor within a conclusion.

My project is both theory-oriented and experiential, growing out of my own alienation from the traditional humanist dominance in literary studies. I am not interested in discovering certain authors. Rather I am interested in texts that can help illuminate my theoretical concerns. For me, Mo's *The Monkey King* was a "chance" discovery, after I had dealt with the general problem of mimesis in *Sour Sweet*, and found that *The Monkey*

King posed problems for the traditional novel somewhat different from mimesis in general. The Bildungsroman genre and intertextuality are two important features peculiar to *The Monkey King*. Logically then, the *Sour Sweet* chapter comes first as posing the more general problem of mimesis, while the Bildungsroman remains secondary. Put in a more schematic way, the first chapter deals with cultural difference through a series of thematic / formal doublings while the second chapter explores the time lag in cultural différance.

On a very pragmatic level, Mo's texts are chosen because I feel that I have a lot to say about them that has not been said before. His Chinese cultural backgrounds (say Confucianism, which Rothfork expounds at length in his two essays) do not pose the threat of cultural specificity / diversity to my theorization about cultural difference.

My critique of realism, a less than sympathetic reader might say, is an old hat in the age of postmodernism and deconstruction. Mo has already been criticized by Philip Holden as a postmodernist from the metropolis who has not found favour with some Hong Kong critics. Behind the familiar image criticism of stereotyping and the non-sequitur argument of popularity as a sign of capitalist conspiracy lie the shadow of realism that demands correct image portrayal, and the nostalgia for a cultural specificity uncontaminated by the West. Indeed, even a sophisticated critic like Fredric Jameson cannot shake off the shadow of realism in his critique of postmodernism (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 215-216). On the other hand, apologists of postmodernism tend to adopt a hasty celebratory tone of a new era, betraying the shadow of realism in their very attempt at periodization and enumerating "postmodern" features like a set of new slogans.

It is in this cultural context that my patient reading of Mo's two novels in two separate chapters is itself a critical gesture for more careful reading instead of name-dropping and labelling on the textual level, and for more deconstructive elaborations on the theoretical level--neither facile dismissal nor open or implicit endorsement of realism and humanism.

Notes

[1] See Homi Bhabha's critique of Bakhtin in "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation" (*The Location of Culture* 147). See also Foucault's view of the panopticon as "power through transparency," as the century of Enlightenment aimed to eliminate the areas of darkness in man (*Power/Knowledge* 154).

[2] His master is the monk going on a pilgrimage. Buddha orders the monkey king to protect the monk, who controls the monkey king by his ability to mutter some incantations that will shrink the iron band on the monkey's head, causing headache.

[3] His urination reminds one of Gulliver's mischiefs in Swift's satire.

[4] The comic scene of Wallace childishly avoiding sex with May Ling recalls similar scenes in Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*.

Chapter Four: Heteroglossia and Cultural Translation

in George Lamming's *The Emigrants*

The representation of language has always been a problem in writings about immigrants who do not "properly" speak the language of their country of destination. Although the question of representation is inevitably tied up with constructing a reality according to literary conventions in a particular historical context, the language issue becomes more acute in novels in which immigrant minorities are alienated linguistically as well as culturally and racially. Their problem lies precisely in the failure of their language to communicate, and in the unequal power relationships that have been imprinted upon language as a contested space of political struggle. What language a writer should use is a decision bearing upon difficult and different subject positions in culture, race, gender and class in their negotiations with the other.

In immigrant novels, the problem of language is whether standard literary English can render adequately the immigrant experience of linguistic and cultural dislocation, an experience within a space of cultural domination and subaltern resistance that cuts across languages. Two languages inevitably entail two cultures in opposition and mediation that can be traced back to the history of colonialism and the nationalist movements of many former colonies. However, as soon as the all-too-familiar oppositions are locked in a binary mode tying a cultural identity to a linguistic identity, the paradigm becomes a derivative repetition of "nature" and "civilization," the romantic interest in the vernacular, the myth of a national and cultural essence in language, and the literary tradition of the vernacular as representative of "nature." This binary opposition all too easily translates into transcendental signifieds which bind the subjects into fixed identities. To break through this static model, the discourse of heteroglossia needs to be examined as "enunciative modalities" in which statements bear traces, not just of their "meanings" or *a priori* cultural values, but also of subject positions, the performative act of discursive materiality in the

agonistic field of language and power with a long history of colonial violence and cultural imperialism. The speaking subjects are thus shaped by, but not bound within, any linguistic identity; they act in a series of rhetorical strategies across linguistic paradigms, in the thickness of language as means of empowerment and performative identification, in the foreignness of language as alterity that invariably returns to split the kernel of meaning in the pedagogic narratives of the Western nation.

Cultural Identity and Binary Oppositions

In approaching immigrant novels, it is very tempting to set up a two-language model. Usually, standard English conveys the main narrative while certain characters speak dialects to show their attachment to their cultural backgrounds.[1] Cultural difference is thus naturalized in language difference, with English put in the position of rational norm; and language is drawn into the binary oppositions of reason and emotion, white and black, First World and Third World.

One proposed escape from this binary opposition is through hybridity, a language made out of both English and the minority language. In this case, supposedly, there will come a fusion of two cultures, a carnivalization of English by the more vital, less standard language of popular culture, a variation on the theme of "the best of both." Though at first sight this approach offers a way out, still the basic assumption remains: the two language paradigms are the sources of cultural values, positivities that would yield other possible combinations. The use of language is a personal choice, a creation of the author's experiments with linguistic possibilities. In this way, the resources of both cultures are translated through an artistic channel of transculturation into the author's creativity, which seemingly transcends the materiality of language and discourse.

However, the model of linguistic identities and cultural essences still retains the binary opposition whose genealogy can be traced back to the master narratives of Western reason, as shown from Rousseau's theory of language, the European romantic cult of the

vernacular, modern nationalism and Western anthropology. Linguistic essentialism invests languages with cultural meanings, which I would like to examine briefly in the historical light of modernity's "inventions" in various power relationships.

Nationalism accompanied the rise of vernacular languages as a challenge to the universality and assumed superiority of Latin. The arbitrariness of language is erased when a national and cultural essence is attributed to a national language, which is but one vernacular imposed upon others. The study of vernaculars was strongly influenced by the myth of the "noble savage," and the romantic interest in the authenticity of feeling found in the vernacular language of people in rural areas or in less "civilized" cultures and regions. Rousseau stressed oral speech as more authentic and immediate to the logos than writing, which is a degeneration through civilization. Herder's interest in folklores of the primitive gave the vernacular a romantic aura in opposition to European culture and civilization. The same fascination with the regional, common language continues in the romantic tradition from William Wordsworth to Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence, where spontaneity and authenticity of feelings are attributed to the rural labourer living a more natural life than the urban industrial one. In English culture, this represents a strong rural myth which many critics have pointed out as representing a conservative strain in a country dominated by financial capital (Wiener; Williams, *Country*). In literary works, dialects are seen in contrast to standard, literary English, sometimes in a derogatory light as caricature, sometimes on a more elevated level as representing more authentic, rural values, as nature rebelling against civilization.

Romantic organicism, of course, is a cultural myth that cannot even stand the more recent close readings of the texts themselves. Hans Aarsleff has argued that Wordsworth is aware of the arbitrariness of language and actually views language as an imperfect medium for communication across private selves. Instead of adhering to an unproblematic union of things, mental images and language in the tradition of "origin of language" expounded by Leibniz, Wordsworth follows the Lockean tradition of treating words as "arbitrary signs

for our private ideas", not as "an inventory of the world" (*From Locke* 375). Frances Ferguson shows that Wordsworth's primitivism and organicism are themselves belied by the actual workings of language as repetition and supplementarity, of which the poet is also keenly aware.

Of course, one can argue, as Olivia Smith does, that the interest in the vernacular in late 18th and early 19th centuries served to break the hegemony of the refined language and introduce "an intellectual vernacular prose" (35) for political radicalism. However, her argument for "the possibility of a moral and intelligent vernacular speaker" (3) that transcends the "vulgar/refined" opposition remains a utopian suggestion, just as modern nationalism, which Benedict Anderson says derived from print capitalism and a national vernacular, fails to address its "others" both at home and abroad. "The politics of language" (the title of Smith's book) does not cover women's discourse, spoken dialects (xi), and other nations in Britain not speaking "English." It is significant to note that the language of class division is itself racialized:

> James Buchanan, for instance, argues that the English verb system must be complex because the English people are wise and respectable. For grammarians to maintain that the English verb system might be simple "is manifestly affirming, that the English Language is nothing superior to that of the Hottentots; ...."[2]

The racial shadow in the metaphor of class élitism splits the ideology of populist nationalism based on a common language of national unity and identity (Balibar 285).

The rise of the English language itself as a national vernacular can be traced even further back to the Renaissance period. Richard Foster Jones locates the gradual "triumph of English" between 1476 and 1660 (viii). English started as a barbaric tongue under the hegemony of Latin. The process of its becoming a national vernacular was marked by the Puritan anti-rhetorical spirit, the invention of printing, and the search for linguistic origins. The Saxon roots of English were not "discovered" until the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the antiquarians followed the proto-nationalist/racist movement of the

Germanic countries and asserted a Germanic origin in distinction to Danish and French influences. Thus the triumph of English can be seen as a culmination of Puritanism, utilitarianism, print capitalism and modern nationalism.[3]

Where "the politics of language" during the 18th and 19th centuries reached other languages abroad, linguistics became Orientalism. For example, though Sir William Jones' enthusiasm for and profound learning of various Oriental languages may show him as more enlightened than James Mill and Macaulay (Aarsleff, *Study* 115-161), his orientalism directly served the interests of British colonialism in India, and his various culturalist conclusions reached through the study of language, literature and law have to be analyzed within the asymmetrical relationship of colonial power in the enunciative process of cultural translation (Niranjana 12-19). In fact, 18th and 19th century European linguistics was intricately tied up with Orientalism, racism, social Darwinism, and colonialism. Linguistic roots and differentiations served to establish types of races, cultures, and civilizations. As Edward Said says of the European linguists at the time,

> It was assumed that if languages were as distinct from each other as the linguists said they were, then too the language users--their minds, cultures, potentials, and even their bodies--were different in similar ways. And these distinctions had the force of ontological, empirical truth behind them, together with the convincing demonstrations of such truth in studies of origins, development, character, and destiny. (*Orientalism* 233)[4]

These general statements do not mean a denial of the different linguistic traditions. Hans Aarsleff has shown that the Saussurean premise of the arbitrariness of language can be traced back to Locke, a scientific and rational tradition in opposition to Leibnizian "origin of language" speculations that tried to discover through etymologies the primal language which would reveal the nature of the things it represents (*From Locke*). As presented by Aarsleff, it seems a battle between essentialism and anti-essentialism (relativism), between universalism (the Creator's presence in the Word) and linguistic particularism. While the former harbours racism and nationalism by claiming, for example, that the Germanic and Celtic languages have preserved more of the Adamic

language (Goldberg 65), the latter's claim equating national languages with national characters produces another kind of linguistic essentialism that Said has criticized in the above quotation. "Particularism" becomes the starting point of a scientific inventory and conquest of other cultures and other "peoples without history." The non-European "other" has escaped fine distinctions between Locke and Leibniz, between whether Locke is a rationalist anti-essentialist or an empiricist anti-essentialist, between universality and particularity.[5]

Racism in the study of languages is inherited by the modern linguist/anthropologist, who focuses his gaze on native myths and languages in order to abstract an essence different from, and yet somehow still complementary to, Western culture. On natives are often projected all the romantic myths that an industrial society longs for but can no longer keep. The native languages are analyzed for their various strengths and limitations.[6] What is absent from the gaze is the relationship between the observer and the observed, the privileged position of the Western anthropologist with his powerful language to construct the identity of the other (Trinh).

In approaching different languages in immigrant novels, then, we may be tempted to follow a strong model of linguistic essence and romantic binary opposition between nature and culture in the critical and literary tradition of English. The anthropological model lends an aura of scientificity and authenticity to the variations of nature/culture dichotomy. Though an oppositional rhetoric of nativism (in the sense of asserting a purely native national culture) can rely on this dichotomy, fundamentally the challenge is ineffective, working still within a culturalist paradigm dictated by Western reason to define and contain the other.

The model basically shows a process of one-way, unproblematic cultural transformation, the minority, native, less powerful being translated by the dominant culture and language into certain identities in Western teleological history. Once elevated and distilled into the realm of meanings, cultural difference can be explained, resolved, and

contained, always within the master language of Western reason and science. The problem lies precisely in an exclusive focus on meanings, on cultural values juxtaposed, positivities pinned down in a static comparison/contrast. Translatability is the mode of metaphor, the language of identity and totality.

On the opposite side to metaphor is metonymy, which W. D. Ashcroft claims as the language of the post-colonial text, where, for example, in a passage from Naipaul's *The Mystic Masseur*,

> [t]he two codes, one propagandised as 'correct' and the other as 'idiomatic,' articulate divisions of power in the colonial systems, but also, and most importantly, inscribe the metonymic gap, the gulf of silence between languages which cannot be adequately traversed by interpretation. (Ashcroft 5)

The language gap, which threatens to split any linguistic subject capable of code-switching, separates conveniently two identities: "indigenous" or "national" on the one hand and "imperial" and "metropolitan" on the other. The metonymic model can easily be taken as the opposite in "meaning" to the metaphoric one, thus reproducing identity politics and precluding moments of negotiation and the volatility of subject positions at the level of representation. The model of "meanings," even though they are incompatible and refuse to sublate and transcend, cannot account for such strategies of cultural translation as subaltern mimicry and repetition.

Both the metaphoric and the metonymic models center around the translatability or untranslatability of a language and a discourse. The answer is always yes _and_ no: yes, because without translatability, no text can be read and understood even in a limited sense; no, because there is always some residual excess that resists translation, difference as absence that cannot be turned into a positivity across cultural and linguistic barriers. The difference is not just a commonsensical intuition that translation always loses something while conveying much of the original. Untranslatability opens to a realm of language as a dynamic and performative act rather than a static pedagogic meaning, and points to the

worldliness and materiality of discourse. In reading a poem composed of different languages, Derrida says,

> what will always remain untranslatable into any *other* language whatsoever, is the marked difference of languages in the poem. We spoke of the *doing* which does not reduce to *knowing*, and of that *being able to do the difference* which is what *marking* comes to. This is what goes on and comes about here. Everything seems, in principle, by right, translatable, except for the mark of the difference among the languages within the same poetic event. (*Acts of Literature* 408)

Derrida's approach looks at the materiality of language as a performance that liberates language from sense and meaning only. In this way, even "a singular mark should also be repeatable, iterable, as mark" (*Acts* 43). "To say that marks or texts are originally iterable is to say that without a simple origin, and so without a pure originality, they divide and repeat themselves immediately" (*Acts* 64). The shift to the materiality of discourse as an event, to the material iterability of performativity, opens to the worldly field of power and agonistic acts within language. In this, we can also think of Foucault's "enunciative modalities" in discourse as an event.

> The analysis of statements, then, is a historical analysis, but one that avoids all interpretation: it does not question things said as to what they are hiding, what they were "really" saying, in spite of themselves, the unspoken element that they contain, the proliferation of thoughts, images, or fantasies that inhabit them; but on the contrary, it questions them as to their mode of existence, what it means to them to have come into existence, to have left traces, and perhaps to remain there, awaiting the moment when they might be of use once more;... (*Archaeology of Knowledge* 109)

For Foucault, discourse is an event with its own modalities of existence that always exceeds its "meaning," with a repeatable materiality that splits from itself and acquires functions irreducible to its "original meaning."

Homi Bhabha's emphasis on the performative, the enunciation in cultural difference as distinct from cultural diversity, carries on this post-structuralist concern with the materiality and the power relations within discourse:

> The concept of cultural difference focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority; the attempt to dominate in the *name* of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation.... The enunciative process introduces a split in the performative present, of cultural identification; a split between the traditional culturalist demand for a model, a tradition, a community, a stable system of reference - and the necessary negation of the certitude in the articulation of new cultural demands, meanings, strategies in the political present, as a practice of domination, or resistance. (*Location* 34-35)

The uncertainty and loss of meaning in the process of cultural translation renders language opaque, and opens up spaces between cultures and languages where colonial and racist fantasies circulate with "truth" and power, where cultural understanding is always problematized as misreadings, where "meaning" ultimately floats amid oppression and resistance. The nucleus of the untranslatable, the language "hollowed by absence," "inhabited by the other, the elsewhere, the distant," (Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* 111) becomes the contested space of performativity.

It is in this mode of "discourse analysis" that I think we should approach the use of non-standard English in the immigrant novel, not as denoting some other cultural essence and another way of life, but as acts of double-writing to initiate and problematize the scene of cultural translation when migrants enter the metropolis and rewrite the colonial paradigms and master narratives of nation, culture and race.

English and "Niggar Talk": Markers of Race and Culture

The dichotomy between English as the colonizer's language and the various West Indian dialects as the language of the colonized is a legacy of the colonialism that destroyed the language of the slaves from Africa and denied them education. Out of the experience of colonial violence and subaltern opposition grew the oral culture of West Indian vernaculars (dialects) which bear some similarity to the master's language of English in words, but which have their own rules of syntax and expression. Thus the language itself is hybridized, transcultural and politicized.

The acquisition and use of languages in the West Indies are a telling mark of racialized social positions and privileges. As Fanon says, "The Negro in the West Indies becomes proportionately whiter--that is, he becomes closer to being a real human being--in direct ratio to his mastery of the language"(*Black Skin* 18). From this context, language is a spectrum on which one can acquire identities through linguistic self-invention. What is called linguistic code switching describes exactly this phenomenon of language identity, and the resultant humour and irony when masks fall off and accents betray the speaker.

Code-switching, however, is a freedom not always accessible to everyone. In *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o narrates his painful experience at a colonial school in Africa, where African school children were forbidden to use their own language. The imposition of English would seem to entail linguistic and cultural extermination. And yet the Africans were not totally "white-washed." Apart from those who could not make it to school, the few élite students who did receive a colonial education did not have a chance to teach. In Malawi, according to Ngugi,

> no Malawian is allowed to teach at the academy--none is good enough--and
> all the teaching staff has been recruited from Britain. A Malawian might
> lower the standards, or rather, the purity of the English language. (466)

The subject position imposed by imperialist practice is the secondary position of impurity, neither here nor there, of subservience to the English master and his language.

It is against this background that decolonization often takes the form of claiming and inventing a national language. Edward Brathwaite, a Barbadian poet, says that Caribbean English is a nation language:

> It is nation language in the Caribbean that, in fact largely ignores the
> pentameter. Nation language is the language that is influenced very strongly
> by the African model, the African aspect of our New World / Caribbean
> heritage. English it may be in terms of its lexicon, but it is not English in
> terms of its syntax. And English it certainly is not in terms of its rhythm and
> timbre, its own sound explosion. In its contours, it is not English, even

though the words, as you hear them, would be English to a greater or lesser degree. (21)

As a political and nationalist act, nationalizing a language is part of the process of decolonization.[7] In this, the colonial peoples are merely demanding what Western nations have always taken for granted in having a national language as their mother tongue.

The "nation language," however, cannot repeat the master narratives of the Western nation. Researches by J.L. Dillard and his school have shown that Black English is a distinct language system with diverse origins including language influences from Africa, as well as other linguistic elements from various historical contacts (such as British English, Standard Portuguese, Jamaican Creole, Saramaccan, etc.) during Negro migration and slavery (Dillard 20). As a distinct language, it is neither simpler, nor derivative, nor exotic; it is simply different. Though its heterogeneous origins are shaped to a large extent by the history of slavery and colonialism, the language itself is not dehumanized. Sheer linguistic difference does not lend support to any ethnocentric cultural paradigms of self and other based on hierarchies of language. Of course, we are not concerned with the science of language per se; we are discussing the impure territory of discursive struggle.

Brathwaite describes his Caribbean nation language as "an English which is like a howl, or a shout, or a machine-gun, or the wind, or a wave. It is also like the blues"(Brathwaite 21). These metaphors show a language of performative acts in a particular space of poetics and repetition: the howl, the shout, the machine-gun (all reminiscent of colonial history), the wind (on the islands surrounded by) the wave, the blues as the Black art of performers, not composers. Language becomes music in the diasporic oral performatives of what Paul Gilroy calls the Black Atlantic culture, proceeding from "a distinctive relationship with the body" of black slaves with limited access to formal literacy:

> This orientation to the specific dynamics of performance has a wider
> significance in the analysis of black cultural forms than has so far been
> supposed. Its strengths are evident when it is contrasted with approaches to
> black culture that have been premised exclusively on textuality and narrative

rather than dramaturgy, enunciation, and gesture--the pre- and anti-discursive constituents of black metacommunication. (75)

Brathwaite's "poetic" definition and Gilroy's concept of language in the performative gesture of diasporic musics lead us to literary discourse, in which mere "authenticity" in representation is supplemented by cultural performance. Heteroglossia inevitably brings various forces into full play in the contested space of negotiation, confrontation, and cultural translation. As Bakhtin says, "All these languages ... themselves become the object of representation" (*Dialogic Imagination* 47). It is in this light that we should see West Indian literary dialect as neither a direct transcription / reflection of "authentic experience" nor part of an established pedagogic system of cultural values. In Peter Roberts' words, "West Indian literary dialect ... serves as both event and medium of communication" (Roberts 146). The writers are writing a nation language without a pedagogic paradigm, creating a culture without a "tradition." As Fanon says on national culture,

> It is not enough to try to get back to the people in that past out of which they have already emerged; rather we must join them in that fluctuating movement which they are just giving a shape to, and which, as soon as it has started, will be the signal for everything to be called in question. Let there be no mistake about it; it is to this zone of occult instability where the people dwell that we must come; and it is there that our souls are crystallized and that our perceptions and our lives are transfused with light. (*Wretched* 227)

If culture is grounded in language, the volatility and performativity of the West Indian language highlight the zone of occult instability and enunciative modalities in which the foreignness of languages enchains the cultural translation from identity to identification in the liminality of new spaces and new nations.

George Lamming's *The Emigrants*: English, Dialects, and the Bodily Scene of the Other

George Lamming's first novel, *The Emigrants* (1954), depicts the migration of West Indians to London after the Second World War, discontented with their life and prospects

at home and attracted by the post-war construction and the shortage of labour in the mother country. While Collis, a would-be writer, provides part of the narrative focus, there are many characters with various motives and aspirations: Tornado, Higgins, the Jamaican and the Barbadian, are hoping to get some professional training and work; Miss Bis is fleeing some Trinidadian calypso derision after a failed love affair; Governor is running away from his wife's betrayal. The West Indian immigrants manage to achieve some sense of community on board the ship to England, only to be dispersed after their landing, and as their dreams are dashed in the cold reality of racism and poverty, they fall victim to moral depravity, madness and total despair. The worldly-wise Governor ends up operating a club, and coldheartedly refuses accommodation to more West Indian new arrivals. The culturally sensitive would-be writer and would-be teacher crack up as their dreams turn into nightmare. Most émigrants remain adrift as masses lost in the metropolis. Thus, Lamming's novel describes the émigrants' "journey to an illusion," to borrow the book title of Donald Hinds' sociological study of West Indian migration to England in the 1950s. The novel defies a succinct summary due to its many characters and loose episodic plot. The general critical assessment that places it beneath *In the Castle of My Skin* in achievement may be partly attributed to earlier constructions of "Third World Literature" and National Literature that failed to value the minorities in the metropolis.

The Emigrants uses the trope of migration to explore cultural dislocation for ex-colonials for whom "England was not only a place, but a heritage" (228). For West Indian writers, the attraction of the mother country lies not only in economic opportunities but also in the reading public and the publishing industry. This "colonization in reverse," as the poet Bennet calls it (179), puts the West Indian writer at the interstices of the problems of political, economic and cultural (de)colonization. What is the identity of Caliban in Prospero's city? It is in the haunting paradigm of this foundational myth of colonization that George Lamming poses the problem of cultural and linguistic identity of the colonized:

> Caliban is [Prospero's] convert, colonised by language, and excluded by language. It is precisely this gift of language, this attempt at transformation which has brought about the pleasure and paradox of Caliban's exile. Exiled from his gods, exiled from his nature, exiled from his own name! (*Pleasures of Exile* 15)[8]

For the linguistically alienated, the other in the language becomes the site where Benjamin's "foreignness of languages" (75) returns the silent body into the opacity of languages, where the mark of difference scrambles all the codes of communication, where the identity of the self and the other dissolves into mirror images of identification and uncanny estrangement.

In Lamming's *The Emigrants*, the dichotomy between a literary English narrative framing and the dialects of the West Indian characters marks a cultural split between cosmopolitan English culture and the dark bodies as excess, as the bodily scenes of colonial/racial/sexual fantasies and hallucinations, the return of the repressed to haunt and double-write the English language in its purity and exclusivity. The central enigma of the novel lies in its Western form of a controlling narrator who is yet self-conscious of his own already-defined colonial position within the literary language. As the narrative "I" tries the position of story-telling, he is decentered by other dialects, by his identification with other characters alienated from the literary language, by scenes of racial fantasies and fetishization in the form of stereotyping. He has to recede and give way to an omniscient narrator, while leaving his doubles in the text. Thus, through this apparent imperfection in narrative strategy, Lamming tells the story of the emigrants as the story of the (im)possibility of telling, naming and defining a (post)colonial identity.

The Narrator and the Narrative Split

The Emigrants opens with a scene familiar to readers of colonial fiction: the pier, the traffic between land and sea, a ship in transit docked at Port-of-Spain, with passengers in limbo, and a first-person narrative voice repeating: "We were all waiting for something to

happen"(5). The reader is plunged with the first-person narrator into an unfamiliar and exotic place, to face an unknown future, and to experience a freedom in mid-air.

The historical specificity of this freedom, though, is not the exodus of convicts and malcontents from the metropolis to the colonies and the dark continent on their *mission civilisatrice*; it is the aftermath of decolonization, when colonial bondage is suddenly loosened politically. The narrator puts the freedom in the image of parent-child:

> I had known a greater personal freedom. I had won the right of the front
> door key, escaped the immediacy of privation, and walked, unrebuked, in
> the small dark hours. I felt my freedom fresh and precious. It was a child's
> freedom, the freedom too of some lately emancipated colonials. (8)

The image recalls the Caliban archetype of a primitive and childish nature, who remains a brute in spite of the gift of the colonial master's language. The freedom in such an image is fore-doomed, more illusory than real, within the loop of birth, childhood, and death, the cyclical failure to emerge into the adulthood of the Symbolic. Soon, the narrator comes to this dead-end, the great English tradition of *The Living Novel* (8) turning into "the ghost of that freedom whose death I had chosen to celebrate" (9).

The image of the child is chained to the split within the narrator between the opacity of languages and the supposed purity of the childish body. Almost from the very beginning, the narrator presents a scene of the free flow of desire (commodity, women and language) in a Deleuzian libidinal euphoria:

> A rich flow of talk went on behind the partition that separated the shop from
> the general living quarters.... There was no immediate exchange of money,
> a kind of self-service, it seemed, and the charges might have been made
> according to the marks the bottle registered with the fall of the liquor. The
> men, many of them in-transit passengers, drank quickly, talking loud and
> fast and in excitement. They thought it safe to talk loud since the people in
> this city spoke French and might not therefore understand English. The
> men didn't speak or understand the other language which might have been
> unfortunate in different circumstances. They were in transit, however, and
> it was therefore a lucky limitation. Without a common language it was
> impossible to make promises. In fact no promise was too large since it
> could easily be reduced by an admission of mutual misunderstanding. It

seemed a rare luxury to sit drinking and speculating on what would happen. The women in the town were very pretty and curious, and it would appear, inexpensive. One man said he had ridden a mam'selle sixty to the minute without paying a blind cent. He was sure he would do it all over again before sundown. (4)

Language flows because there is no meaning imposed by the listener, because the bar between the signifier and the signified becomes absolute, because the barriers of different languages have liberated dreams and fantasies in the weaving of the stories. In a similar way, the flow of liquor and sex is uninhibited by the reality principle of money and its denominations. Moreover, the men are themselves "in transit," deterritorialized bodies on the edge of language, homeland, and relationships.

In the great tradition of the individualist narrator of the 19th century novelists, the narrative voice "I" refrains from this fantastic flow of desire, and remains in his childish withdrawal into bourgeois interiority. In the above-quoted passage on "a child's freedom," the narrator continues:

> There I felt it [freedom], and at other hours when the whores fixed their prices, talking leisurely about their difficulties, the sort of men they preferred, the careers of their rivals in the trade. And if it weren't for an early fear of illness and the subsequent dread of having to die I would have been free to measure this muck that drifted like so much human flotsam across the face of the city. I felt this freedom. It was a private and personal acquisition, and I used it as a man uses what is private and personal, like his penis. (8)

The repeated phrase "private and personal" underlines the narrator's conscious withdrawal from a political perspective of decolonization and emancipation, and inserts a wedge in the earlier unproblematic equation of his own "child's freedom" with that of "emancipated colonials," for, if the metaphor of the childish continues colonial violence, the narrator has internalized this metaphoric violence and turned it into the individual interiority of the bourgeois novel, through a childish obsession with his penis and its purity from contact with other bodies, other languages, the muck of the "human flotsam." The narrator harbours "a strange compulsion" (7) of "a repetitive order" (8), "[a] secret that urged

identity" (7). It is a neurotic "compulsion to repeat," which, according to Freud, is often found in small children and leads to the uncanny and the double ("'Uncanny'" 238). It is an urge to start all over again from the mother's womb as the eternal return, to be reborn into a purer and freer self, freedom being the uncontaminated penis. The womb, the destination for a better life with "papers o' qualification" (53), is the mother country, the language of the mother tongue English. Since this is a repetition of an earlier urge (8), it is a neurotic symptom of the repetition of the same thing, one among a series of doublings and self-splittings to be enacted in the text.

In contrast to the lonely figure of the narrator lies the scene of the colonial periphery and chaos, where the language of the in-transit passengers becomes homeless and loses its supposed transparency. Thus on the ship, a Venezuelan's choice of the proverbial "right English word" becomes lost "in a jumble of English and Spanish" (26); the incomprehension of French Liberty and Democracy by an Englishwoman who asks him why he does not go to Spain ("once very nice to those countries" [colonies]) results in the latter spitting, muttering and repeating those words "Liberty, Democracy, the Venezuelans" (27). The sacred words of Enlightenment do not bear much repetition before they split from their origins through colonial non-sense, alienation, distance and difference. The position of "the Venezuelans" at the end of the sentence lies on the subversive edge between subject and object, as subject (appositive) recapitulating the Venezuelan and his wife; as object (the last of the muttered words) supplementing metonymically the grand narratives of the Enlightenment. The uncertainty of the colonials as the subject and the object is realized in their ambiguous discursive position, in their cultural supplementarity and historical belatedness.

The first-person narrator remains a child filled with sexual fantasies until his disappearance early in the voyage across the Atlantic. He holds the girl Queenie's hand and envisions her naked, only to end his interior fantasy with a pathetic epic invocation of "the cross and the words: Father Into Thy Hands I Commend My Spirit" (24). The narrator

reappears towards the end of the novel, in the section marked by "TODAY" (231), and then ends the last section of the novel in the omniscient narrative framed by the mark "THE DAY BEFORE."

The narrator--who might grow unfeasible as a continuing character--has left his doubles in other characters, while his splitting between language and the body carries a crucial thematic and formal echo throughout the text, where language becomes opaque by the invasion of dialects and the assertion of the black body as a fetishized object of racist stereotyping hollows language from within.

The Split in Colonial Discourse

In his essay "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism" (*Location* 66-84), Homi Bhabha takes up Said's point about latent and manifest Orientalism and develops it along psychoanalytical lines. Orientalism is split at the very centre between a manifest Orientalism as "a topic of learning, discovery, practice," and a latent Orientalism as "a site of dreams, images, fantasies, myths, obsessions and requirements" (*Location* 71; Said, *Orientalism* 206). The synchronic is continually disrupted by the diachronic. While Said unites the two by positing a single intention of the subject, Homi Bhabha explores "the alterity and ambivalence of Orientalist discourse" (71) which contains both the dominated and the dominating subjects in "the symbolic decentering of multiple power relations" and the destabilizing of the subject through the return of the repressed (72). The colonial discourse and racial stereotype reveal--through the application of Freud's theory of fetishism--dreams, fantasies, ambivalences and fear of castration in front of the Other, be it sexual difference, or racial/epidermal. Racism becomes a symptom of a fixation, a vacillation between a contempt for the familiar and a delight in, or fear of, the strange.

Using Bhabha's model of the split in colonial discourse, one finds that the narrative split in Lamming between the heterogeneity of languages and the pure body is a reversed image,

through negation of the narrator's colonial self, of the colonial split between the discourse of ideality/reason and the other scenes of dark bodies and racial fantasies. The pedagogic split of the racialized language for foreigners, immigrants and ex-colonials is that on the one hand English is accessible to all as speakers who adopt and use the language like a transparent means of communication; on the other hand, they find themselves already stereotyped within the language: the lazy natives, the sexual blacks, the smelly Indians and the duplicitous "Heathen Chinees." As Homi Bhabha says while quoting from Lyotard,

> The people turn *pagan* in that disseminatory act of social narrative that Lyotard defines, against the Platonic tradition, as the privileged pole of the *narrated*:
>
> where the one doing the speaking speaks from the place of the referent. As narrator she is narrated as well. And in a way she is already told, and what she herself is *telling* will not undo that somewhere else she is *told*. (My emphasis)
>
> This narrative inversion of circulation--which is in the spirit of my splitting of the people--makes untenable any supremacist, or nationalist claims to cultural mastery, for the position of narrative control is neither monocular nor monologic. (*Location* 150)

The speaker is also the *enoncé*; the seer is also the seen. The language of the other is the eye/I in the other, reflecting and splitting the self. In this way, the very process of narration becomes a struggle for meaning dissolved in the sliding of the subject and the object circulating amid the thickness of language.

"Black Skins, White Masks": The Scene/Seen of the Unspeakable

The narrator is dissolved in his identification with all the West Indian emigrants on their journey of cultural translation and economic survival. In particular, Dickson and Collis become shadow figures of the receding narrator who chooses to hide behind omniscience rather than foreground his own problematic position. In Lamming's novel, the narrator leaves his doubles in the characters Dickson and Collis, one superfluent in his mimicry of

English while the other wants to write, in vain, both caught in the eye of the other's racist gaze.

Dickson is a "trained teacher with a degree and diploma in education" (53). Building a wall of insularity around himself, he always insists on his supposed cultural and linguistic superiority. Dickson is a perfect product of what Said calls "culture for export"--a product of colonial education par excellence:

> He spoke with a fastidious precision which at times seemed to puzzle the [English] doctor. It was as though you had taken a willing London Cockney and put him in some cultural laboratory. ... Dickson's fluency increased. He was obviously impressing the doctor whether or not he cared to. Collis noticed that he had an obsession with the principles of the language and wouldn't at the point of peril end a sentence with a preposition. (57-58)

Dickson's effort wins a stroke on the shoulder and a little prophecy about his future from the doctor. The doctor's interest in this specimen borders on the clinical, as though "he had found a specimen of something he had lost" (57). The little comment in the narrative "It was as though..." seems to be taken from, and explains, the "puzzled" doctor's mind. Thus the perfect specimen of linguistic normalization in colonial administration and education is a robotic coding and programming, the fake perfection of the automaton mimicking the master's language and presuming to school the little masters. Dickson's scruples with the principles of language are the obverse of "dialects" which openly violate certain normative principles of language. Linguistic difference is always "not quite"/"not right," less than or more than the normative, doubling it in a reflection of the original "purity" of the language.[9] These linguistic doubles drive a wedge between the universalizing globalization of the empire of English as a would-be Esperanto and the nationalist dream of the purity of a racialized origin, between the pedagogic *mission civilisatrice* and the performative racist exclusion and racialized recoding of the language. The colonial speaking subject stares into his mirror image in the language, already narrated elsewhere as the signifying monkey of mimicry, which as the other of language (whether

robotic correctness or accented english) also stares back at the gaze of the authentic master/pedagogue. It is in this split second of gaze, of seeing and being seen, that cultural translation takes place, that identification (attraction/repulsion) blurs the fine line between Enlightenment ideals of universal brotherhood and obsessions with the other as object of fear and desire. Language is hollowed out by "the abyss," "the bottomlessness of infinite redoubling" (Derrida, *Writing and Difference* 296).

The split explains the Englishwoman's reaction to Dickson. According to the colonial scheme of missionary one way cultural export, Dickson should go back.

> "I can understand our missionaries going to Africa and the West Indies," the Englishwoman said, "they need what they're being told." She scratched her head and thought. "But it's the strangest thing to me such people leaving their own people to go to England to do what's most needed in their own home." (73)

Later in England, she rents him a room for six months and entices him one night into her room for a drink. Dickson's recollection of the event takes place towards the end of the novel, when he is already homeless and insane, sleeping in the park, hallucinating in a stream-of-consciousness lyricism:

> out of them all she chose me perhaps the doctor was telling her about me
> she could understand nothing like the intelligence it can reduce all difference
> to the understanding she and me the doctor and me and what could have
> happened to make him befriend me to make her choose me the common
> language of a common civilisation reason she could see he could see. (264)

The sexual fantasy takes the form of incantation of key words like "understanding," "reason," "intelligence," "civilization," which end up in the repetition of "see." The reduction of difference is effected through a common language of transparency rendering reason visible. Speech and sight are returned to their ideal origin and unity. It is the Hegelian *sight* which "possesses a purely ideal relation to objects by means of light" and soul (Derrida, *Writing* 99). Except that this passage about speech and sight is a prelude to, and recollection of, the traumatic scene of exposure and castration. The white glance does

not turn to reason, but is trained on the black body when the drunk Dick/son is exposed naked in front of the Englishwoman and her sister:

> The light was turned on and his eyes hurt.... She said they only wanted to see what he *looked* like.... The women were consumed with curiosity. They devoured his body with their eyes. It disintegrated and dissolved in their stare, gradually regaining its life through the reflection in the mirror. (266)

This is not just the *look*, with the "neutralization of desire" (Derrida, *Writing* 99) to consume, that effects violence to "the identity, which the eyes of others had drained away" (268), for the word <u>curiosity</u> suggests both detachment and desire. The phrase "devoured his body" in its literality opens up to scenes elsewhere of cannibalism as the haunting image of the colonial (un)conscious--Montaigne, Shakespeare, Defoe, Conrad, especially of Friday and Caliban (anagram of cannibal) as the literary image of the West Indians.

Cannibalism evokes the earlier image of the West Indians as the vomit (*excess*) of the colonial powers:

> "... England, France, Spain, all o' them, them vomit up what them din't want, an' the vomit settle there in that Caribbean Sea...." (65)

Being devoured and coughed up, the West Indians find themselves without identity, despite the urge to prove one (66). In fact the image of the vomit as bodily defilement sketches a (non-)identity as both inside and outside, an othered self indispensable for the construction of a white racial identity. As Kristeva writes,

> Defilement is what is jettisoned from the *symbolic system*. It is what escapes that social rationality, that logical order on which a social aggregate is based, which then becomes differentiated from a temporary agglomeration of individuals and, in short, constitutes a *classification system* or a *structure*. (*Power* 3)

Iris Young uses Kristeva's discussion of abjection to argue that "the repudiation of bodies for their sex, sexuality, and/or color is an 'expulsion' followed by a 'repulsion' that founds and consolidates culturally hegemonic identities along sex/race/sexuality axes of differentiation" (Butler 133). The predatory, assaultive gaze of cannibalism and the

abjection of vomiting point to the fantasy of fear and desire in a hegemonic subject threatened by gender/race/cultural difference (male/female, straight/queer, pure/impure). Homi Bhabha explains racial stereotype (the construction of the other body in language) as fetishism which disavows difference in the fear of castration. In the Lacanian schema of the Imaginary, Bhabha writes, "the subject finds or recognizes itself through an image which is simultaneously alienating and hence potentially confrontational" (*Location* 77).

The mirror image perceived by the "othered" West Indians is split and alienated, composed and reflected elsewhere.[10] Their identity is always in a state of existentialist *Angst*, under siege, as suggested in the recurring image of a claustrophobic womb: when they leave the womb-like cabin upon landing, there is "no-Thing" outside, and England is just "a cage like the dormitory vastly expanded" (106); both the barber's shop (129) and the hairdresser's (148) as gathering places for West Indian men and women are dark, secluded basements like "a womb" (148), a paradoxical location of security and imprisonment. The emigrants' dream of a new identity with "papers o' qualification" is haunted by the uncanny fantasy of regressing into the womb, of being buried alive in the mother country.[11]

The narrator's more obvious double is Collis. The clue is not only the occasional sudden break into first person narration to reflect Collis's thoughts (49-50), but also Collis' proper English, the language of the narrative in the text, and his position as a writer. There is a strange tension between the two doubles of the narrator, the only two West Indians who speak proper English. They cannot communicate verbally, and seeing / being seen only leads to physical attack. Both are suspected of being crazy (32). There seems a non-verbal understanding that they are doubles, each meant to displace the other with his mere physical proximity, his glance to drain the other's identity (31). Dickson is especially afraid of Collis's ability to write, to represent and further split him through "lies" (102).

As the narrator's alter ego, Collis carries the burden of writing as representation and commitment. If Dickson is his double in proper English tormented with the anxiety of self-splitting, the Yugoslav becomes his super-ego of conscience, warning him not to "live

comfortably with the enemy within" and betray his people through his words printed as "public property" (101). But Collis cannot write, as he confesses to the Yugoslav later in England (273), just as Dickson cannot teach. He cannot spy on others, for he becomes himself an object for the white gaze, much like Dickson.

After coming to England, Collis gets fired from one menial job after another, and clings to a livelihood through writing some blurbs for records. While his pen fails at literary creation, his black penis is used by the liberal white hedonist Frederick as "an-other, a male vibration, to wind [him] up" (254). While Collis copulates with Peggy, Frederick identifies with him in order to cure his own impotence. It is this primal scene of racial phantasy stereotyping black men as a fetishized phallus that finally drives Collis crazy, as crazy as his double Dickson.

Dickson and Collis are finally doubled in their obsession with their eyes/"I"s. Dickson's "life had become a perpetual struggle to avoid eyes," for "it was a torture to see and be seen simultaneously" (267). His madness lies precisely in his loss of language, which, in the above visual image of seeing/seen, is the irruption of the scene of his black body into the programmed codes of the principles of English. Collis' problem with his eyes is foreshadowed in a nonsensical joke between Frederick and Peggy when they are on the way to the "male vibration" scene (225). In fact, it is Frederick's eyes that have puzzled him as he tries to gauge the white man's identity:

> They were round and bright, and they had the glassy impersonal dullness of eyes that had popped from the scarlet sockets of dead fish. ... Collis was looking for his eyes but it seemed that he had forgotten what an eye was. He saw the objects of dull glass evenly balanced on either side of Frederick's nose, but he could no longer recognise Frederick's eyes. (224)

This is an uncanny moment when a living being is turned into a cadaver, an automaton with tell-tale glass eyes. Collis is disoriented into an intellectual uncertainty in which the self and the other are identified, or the distinctions are blurred. In this cognitive process, there is a shift from the object to the subject: at first it is Frederick's eyes that are dead; then the

loss is internalized as a deficiency on the looker's part; finally he admits that he can no longer recognize Frederick's eyes. Collis' eyes are now problematic.

It is ironic that Frederick should accuse Collis of spying from the objectivity and detachment of a writer, while the latter can neither write creatively nor see clearly (274-75). What he blurts out borders on the senseless (drunken) and the sensible (assured by the narrator):

> "I can understand it at certain times," he said. "In sex, in the sexual act." ...
> "My relation then is that of a subject to an object. That is true. I see the
> body as an object. You understand? I'm sure you understand. And I
> wanted to ask some women ... but I couldn't. That would be beyond me."
> He turned his eyes on Dickson. "Have you ever felt that you were *seen* in
> this way?" (275)

Collis' rambling sends Dickson "stumbling blindly through the swaying crowd" to the door. As the Yugoslav explains clearly, the key words are "eyes" and "*seen*". Madness lies in the paralyzing double vision: his emergence into the subjectivity of cognition and language is blocked by the objectivity of his body under the white fetishizing and castrating gaze.[12] He cannot verbalize his desire to some women, since his body has become an object, a "male vibration" in the sexual act. "My eyes!"--this cry echoes Kurtz's "The horror! The Horror!"

What is wrong with "my eyes/I's"? It is the existentialist angst about a particular self that has lost sight of its own identity. Descartes says, "I think, therefore I am." Fanon says, "The Negro is not. Any more than the white man" (*Black Skin* 231). The eye/I is split and decentered between the subject of the enunciated (seen) and the subject of enunciation (seeing): the subject is always narrated elsewhere. As Zizek explains the problem of Cartesian *cogito* in Lacanian terms, the subject has to be empty before it can think intersubjectively: "... intersubjectivity *stricto sensu* involves the subject's radical decenteredness: only when my self-consciousness is externalized in an object do I begin to look for it in another subject" (Zizek 68). What images of self does the black subject find in the white discourse except the return of the repressed, the primal scene of racial fantasy

and colonial violence/cannibalism? This estrangement constitutes a supplementary différance to the euphoria of postmodern decentered subjectivity. Madness is the only exit.

What role does Frederick play as the white liberal "friend" of the emigrants? He used to be in the Colonial Service, as District Commissioner in Nigeria, and believes he ruined Miss Bis (Una Soloman) in Trinidad. To save his liberal conscience, he decides to marry Una and even intends to go back to Africa to regain his strength. He toys with different identities and different photographed images of himself, and seems to have gone native in befriending the emigrants and resorting to native drugs and black penises to cure his impotence. In all these, he seems a successor to Conrad's Kurtz, in a more liberal and mild version. Yet his fascination with the other is always ambiguous. He has brought direct harm to Miss Bis, Collis and Higgins. He retains the white gaze, whether through photographs shot in the colonies or through voyeuristic identification. The other is there for his consumption, to shore up his own potency, to confirm his white male privileged position of a modern, hedonistic aesthete. Behind his apparent liberalism of sharing his partner with black men is his racist fetishization. Although his sexual mores seem loose under the pretext of medical cure, he is a totalitarian homophobe when it comes to "different" women (250, 255)--lesbians. Probably that other scene has to be suppressed, for identification with what he thinks is an amoral lack would only reduce him to further impotence, and shake his own gender confusion when he both identifies with and is attracted to the black penis via the exchange of woman in his "hom(m)osexuality." No wonder he needs what he believes is a still pure black woman for wife, back to Africa to restore his maleness! Frederick is the postmodern multi-cultural gourmet par excellence.

In this section, I have been exploring the impossibility of telling the story, and the very act of telling has to be effected by the narrator through fading into omniscient narration and shedding his selves onto his doubles. Both of his doubles finally go mad, because their language is disrupted by mnemonic scenes of the black body as the object of white fear and desire, and hence trapped in the reflexivity of seeing/seen/scene. The speaking subject that

is also the object (the body) narrated elsewhere breaches an abyss of language through infinite redoublings, rendered here metonymically in the borrowed phrase from Fanon's "Black Skin, White Masks"--the disjunction between "white" English as pedagogic universality and performative racial purity, and the black body as the mark of cultural and racial difference. I have quoted from Fanon earlier that "The Negro in the West Indies becomes proportionately whiter ... in direct ratio to his mastery of the language." West Indian dialects are thus metonymically "black," bearing the traces of the black body as the mark of difference; they are linguistic signs embodied with blackness as difference, though not as representing some supposed transcendental signified of a black essence. Heteroglossia thus brings out the foreignness of languages in the very process of cultural translation.

Dialects and Cultural Difference: What is "West Indian"?

Most of the emigrants in the novel speak West Indian English (dialects), which are rendered orthographically through a compromise between a sense of authenticity and the practicality of reaching a wide reading public. Their language is marked by its "non-standardness" as difference, which scrambles the codes of proper English and interrogates English cultural values and identity through defamiliarizing and doubling the normal. Since this is not the language of *man* (as in Fanon's quotation, meaning European humanism), it is most subversive as voices of mimicry and near anonymity, as faceless, unseen irruptions of guerrilla war tactics.[13]

The section depicting the emigrants' first impression of England on the train consists of various voices, images of languages as the object of representation. We see names like Tornado and Lilian in some dialogues, while in others the voice is marked by varieties of English and shades of tones suggesting different enunciative positions.

The density of language is revealed through a series of "misunderstandings." Lilian complains that a stewardess lies about putting sugar in her tea, which she does not taste.

Tornado explains it in the context of the sugar ration. Then there is another exchange on tea-serving:

> Would you have a cup of tea? With or without?
> (What she mean with or without.)
> Milk and sugar?
> (What she mean milk an' sugar.)
> Good. Won't be a minute.
> Say Tornado what wrong wid dese people at all? You doan' mean to say people drink tea when it ain't got milk. They ain't that poor un, un, Tornado, no tell me de truth, dey ain't so poor they can't spare a drop o' milk in they tea, an' what kin' o' talk is dis 'bout with or without. Is it ol' man that they doan' like sugar. What wrong wid dem at all. With or without. O Christ Tornado, will a long time 'fore I forget dat ... with or without.
> They have funny taste, partner. You goin' get some surprises. You wait.
> (111-12)

Lilian's repetition of seemingly innocuous service English opens up new spaces for cultural interrogation. Culture as a way of life is most entrenched in food, in taste, which used to be a metaphor for canon-building in literary evaluation as something akin to wine-tasting. "With or without" does not make sense to Lilian because she cannot taste any sugar in the tea anyway, and suspects that the stewardess lies. The reason for this misunderstanding is overdetermined: it could be that the stewardess lies; or that there is so little sugar due to the post-war rationing that "with" is always not enough for Lilian; or that the English have a milder taste than the West Indians; or that they are poor; or that they are "ol' man". "With or without" seems to offer more choices in the mother country; for the colonial Lilian, the choice is no choice, is a sign of something else in the chain of cultural translations and differences. "With or without" marks a difference in the English cultural / linguistic system that has to be translated into other differences in another system before they can make sense, and the translation is productive in bringing out unexpected (non)senses through estrangement and defamiliarization.

"With or without," S/Z, Fort/Da, ... "What wrong wid dem at all." The difference between th sound and d sound is all the difference there is, when language is hollowed of

meaning and becomes the site of agonistic performances, when cultural difference brings out the foreignness of languages, when signification is perpetually postponed, detoured, and deferred. The scrambling of the "meaningful" phonetic codes brings in the traces of other differences from other languages. Accents--Oriental, Black, East Indian--are exactly these other differences that scramble the English codes without hindering meaning in its pure, scientific sense, such as Dickson's robotic communication. Since language in use does not function in this scientific way, accents are the *excessive* "errors" that make language lapidary, opaque, with traces of racialized bodies and historicized subject positions. In Lacanian terms, as Slavoj Zizek points out, "... human speech in its most radical, fundamental dimension functions as a password: prior to its being a means of communication, of transmitting the signified content, speech is the medium of the mutual recognition of the speakers" (94). Language hollowed of meaning: is this not the language of accented english (with a small e in contrast to English) which is always more or less than what is expressed in "content"? Always somewhat off the point? Always elsewhere? For what is heard is the accent, the excesses on top of "meanings," the sheer arrogance of a subject position cloaked in a heavy accent, an affront to the host society in keeping an accent after years of residence. Isn't the accentuated English a form of writing that Roland Barthes describes as "writing aloud"?

> a text of pulsional incidents, the language lined with flesh, a text where we can hear the grain of the throat ... a whole carnal stereophony: the articulation of the tongue, not the meaning of language. (*Pleasure* 66-67)

This writing of the body is, of course, not a return to some black essence, for the black body is always already constructed within the language system, albeit marginalized "amid the murmuring of things" in a repeated interrogation of Hegelian self-consciousness (Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* 236). To borrow Foucault's comments on Artaud, this encounter of the body and discourse is the occasion "when all of discursive language is constrained to come undone in the violence of the body and the cry, and when thought, forsaking the wordy interiority of consciousness, becomes a material energy, the suffering

of the flesh, the persecution and rending of the subject itself" (Foucault, *Foucault/Blanchot* 18). Fanon's final prayer in his *Black Skin, White Masks* is to the black body: "O my body, make of me always a man who questions!" (232) This Cartesian echo is influenced by Sartrean existentialist humanism that makes the body an instrument (Butler 152). However, "the man who questions" can also be read in a Derridean way as "exiled speech" in Judaism: "The Law then becomes Question and the right to speech coincides with the duty to interrogate. The book of man is a book of question" (Derrida, *Writing* 67). This ethical subject attains a passage from instrumental utility to sovereignty whose alterity is marked by "the certainty of being *at issue*," as described by Georges Bataille:

> I am not this that I name in the same way that I name each particular thing in the order where it has its place and has a sense that accounts for it; I am an object in question, an object whose basic content is subjectivity, which is a question, and which its differentiated contents bring into play. (378)

Barthes' "whole carnal stereophony," the Foucauldian "violence of the body and the cry," the Derridean "exiled speech," and Bataille's sovereign subjectivity "*in question*" mark the fundamental difference of the black body between proximity and accessibility to meaning.

In the above quoted passage, Lilian scrambles the th/d phonetic difference just as she scrambles "With or without" cultural / gustatory opposition, questions the truthfulness of the stewardess' promise, and even wonders about the poverty level of the whole nation. She is thus refusing to be bound in the immediate codes by commenting on them from the higher levels of meta-languages, which are yet solidly based on the bodily reactions of her taste buds, and her tongue cannot feel the sense of d/th difference. "With or without," even Dickson's fastidiousness with th immediately followed by r (58) cannot eliminate the blackness of his language. "With or without," the master's cultural and linguistic pedagogy makes no difference and no sense for the blacks, unless they choose to make a difference on a higher level of rhetorical performativity and cultural translation.

Most of the voices in this train section are anonymous. They express various sentiments and attitudes ranging from ambivalent admiration of the English industry that

produces "life" and "death" in advertisements, to a verbal fight with a "spy" inquiring about stowaway West Indians, to dreams of big pool winnings, to political talks about the ills of the country, and in various styles and tones of the dialect-speaking labourers, educated West Indians, drunken "limeys," impersonal announcers, and so on. One voice tries to construct an image of England:

> ... England. Am I really in England. Remember the battles. England was always the place that fought battle, the country with some enemy, but England, it was Britain the books said, For Britain. It was Britons, Britons never never shall be slaves. This is England. Look you just missed it. Ah, there again, there it is, the white horse. Gone. There ah, there it is. White against the grass. Who put it there.... (119-120)

The educated voice grows nostalgic and recalls the images and words from colonial textbooks to fit in the military glory of the empire that boasts of a long national history of "Britons." The image is "that white horse like a plaster print on the grass" (119). Jingoism becomes uncanny when repeated by an ex-colonial, who fetishizes on the ancient chalk outline of the white horse as a hallucinatory image of Britons. The staccato tone of "there ... gone" repetition sounds like a child's play (*Fort/Da*), "a compulsion to repeat" evoking the presence and mourning the disappearance of a lost empire that has never been his own, always an image imported from elsewhere. The rejoinder to this educated colonial voice is another anonymous, laconic "How long you been sleepin'?" (120) The discourse of nationalism is going through the compulsion to repeat endlessly by an ex-colonial, tipping over into the mumblings of day-dreams and archaic fantasies.

The anonymity of the voices is an ironic rewriting of the travel genre by European colonials who maintain their subject position as objective observers projecting through their narrative gaze an order upon the disorder of the "other" scenes and peoples. The omniscient narrator of the novel has to disappear behind various voices giving inchoate first impressions of the mother country. What the West Indians see with their eyes is inseparable from what they are themselves. Since these migrants are displaced, literally in transit (on the train going somewhere / nowhere), their vision is multiple and shaky, like

movie scenes produced experimentally from an unstable camera. Thus the metaphor of space is meshed with that of vision.

One voice says, "I never though ah would have set eyes on England" (114). But what is this land? It is both familiar and strange:

> Feel vaguely that have been here before just as after four years in the other island felt had always lived there. For a moment seemed had forgotten where I was. Stretch of land over yonder reminds so much of home....
> Tornado de ground feel harder than back home. W'at dat mean.
> You on strange ground, partner. Yuh foot got to get acclimatised. (114)

The visual impression of everywhere like home is belied by the physical feeling of estrangement; the vision of universality by the physical presence of difference. The latter threatens to destroy the former, even "at home," which is no home:

> Is work scarce at home?
> For some people. If you go down there they'll make you inspector o' police. Before the sun hit you twice you won't know who you is. 'Cause the power you'll command after that will simply take possession o' you. Ol' man you'll get in de spirit. Know what that mean. You'll become one wid Gawd.
> In the land of the blind....
> 'Tis the other way round. In the land o' de one eye the blind is king.
> You see, partner, if you can't see, we'll all tart thinkin' that's w'at we got eyes for, not to see. (116)

Colonial identity is no identity, for the eyes/I's can neither see nor be seen. The proverb that the white man invokes to explain his power is turned upside down, just as enlightenment is shown its blindness in the colonial scene: "Me always say English people got everything upside down. The wrong things catch they eye" (116). When the West Indian colonial identity is unmade in these comic exchanges, England and the English are also unmade through the shattered visions of fragmented subjects in transit. England becomes a series of fetishistic commodities: shaving blades, Ponds, paint, dissecticide, suspenders, bellybreakers, lipstick, yeast, toothpaste--"Everything we get back home they make here, ol' man." (121) Not only commodities, but also cultural identities are made for export--white masks, black bodies. The "reverse colonization" makes England itself into

what E. P. Thompson calls "the last colony of the British Empire" (qtd. in Dabydeen 68),

as the emigrants look for shelter: "Ask for Victoria. / What happen there? / The Colonial

Office" (122). The biblical pillars of fire and cloud become a hallucinatory "fire in

London" and polluting smoke ["a thick choking mass of cloud" (123)]. If language makes

up reality, these dialects of non-identitarian performativity have "West-Indianized" or

"tropicalized" (Rushdie, *Satanic Verses* 354) London, much like Sam Selvon's use of

dialects as the narrative voice for carnivalization. Their re-presentation of England follows

a trajectory *from the fetishization of the selected images of the mother country to the*

uncertain ground of their standpoint, from the split between sightseeing of wish-fulfillment

and being seen (interrogated),[14] to the final destination of the bodily touch in utter

darkness: "Touch my nose. ... When we get outta this smoke, w'at happen next? / More

smoke" (124-125). No name, no sight, no identity, no light--the haunting shadow of "the

heart of an immense darkness" as the ending of Conrad's novella.

The anonymity of the voices is reinforced by the futility of naming:

> 'Ave 'alf pint o' bitter John?
> My name ain't John.
> Oh no 'arm meant. Jes' gettin' to know you. 'Alf a pint for me an' my
> pal...
> 'Ere's yours, John, an' yours, darkie...
> 'E isn't no darkie. 'E's 'avin' a drink with me, an' that makes 'im my pal.
> Understand?
> Well w'at you'd 'ave me say. Ah don't know fercetn't the guy's name.
> Alllll the best. (112)

The ritual of getting acquainted is not asking for a proper name, but imposing and adopting

a common name that can just fit anyone. The racist slur "darkie," a metonymic fetishism

on the black body, is displaced by "pal" according to a funny logic of drinking protocol,

another cultural / linguistic system of arbitrary codes linked with alcoholism as a way of

life.

While the émigrants have debated about their separate identities according to the islands

of their origin, here they acquire a common (non)identity through the name "spade":

> 'Tis w'at every spade hope to happen to him when he sen' in the pools.
>   What spade got to do with it. What you mean by spade.
>   The spades? That's me, an' you. Spades. Same colour as the card. Ever
> see the Ace o' spades, ol' man. (113)

Here the old immigrant is introducing the new one into a group (non)identity that includes "me an' you." Naming is baptizing. "Spade," by its darkness in a primordial Ace, is the utter darkness as the signifier of the West Indians.[15] The deliberate adoption of a derogatory name that connects to the lowest of the white value scheme is an act of subaltern solidarity and subversion. It is in the blackness of nothingness and anonymity as the negativity of a proper name and a proper identity (like the name Malcolm X), that a guerrilla warfare for freedom can be fought, that Fanon's "occult instability" of performative cultural identification can be played out against the pedagogic identity of people as one.

What is West Indian? In the hostel, there is an interesting exchange on the definition. Mrs James looks at Dickson as another dark body of rhythmic vibration:

> "I love to see your people dance," she said, smiling across at Dickson.
> "So beautiful in their costumes."
>   "Mr. Dickson is West Indian," the warden corrected. Frederick sat like
> one waiting for something to happen.
>   "I beg your pardon," Mrs. James said, "how silly of me. Of course
> you're West Indian."
>   "Do I really look like an African?" Dickson asked.
>   "Not at all," Mrs. James said breezily. "Of course you're West Indian."
> (157-58)

The affirmative repetition by the other sets the validity of the statement in question. As Frederick notes, Mrs. James has no way of knowing the difference by appearances, which means that the black body is all there is to her fantasizing and racializing white gaze. But Dickson's question is also on appearances: "Do I really look like an African?", as if he did expect a definite answer to the physical differences. He is trying to racialize his supposed cultural superiority in the same way that Mrs James racializes the black body. He is looking into the eye of the other for a reassuring image of himself as a sign in the colonial system of differentiation.

While Dickson's colonial mentality seeks identity in the eye of the other, there is a contrasting incident in which the confusion of African and West Indian is used as a camouflage in the war between the police detective's surveillance to track down "criminal identity" and the emigrants' counter-surveillance move of identification to fracture the white gaze. Higgins is arrested for peddling "drugs" (which turns out to be some bull's testicles and African Love Vine concoction made by the African Azi at the order of Frederick). When the policeman comes to the barber's shop, he acts upon the logic that since Higgins as a black was looking for a barber shop, it must be this colored barber shop in the neighbourhood. It is the same logic as Mrs James'.

> "A man was arrested this morning at Marble Arch," the policeman said,
> "one of your people."
> "Which people?" the Jamaican said. (161)

> "It's [the barber shop] the only one your people come to around here," the
> policeman said.
> "Which people?" the Jamaican asked again. (163)

The Jamaican insists that "There's coloured people and coloured people," while the barber dares the policeman to tell the identity of the African Azi. It is this deconstructive strategy of erasing names that turns the game of police interrogation into the "spades'" counter-interrogation. While the African gives the policeman an ambiguous reassurance, "Let's say, we are,"--a provisional performative identification that the émigrants are actually playing out at the moment--the Jamaican lectures him on police harassments and concludes that it is no more natural to conflate colored peoples into one than it is to do the same to the Irish, the Welsh and the English (163).[16] It is precisely in the interstitial split of naming / identity, "They are... They are not," "With...Without," "Fort/Da," "There...Gone," in the liminality of identity / identification, that the subaltern subversion emerges into new social movements through a cultural translation turning, in Homi Bhabha's words, "the differences among them [people, the diasporic, the minorities, the migrants] into a kind of solidarity" for their "cultural survival" (*Location* 170).

The Emigrants ends with the gathering at the Governor's club of new arrivals of West Indians led by the Strange Man,[17] now married to the Governor's ex-wife. They have come to the metropolis to claim Black Britain, and historically they are the precursors of what Bhabha calls the great "gatherings of exiles and emigrés and refugees, gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures" (*Location* 139). This gathering thematically foreshadows the last novel by George Lamming about the West Indian emigrants in London, *Water with Berries*, which ends with the exiled Calibans going mad, murdering and setting fire to London in an act of revolutionary violence / colonial madness. Lamming writes the last four sentences of the novel as the last chapter heralding a new beginning:

> The publican of the Mona died two days after the remains of the Old
> dowager's body were found.
> Derek alone escaped the charge of murder.
> But the Gathering defied the nation with their furious arguing that Teeton
> was innocent.
> They were all waiting for the trials to begin. (*Water with Berries* 249)

Here, Lamming creates a new theme of Black Britons settling down and making a permanent claim of "colonization in reverse." His is one of the early voices bridging the theme of the exilic and the post-colonial migrant with the problems of citizenship, constitutional rights and minority rights of the new ethnicity in the metropolitan centres of the Western world. As Lamming explains,

> They are not going to return. What they will have to deal with now is the
> new reality in the experience--that is, the world of blacks in England, rather
> than what they propose to do about the world on the island. (Paquet 90)

The emigrants have become the immigrants. The Gathering defies the nation, inserting their voices of heteroglossia from the margins to disturb and disrupt the cultural narratives of the modern nation at the metropolitan centre. The emigrants, the migrants, the immigrants, the exilic, the diasporic, the refugees, the homeless, West Indians, Black Britons, Asian Americans ... the chain of signifiers goes on endlessly in the game of naming and the politics of identification.

The heterogeneity of the emerging forces defies historical periodization and difference in location. Paul Gilroy has pointed out the cultural travel routes of the Black Atlantic, in which the British and the American black experiences interchange and influence each other. Lamming's style in *The Emigrants* can probably be classified as modernist, which can be conveniently contrasted with the more self-conscious postmodernist *Satanic Verses* by Rushdie. However, the 1980s has also seen Buchi Emecheta's *Ada's Story* (1983) (which consists of *Second-Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch*) and *Gwendolen* (1989), two realist narrative accounts of African women's experience in London, while Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging* (1985) and *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987) are modernist, the former having been compared to Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* (Corhay-Ledent). One version of periodization is to follow world systems theory as Frederick Buell does, and simply call the present-day heterogeneity "global polyethnicity" that has succeeded the previous oppositional anti-colonial writers such as Fanon and Lamming or colonial writers such as V. S. Naipaul. The new generation can be said to be more flexible in forming political alliances, which they would acknowledge consist of different political impulses and interests, and are less susceptible to nationalist myths. Yet with figures like Fanon (if one follows what Homi Bhabha has done with him), it would be difficult to say he is dated, considering what influences he has had on our very way of thinking post-colonially.[18]

What is most impressive about Lamming is how he anticipates many issues on language and subjectivity that have emerged only recently in literary theory and cultural studies. While the contemporary influence of psychoanalysis and existentialism are crucial here, it is also a deeply felt experience of colonization that has informed his way of refiguring a fragmentary language-constituted subjectivity in the perplexity of being. Lamming possesses a power that cannot be discovered even in a postmodern era of ethnic carnivalization. What Buell has celebrated as cosmopolitan immigrants in Bharati Mukherjee's fiction need to be set in the context of the international division of labour and the subaltern women in rural India in Mahasweta Devi's fiction ("Breast-Giver") (Spivak,

In Other Worlds 256). In this light, the much celebrated post-industrial global economy turns out to be a displacement and a repetition of the classic capitalist exploitation of surplus value. And the postmodern patchwork of showcase multi-ethnicity cannot escape the long shadow of otherness from elsewhere in the world (more barbaric practices of multinational corporations in the Third World), and from the past through the legacy of modernity and colonialism that have shaped our present day international division of labour and the mass movement of homeless people.

Notes

[1] Sam Selvon's *Moses Trilogy* (*The Lonely Londoners*, *Moses Ascending*, and *Moses Migrating*) are the first immigrant novels to use West Indian dialects as the narrative voice.

[2] *British Grammar*, 1762m EL no. 97, 105. Quoted in Olivia Smith (9).

[3] Jones' book treats the final stage of the triumph in the Puritans' insistance on the utilitarian function of the English vernacular.

[4] See also David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture* 70-71.

[5] See David Goldberg's discussion of Locke, Leibniz and Chomsky in his book *Racist Culture* 27-29. Goldberg does not take Aarsleff's revisionist history into consideration, yet his location of racism within European reason points to the inadequacies of intellectual histories in which Orientalism and racism are not fully treated.

[6] See Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought and Reality*, and Whorf/Sapir hypothesis on linguistic determinism.

[7] There are practical difficulties when many languages coexist and arbitrarily choosing one would cause disputes among different racial groups, such as in India. Besides, English as the new international language is very useful for communication with the outside world. In South Africa, the language issue has been postponed through recognizing many languages as official.

[8] There have been various meanings associated with Caliban. For a brief survey of the emblem, see Margaret Paul Joseph, *Caliban in Exile: The Outsider in Caribbean Fiction* 1-20; 113-31. I disagree with the use of Caliban as a shorthand for people of former colonies, because, as Spivak has warned, there is a danger of "forgetting that he is a name in a play, an inaccessible blankness circumscribed by an interpretable text" ("Three Women's Texts" 264). My use of Caliban chiefly follows Lamming's use in the quotation from *The Pleasures of Exile*, which focuses on Caliban's alienation as the "Other." See also Houston A. Baker, Jr.'s essay "Caliban's Triple Play" (in *"Race," Writing and Difference*) for a post-structuralist line of exploration, which is compatible with Spivak's emphasis on Caliban as a name in a play. Margaret Joseph's argument for non-exilic Caliban is really a misuse of the term anyway. I do not think Houston A. Baker's post-structuralist use in 1985, developed from earlier writers like Lamming and James Baldwin, is "outdated" by essentialist arguments (such as Joseph's) which happen to be published later.

[9] Kazuo Ishiguro's mimicry of the gentleman's English in the Butler/first person narration in *The Remains of the Day* almost breathes life into the robotic guardian of Englishness. Yet he remains a cultural lab robot largely because of the author's unEnglish name and the wrong age of his fictional birth. The fine line between mimicry and sincerity is not always hard and fast.

[10] Other mirror images appear when Dickson looks into the mirror before and after his naked exposure (264; 266) and when Miss Bis (Una Solomon) finds a different self in the mirror (264).

[11] Cf. Freud classifies the phantasy of intra-uterine existence as a kind of uncanniness ("The 'Uncanny'" 244).

[12] See Freud, "... the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated" ("The 'Uncanny'" 231). The description of Frederick's glassy eyes is reminiscent of Hoffmann's tale "The Sand-Man," which Freud analyzes in his "uncanny" essay. The Oedipal fear of castration also works in Lamming's novel, echoing earlier references to the penis and the white fantasy and desire for the black body.

13 Chinese Pidgin English as used in Mo's novels helps to convey a sense of authenticity, and, as some reviewers in Hong Kong have complained, it easily gives a sense of caricature. Black English, although also susceptible to caricature, is more distinct as a powerful language for artistic expression. The Chinese American author Frank Chin has complained about the lack of a proper language to convey Asian American sensibilities. His characters in *The Chicken-coop Chinamen*, for example, borrow Black English in their back-talk. See J.L. Dillard, *Black English* (163-185) for a discussion of Chinese Pidgin English, which he thinks has not received enough scholarly attention.

14 "Do you know if there is any stowaways on the ship?" asks a white voice (115). The British Government decided in 1949 to block the employment of stowaways, who had been tolerated and allowed to work in British ships during the war. See Colin Holmes, *A Tolerant Country: Immigrants, Refugees and Minorities in Britain* (52).

15 Cf. "Spade. A Negro: low: from ca. 1920. Since ca. 1954, it has mostly designated a West Indian. Ex the colour of the card suit; cf. "as black as the ace of spades". Beale ed. *Partridge Concise Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (421).

16 We are reminded of the jingoistic "Britons" in the educated colonial's rumination on the train, and the internal colonial violence covered under the term "Britons." That stuttering "Britons never never shall be slaves" is doubled by colonization of the Irish at home.

17 The Strange Man is the archetypal migrant other, John Berger's seventh man. In the "uncanny" essay, Freud recounts his and Ernst Mach's experiences of encountering a "supposed stranger" in a mirror, who turns out to be their "double" that they "thoroughly disliked" (248). Disliked because the stranger is not like us; and because the stranger echoes to our "repressed infantile complexes" and "surmounted" "primitive beliefs" (249). The child's herd instinct is related to the mother, whose disappearance and absence (which the child tries to control in his game Fort/Da) constitute "a hole in the perceptual field" of the child, "the place that could engulf everything, including itself" (Safouan 56). The child's unfulfilled desire can only be turned into fear and anxiety, not pacified but "brought into existence by the approach of a 'stranger,'" "any haphazard 'member of the herd'" (Freud, *Group Psychology* 51). Georg Simmel thinks of the stranger as the Jew in European history. The stranger's "membership within the group involves both being outside it and confronting it" (144):
The stranger is close to us insofar as we feel between him and ourselves similarities of nationality or social position, of occupation or of general human nature. He is far from us insofar as these similarities extend beyond him and us, and connect us only because they connect a great many people. (147)
For a stranger to the country, the city, the race, and so on, what is stressed is again nothing individual, but alien origin, a quality which he has, or could have, in common with many other strangers. (148)

18 It is debatable whether Fanon's comments on the colonial situation still apply today, though their application to Lamming is warranted by the same period of decolonization, existentialism and psychoanalysis in which they wrote. It is certainly subject to critical interpretation whether any work from the past has a significance for today. Fanon has been "resurrected" by Edward Said (*Culture and Imperialism*) and Homi Bhabha (see his essay collection, *The Location of Culture*, and his preface to Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986), pp.vii-xxvi, where he gives an interesting note on Fanon's use of "man.") For a different view on the use of Fanon, see Henry Louis Gates, "Critical Fanonism," *Critical Inquiry*, v. 17, no. 3, Spring 1991. Gwen Bergner's essay "Who Is That Masked Woman? or, The Role of Gender in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*" shows Fanon's limitations in excluding the subjectivity and desire of the woman of colour. Bergner finds Gates' purely biographical debunking inadequate for Fanon's theoretical contributions, acknowledges Fanon's creative use of psychoanalysis in theorizing race, and problematizes the juncture of race and gender in Fanon and Bhabha.

Chapter Five: The Woman That Is Not One

--The Schizophrenic World in Hualing Nieh's

Mulberry and Peach

In previous chapters, I have dealt with the exilic energies in some migrant novels at the juncture between deconstructive gestures and an ethics of alterity. The doubling and transgression of generic forms have been explained through interrogating various ideologies implicit in novels in which representations of the "other" are problematized. In this chapter I will examine a novel written in Chinese by a Chinese American woman, Hualing Nieh. My purpose is to see how the perspective of "metropolitan migrants" might apply (or fail to) in a novel about a Chinese woman migrant whose itinerary extends from the Three Gorges to Beijing, from Taiwan to America, and from 1945 to 1970; and to see if the migrant's vision of unbelonging can have a larger significance than the narrowly sociological explanation provided by a metropolitan "Third Worldism." From this perspective, Nieh's experiments with generic forms and language can be seen as attempts to render the heterogeneous other beyond the grand narratives of modern Chinese history, transgressing both tradition and modernity in their various literary conventions.

My focus on a Chinese novel by a Taiwanese writer who immigrated to America has other repercussions within debates about post-colonial discourse. Hualing Nieh is deeply influenced by Western literature; yet her exilic thesis was also born within the context of modern Chinese history as experienced personally by many mainland-born Chinese who fled to Taiwan and finally ended up in the U.S. through a double exile. The novel was written in 1970, before the birth of a post-colonial theoretical discourse. Will this novel reinforce the general framework of post-colonial theory as developed by immigrant critics within the metropolitan West? How will the Chinese novel, still "under-represented" in post-colonial discourse, change some of the general conclusions drawn from the Indian sub-continent, the Middle-East, or the West Indies and following certain rules of

selectivity? Many of the criticisms directed against post-colonial discourse emphasize the contradictions of critics who claim to represent the Third World while situated within Western academic institutions.[1] However, this seemingly historicist *ad hominem* move runs the risk of ignoring the discursive paradigms of a Derridean textuality that turns history into writing and nation into narration. History and textuality exist in an uneasy relationship of negotiation.

These theoretical problems arise in Nieh's novel, as it rewrites traditional narratives of modern Chinese history through the "confession" of a schizophrenic woman Mulberry/Peach. On the historical level, the great events in modern Chinese history are read differently from different ideological and political perspectives. On the personal level, Nieh writes from her experience of a double exile, from mainland China to Taiwan and finally to the U. S., an experience shared by many writers following the same route of migration. On the textual level, the confessions of a schizophrenic woman open up to an *excess* beyond historical paradigms, a certain alterity that will double-write the lineal historicist narratives.

Subjecting Nieh's 1970 novel to various theories of modernity and post-coloniality requires a few words about recent polemics in the field of modern Chinese literature. Rey Chow's work on modernity and Chinese woman makes a serious deconstructive intervention into the question of Chinese modernity, which has always been perceived as progressive and emancipatory by critics and writers following the humanist tradition. Chow and other Chinese critics[2] now applying deconstruction to modern Chinese culture have been attacked for imposing Western anti-humanist theories on a situation where humanism has not yet won the battle over feudal traditions.[3] Since a defense of Chinese communism in the U.S. after 1989 is unthinkable, the question often becomes: is the Communist Party a product of feudalism, or modernity? At present, with China joining the world market of transnational capitalism, it becomes even more difficult to return to older narratives, whether socialist, liberal humanist, or anti-communist. Now that China's

regime seems to approximate the policies of other Asian governments that combine a market economy with a non-Western style order, it is facile, as many "theorists" of modern Chinese culture do, to set up a binary model with communism as hegemony and everything foreign as subversive.[4]

This is not the place to construct a theoretical analysis of the strange mixture in contemporary China of communism, feudalism, "early capitalism," and transnational capitalism. What is striking is that the exilic in Nieh's novel, reached through a route of double exile historically unique, proves prophetic in its sense of cultural dislocation for both the diasporic Chinese and the Chinese of the mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong, whether in their internal displacement or in their sense of alienation from politics, tradition and modernity. It is amid this intellectual uncertainty that I will approach Nieh's novel with the migrant model of exilic energies that I have elaborated in my previous chapters.

Personal Story, National Allegory

One noted critic and poet, Kenneth [Xian-yong] Bai, himself a diasporic Chinese American from Mainland China via Taiwan, says about Nieh's novel *Mulberry and Peach*:

> ... the story develops into a Kafkaesque nightmare. Mulberry flees to America, only to be sought by the Immigration Service. Like "K" in *The Trial*, she has a marathon struggle with the Immigration Service. When the immigration officer asks where she would like to go should she be deported, her answer is representative: "I don't know." Her answer bespeaks the tragedy of the migrant Chinese today. They have no where to go, no motherland to return to. From Peking to Taipei to the U.S., their journey is full of pain and suffering. [See appendix.]

Bai is talking about a relatively privileged generation of Taiwan students and scholars who have gone through double exile or self-exile.[5] On this *sociological* level, it is problematic to translate this personal story into a national allegory. Their experience is different from millions of Chinese in Mainland China without the privilege to migrate within their own lands, not to mention going to the U. S., or the Taiwan natives displaced and marginalized by the mandarin-speaking bureaucrats through a massacre in the early fifties. This kind of

argument, of course, has been used in the polemics of post-colonial discourse against universalizing the metropolitan migrant experience, from both the radical and the conservative sides. It carries more weight against a kind of euphoric celebration of immigration in the mode of "the best of the two cultures." If the migrant experience is perceived as loss, unbelonging, linguistic alienation and cultural dislocation, however, the difference between exile in one's own land and exile in another land is not always significant. Said's summary of the contemporary world in terms of the unhoused, decentered, and exilic energies of the homeless nomads unassimilated to the emerging structures of institutional power is still valid both for the metropolitan migrants and for the subalterns in the peripheries. Yet this is not to say that deconstructive readings of cultural events are not themselves heavily selective as well. In fact, the most usual criticism of the migrant model often cites events and cultural formations outside the West, or examines the problems when this model "postmodernizes" the non-Western world.[6] I agree with Spivak's view that there is a disjuncture between the metropolitan migrant of Third World origin and the subaltern woman. However, it would be misleading to believe that the migrant model is the exclusive property of immigrant intellectuals in the West. After all, exile is a respectable genre in literature throughout world history; Zen Buddhism and Taoism have a lot in common with deconstructive concepts; and "postmodern" art in China does speak to the contemporary sense of cultural dislocation and political disorientation with the gradual death of idealism (epitomized in the Tiananmen massacre) *and* transnational capitalist incorporation.[7] Against this background fraught with political and cultural polemics, I will try to give traditional readings a chance in the rest of this section, to show the roads not taken, the generic forms not followed through, and the risks involved in writing a "postmodern" novel about modern China. While I am anticipating the usual questions about a "Third World" novel often asked by demystifiers and sceptics wary of deconstruction, the discursive turn in my reading of *Mulberry and Peach*, which I will present after this section, has to be seen as a dialogic negotiation with other possible ways

of constructing modern China, because I believe Nieh's experiments with language do have political, cultural and feminist ramifications in their deconstructive intervention.

In her preface, Nieh says, "The novel describes the tragedy of a schizophrenic Chinese who has been through the turmoils in China and who ends up in exile" (see appendix). If Mulberry/Peach is representative of the Chinese, there are other Chinese of a different type: the captain and the Peach-flower woman, whose "fresh, primitive life force represents the soul of the several-thousand-year old Chinese nation and sustains their survival through one disaster after another in history."[8] How should one represent those ordinary working people? If we accept Nieh's version of their organic exuberance and will to survive, are they not more representative of the Chinese at least numerically, if not essentially? If we refrain from argument about authenticity in representation, we may see Nieh as following briefly the convention of nature vs. civilization, infusing the image of the labouring people with primordial forces of survival. This pastoral, primitive genre in modern Chinese literature is best represented by the novels of Shen Ts'ung-wen, about whom Nieh wrote a critical biography in English in 1972. Obviously Nieh adopts the genre only briefly. Mulberry is the center of the story.

Who is Mulberry? A socio-historical approach may see her as a petty bourgeois, still emotionally and economically attached to the feudal tradition. She wants to run away from her own feudal, abusive family, wavers briefly when encountering difficulties, and marries willingly into a feudal, patriarchal family. Although she may be seen as a victim, she is never an innocent, passive sufferer. Critics may fault Nieh for perpetuating stereotypes of women and for failing to present positive images. Even if one is not a moralist, one cannot deny that in choosing to see great events in modern China through the eye of such a morally and politically ambiguous character, Nieh forecloses other ways of narrating the great events--specifically the defeat of the Japanese and the communist takeover of China. How about the sense of triumph and celebration in those who actually participated in the war of resistance against Japan? Why does it fail to give a sense of the people as actively

involved in shaping their own and their nation's destiny in addition to their victimization which Nieh describes in the novel? Nieh's description of the "liberation of Beijing" is even more problematic. The details of students persecuting the rich and their very slogans are taken anachronistically from scenes of the Cultural Revolution. Revolutionary violence against rich landlords was limited to the countryside, while the capitalists in the cities were considered allies of revolution. Nieh seems to essentialize the communists and miss their extreme popularity under certain historical circumstances. At least the sense of ambiguity she tries to convey at the great historical moments could have been expressed more subtly without traces of clear manipulation in the "realist" passages of the novel.

If the above reservations sound too "Marxist," it should also be remembered that *Mulberry and Peach* is not just an anti-communist, pro-Western, pro-Nationalist (Kuomintang), pro-feudalist, or pro-liberal humanist novel either. Its critique of the decadence of the feudal family is unmistakable, so is its allegorization of Taiwan under Kuomintang rule as a prison-like attic, and so is its Kafkaesque portrayal of the "land of the free." Yet it is not pure nihilism either, for, apart from the positive images of Peach-flower woman and the captain, China also appears as "the homeland of love" in Chia-kang's clippings of old scenes of Peking (123), and in Teng's glass ball with snow falling on the Great Wall inside (203). In fact, Nieh's preface of 1986 gives a quite traditional, nationalist reading of her own novel. The last two examples are not to be dismissed as just nostalgia / fantasia for a golden age in a text of nomadology. They insert another economy of non-movement (for Chia-kang, literal imprisonment in the attic) in which psychological survival depends upon fetishization of certain symbols from elsewhere (for Teng, a "homeland" he has never seen). The paradox between movement and non-movement, of non-movement within movement (the glass ball of the Great Wall mounted in the American car of mobility) and vice versa, points to the ambivalence at the center of the migrant experience, beyond gender essentialization of mobility, beyond binary oppositions between here and there, and beyond celebratory assimilationism or cultural nationalism.

A Woman by Any Other Name

Mulberry and Peach opens with the following exchange between Peach and the U. S. immigration officer:

> "I'm not Mulberry. Mulberry is dead!"
> "Well, what is your name, then?" asks the man from the Immigration Service.
> "Call me anything you like. Ah-chu, Ah-ch'ou, Mei-chuan, Ch'un-hsiang, Ch'iu-hsia, Tung-mei, Hsiu-ying, Ts'ui-fang, Niu-niu, Pao-pao, Pei-pei, Lien-ying, Kuei-fen, Chu-hua. Just call me Peach, OK?" (3)

Right from the beginning, the text foregrounds the name of the woman under interrogation, with Mulberry/Peach answering to real and imaginary audiences of patriarchy. Nieh opens up two battle fronts: race and gender.

The white male immigration officer is interested in the identity of the Third World Woman, with his probing questions into her political affiliations and sexual liaisons. He stands for a whole series of authority figures--a psychoanalyst in front of an unruly schizophrenic, an anthropologist bent on putting the native within his scientific grids, Orientalists trying to figure out the essence of the East. By asking for her name, he is also inadvertently invoking her identity as bestowed first by her father through naming: the given name and the surname which bears directly the name of the father. Thus the question, asked by the authority figure wielding the right of a possible deportation, carries the double weight of white racism and Chinese patriarchy, infusing terror and moral guilt in order to extricate a total confession.

Peach's opening words announce the death of the self, or the death of the old name, the death of the "I" as a moral being interpellated in the name Mulberry. Her answer is double-edged against both Western racism and Chinese patriarchy. She plays the game of naming.

Mulberry and Peach are "meaning" translations. The more usual translation is through "sound." Mulberry would be Sang-qing, and Peach would be Tao-hong. When the Chinese call these names, both the sound and the meaning function in the subconscious. In

other words, proper nouns are supplemented subliminally by their meanings as ordinary nouns. There is thus a loss in either way of translation. According to the Chinese original corresponding to another exchange between Mulberry and the immigration officer, "Sang Qing" is the way Mulberry gives her name, so that the officer says, "Sang Qing ["death - green" is the way the author renders his pronunciation in Chinese]--foreign names sure sound funny" (161). Mulberry has stopped using her English name Helen, and now Peach gives the immigration officer a string of funny-sounding Chinese names, erasing her identity behind linguistic confusion.

If, by losing her name amid funny-sounding and nonsensical Chinese, she estranges her English name identity, to a Chinese reader her Chinese names float her identity through over-familiarity. Between Mulberry and Peach, the suggested names are hackneyed ones for girls: Pearl, Silk, Beauty, Spring Scent, Autumn Glow, Winter Plum, etc. "Call me anything you like" (3). This "you" is obviously generic. Sexism in Chinese patriarchy considers a girl not worth much, so that her name does not deserve too much thought. Peach is here playing facetiously with stereotypes suggested by these all too common names for girls.

The name Sang Qing [literally Mulberry Green], however, is quite distinct and elegant. As Mulberry explains,

> "Mulberry is a holy tree, Chinese people consider it the chief of the tree family, it can feed silk worms, silk worms can produce silk, silk can be woven into silk and satin material. The mulberry tree is green, the colour of spring..." (178)

The association refers to a famous line by the Tang Dynasty symbolist poet Li Shangyin: "The spring silkworm till its death spins silk from love-sick heart" (Li 34). The explanation, though pointing to its distinct elegance, dissolves the proper noun into a common noun, to be set into linguistic play by the other name she chooses for herself--Peach [literally Peach-Red]. The contrast in sound and meaning between these two words makes them a perfect pair for Chinese poetic rhyming. "Mulberry Green" and "Peach Red"

would occupy counterpart positions in a poetic couplet, forming an oscillating linguistic play both metonymic and metaphoric, metonymic in the sense that both words appear in a contrastive relationship in the couplet, and metaphoric in the sense that one word recalls the other in the paradigmatic relationship of substitutability (tree and colour). Instead of conferring identity on their referents, names become signs following the rules of play within the arbitrary system of language. Mulberry and Peach, who is she? As soon as she is named, the subject is dead, evaporated behind the language system.

"Peach" turns the proper noun "Sang Qing" into a common noun "Mulberry." It is the same trick performed by Jean Genet according to Derrida:

> To give a name is always, like any birth (certificate), to sublimate a singularity and to inform against it, to hand it over to the police. ...

> When Genet gives his characters proper names, kinds of singularities that are capitalized common noun, what is he doing? What does he give us to read beneath the visible cicatrix of a decapitalization that is forever threatening to open up again?

> ... The convention dethrones and crowns [*couronne*] at once. ... (*Glas* 7)

For the subject to become a common noun is to be disseminated in the nameless play of language, in the sheer loss of meaning. Ian Watt has pointed out, "[Proper names] are the verbal expression of the particular identity of each individual person" (18). This literary function was first fully established in the novel, though names in the early novels (such as Fielding's) do suggest *types* (20). Genet's and Nieh's naming devices escape both particularity and universality in the loop of the realist novel, both the personal and the public property implied in a proper name.

Mulberry/Peach is split between the subject of the enoncé and the subject of enunciation. The former has to die so that the story can be told, "confessed" to the authority figure by the latter. The paradox is that whatever Mulberry/Peach writes down and presents to the authority (her diaries, letters and maps), whatever she lets the immigration officer copy and enter in her file, is a series of signs, a performative act of *writing* as "a field without origin-

-or which, at least, has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins" (Barthes, "Death" 230). That is why by the end of the book, the bureaucratic process of investigation still drags on, and the Kafkaesque trial is delayed and infinitely deferred. The ending is also the beginning, linked by the news clipping reference to Mulberry's bizarre car accident and her survival. Mulberry/Peach's flight, her performative writing, is also an act of rebellion, "since to refuse to fix meaning [read identity] is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases--reason, science, law" (Barthes, "Death" 231).[9]

Mulberry/Peach is diffused: she is flower, she is mist, she is everything, in her schizophrenic world of bearded women, child-bearing men, a body with sex and head organs switched, a murderer of father, mother, husband and daughter, a machine with electricity flowing like desire (4-5)--in a word, a Deleuzian world of deterritorialization:

> This subject itself is not at the center, which is occupied by the machine, but on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentered, *defined* by the states through which it passes. (Deleuze 20)

The female body in the process of becoming refuses the solidity of identity and appropriation (Irigaray 106-118); its trope is the self dissolved and flowing within the universe. As Peach says, "'Wind should blow, water should flow. You can't stop it'" (6). Her argument that "Even if I button it [her blouse], I'm still naked inside" (7) derives from the witticism of a third century Chinese Taoist eccentric: "The heaven and the earth are my clothes."

Whose Story? Narrative Framings and Dead Ends

Mulberry/Peach has to split into two subjects in order to tell the story. Yet on another level, Peach is also the subject of énoncé, the heroine of the book that we are reading; the teller of the story is also being narrated elsewhere. Even the division between Peach and Mulberry is but a linguistic play to facilitate the story-telling; in the last section of the novel, Mulberry resurfaces time and again, contrary to Peach's proclamation. The resurrection of

the "dead" casts doubt on the objectivity of the living subject outside the story being told. The point is illustrated in the old man's story about the Chungking bombing and Nanking massacre (41-44). The old man starts with an anonymous "[t]he 'he' in the story" (41). By the end of the story, "he" becomes "I":

> "You? Are you telling us a story, or is that something that really happened
> to you?"
> "It really happened to me. We've been stranded here so long that it seems
> like a story from a former life," says the old man. (44)

Counterpoised to the blurring of the borderlines between story and life, between this life and a former life, is the story itself, in which the Chinese woman is split into the Chungking Bombing self and the Nanking Massacre self, and after rising from the grave she has her later self wiped out completely from her memory. The self can be split, lopped off, and multiplied, in a narrative scenario reminiscent of Picasso's *Guernica* (1937). One listener compares the story to *The Tales of Liao-zai*,[10] a collection of 17th century Chinese folk tales depicting mostly female ghosts, metamorphoses and supernatural encounters. The Great Wall song accompanying the story (44) is itself an ancient narrative about a woman mourning her husband's death during the construction of the Wall and bringing down part of the Wall with her heaven-moving grief. The confusion about "Which woman? The woman at the Great Wall or the woman in the grave?" offers a historical perspective into the sufferings of women and ordinary people since the very beginning of a unified feudal China (221 B.C.). Shadows of the past and the present haunt the characters "'stranded in the midst of history!'" (40); narrative framings become labyrinths inviting the investigating subject to become "the Nietzschean subject who passes through a series of states, and who identifies these states with the names of history: '*every name in history is I* ...'" (Deleuze 21). Narrativity thus turns into a performative destabilization of the subject, a process of becoming other.

A narrative must have a beginning and an ending. In the beginning, of course, is the task of *fiat* and then naming, while in the end lies the teleology. When Mulberry becomes

Peach, in a parricidal move, she invents her own genealogy as coeval with the birth of the universe:

> I was born in a valley when heaven split from the earth. The goddess Nüwa plucked a branch of wild flowers and threw it to the earth. Where the flowers fell, people sprang up. That's how I was born. You people were born from your mothers' wombs. I'm a stranger wherever I go, but I'm happy. (6)

The Chinese mythology itself reflects a matrilineal beginning of history, though the myth as such also exceeds any positivity of historicism. As the mythological "origin," Nüwa consists of Nü, literally "woman," and wa, a character with the "woman" radical. The earliest batch of Chinese surnames are clan names, all with the "woman" radical. In fact, the Chinese for surname, Xing, consists of the "woman" radical and the word "birth"--i.e. "born of a woman," not the name of the father as later in patriarchy. Thus in teasing out the common noun meanings out of the proper names of the father, as we discussed earlier, Mulberry / Peach reverts back to the feminine "origin" of the Chinese creation mythology. By disowning any familial father and mother, Peach sounds like the rebellious Monkey King born out of a rock and thus beyond the realm of parental authority. The "I" is scattered throughout history, and as the cyclical narrative structure of the novel suggests, the "I" has no beginning nor ending. To trace the genealogy of the *woman*, you might as well trace the beginning of the universe, the ultimate other in *différance*.[11]

Mulberry's notebook begins in a parody of traditional Chinese novels, which usually start with a narrative of the mythical birth of the universe out of chaos, and if the hero is the emperor, a narrative of a mythical dragon impregnating the future emperor's mother. The parody is subtly built in a seemingly realistic description of the bad weather:

> There is no sun. There is no moon. There is no sky. The sky and the water are one, both murky. The river dragon stirs up the water. His hundred hairy legs and clumsy tail swish back and forth, churning the water. (16)

The parody undercuts the reassurance of a supernatural fate governing the cyclical nature of history, the falls and the rises of different kingdoms, characteristic of the pre-modern romances before the vernacular (*baihua*) modern novel was developed at the beginning of this century.

Mulberry's escape from her feudal and abusive family follows a familiar theme in modern Chinese history and literature: young people leaving decadent feudal families in small hometowns, in pursuit of Westernized education, romantic love, revolution, the nationalist movement, and so on. The most exciting and enigmatic moment in this theme is the moment of leaving, which shows not only the awakening of modern consciousness out of the shackles of feudalism, but also the great promises lying ahead, always in the future. The birth of the new self, of course, is as problematic as the birth of modern China. Should the idealist youth join the communists? Or the Nationalists (Kuomintang)? Both parties turn out to be totalitarian. How much of the old tradition is still there in the new youth when he merges into the real world? And what about those left behind, such as Peach-flower Woman who can't even write her own name? There is no definite answer once modernity is thrown into doubt. That Mulberry should marry into another feudal family shows the author's conscious distancing from the mainstreams of modern Chinese history. The Refugee Student says, "Don't stop. Come on. There's no way to stop it" (23). The old man says, "We're stranded in the midst of history!" (40) Whether it is to flee an oppressive family, or to be forced into exile by the Japanese invaders, the movement is haunted by the nightmare of stasis, such as a labyrinth in which the Chunking Bombing woman would find herself back in the Nanking massacre, and Mulberry would find herself marrying back into another feudal family.

Sandwriting and the Throwing of Dice

Mulberry's diary starts with the historical moment on the eve of the victory over the Japanese invaders. Nieh distances her novel from the grand narratives of modern Chinese

history, whether the communist version or the Kuomintang version which inevitably center around different leaders of each party and distill a national essence of patriotism. Instead, her novel presents a tableau of heterogeneous and ordinary people as refugees caught up in the war. As a national allegory, their experience of besiegement and deliverance points to another scene of historical contingency in the formation of the national subject of resistance and survival.

The people on the boat are representative of the heterogeneity of ordinary Chinese caught in the war. Mulberry and Lao-shih are students from well-to-do families. Mulberry flees her abusive family while Lao-shih's family has been destroyed in the war. The purpose of their journey to Chungking is not so much to join "The center of the Resistance" as to find another home which "will take care of [their] food, housing, school and a job" (16). Right on the first day, Mulberry sees an army deserter being caught and tortured. The Refugee Student, however, is on his way to join the army. He has modern education, patriotism and manliness, apparently a hero figure in any grand narratives of modern China. The old man, a merchant, represents tradition. The Peach-flower Woman, an illiterate woman sold early into a rich family to work as a servant and care for a baby husband, has fled home to reclaim her husband now attending school and living with another woman. Besides, there are also the oarsmen and the captain, who make a living in a daily fight with the river and fate. Their different interests are well illustrated in the exchange between the Refugee Student and the Peach-flower Woman. When he indulges in his idealist language of political protest, she laughs, "Sign our names to a petition? I can't even write my own name" (33). How does the elite talk to the illiterate? Certainly not through his idealist abstract speech addressed to the government or the international press, neither of which can offer much help. Meanwhile, the old man as the voice of moral tradition intones from the classics, "It's a great virtue for a woman to be without talent" (33).

However, all the passengers do have one thing in common: they are all refugees without any address, displaced persons for various reasons. And they share the same lot of being stranded in the Three Gorges, together with the captain and the oarsmen. A common language is forged out of the common experience of desperation. Let us compare the following:

> [The old man shaking his fist at the crow of ill omen:] "When the warlords were fighting, I didn't die. When the Japanese were fighting, I didn't die. Do you think I'm going to die now, on this pile of rocks? Hah!" (46)

> "Goddam motherfucker," shouts Refugee Student, leaping at the crow. "You can't scare me. Just wait and see I won't die.... People won't die out. Don't you know that? They won't die out." (46)

> "We boatmen can live like that. Can't you?" [The captain] sucks hard on his pipe. "When our tobacco is gone, we smoke the dregs; when that's gone, we smoke the residue." (47)

Though they are arguing with each other, they now speak the same language of survival amid contingency. It is significant that the last few moments before deliverance (sailing out of the shoal and the national victory over Japan) are spent in the language of the dice, in which the most precious is put in stake: the old man's house, Refugee Student's flute, Mulberry's jade griffin (symbol of patriarchy), even women's bodies. Gambling with their life is also a moment of liberation of the self from all the shackles of convention and tradition, a moment of carnivalization culminating in Refugee Student becoming woman.

Complementary to the throwing of dice is sandwriting, which oscillates between inscription and erasure, and blurs the distinction between human manipulation and anterior traces of the other: "'Was it you writing with the sticks or was it really Tu Fu and Chu-ko?'" (40) It is double writing with messages cancelling each other, in a mixture of citation, copying, and a possible act of manipulation. The trouble is the uncertainty of which is which, similar to the change of *Koran* narrated in Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. As Bakhtin says,

> Others' utterances and others' individual words--recognized and singled out as such and inserted into the utterance--introduce an element that is, so to speak, irrational from the standpoint of language as system, particularly from the standpoint of syntax. (*Speech* 92)

The "irrational" other in such a double writing opens up a supplementary space of other voices within and beside grand narratives of nationalism in the historiography of modern China.

Read as (supplement to) national allegory, the trope of gambling with one's life offers a revisionist interpretation of history. The ordinary Chinese, caught in the war, are forced to gamble with their life against all odds. It is in their instinct of survival, their insurgence and resistance amid the contingent and the indeterminate, that there comes what Homi Bhabha calls "the return of the subject as agent" (*Location* 185):

> The contingency of the subject as agent is articulated in a double dimension, a dramatic action. The signified is distanced; the resulting time lag opens up the space between the lexical and the grammatical, between enunciation and enounced, in-between the anchoring of signifiers. Then, suddenly, this in-between spatial dimension, this distancing, converts itself into the temporality of the 'throw' that iteratively (re)turns the subject as a moment of conclusion and control: a historically or contextually specific subject. (*Location* 186)

The language of the dice (a sign system operating as arbitrarily as language itself) introduces the subaltern agents "outside the sentence" of grand narratives of history, in which the leaders proclaiming patriotic projects in their capacity of autonomous subjects as originators of historical changes are themselves former "warlords." By returning from the signified to the signifier, to the enunciative moments of agency as contingency, Nieh opens up a supplementary space coeval and contiguous with the official histories of the anti-Japanese resistance. To enter that space, as Refugee Student does, is to acknowledge the indeterminate and the contingent in the contextual formation of the subject negotiated through intersubjectivitiy, to dwell in the in-between space of enunciative modalities in a language system of arbitrary closures and controls, and, in a word, to become "woman" singing the Flower Drum Song of female migrants.

Both the language of/as dice and sandwriting point to the origin of Chinese philosophy as divination in the ancient book of *I-Ching*,[12] which has had great influence on Taoism and Chinese military strategists. One of the major concepts in this book is exactly the contingent and the indeterminate in the development of events, which in terms of pragmatics offers both challenges and opportunities (as implied in the word *Ji*, chance) for human intervention. This concept questions, without reversing, and supplements the autonomous human subject as makers of history in traditional historiography. The contingent resides contiguous and eccentric to the teleology of nation, the individual, and the Word. Lao Tzu says,

> The Tao that can be told of is not the eternal Tao;
> The name that can be named is not the eternal name.
> The nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;
> The Named is the mother of all things. (97)

The supplementary space of contingency and indeterminacy is not meant to displace the organized resistance in a sort of reversal of (and always a return to) metaphysics, nor to trivialize the great victory of the nation through a "postmodern" flattening neutralization. On the contrary, it points to the (im)possibility of a historiography that would account for the complexity and heterogeneity of the "united front" beyond political and ideological appropriation, beyond the teleology of the "nation" torn between civil strifes even during the War of Resistance.[13] The "war heroes" are the ordinary people engaged in their daily struggle for survival, such as the seven-day suspension in mid-stream in the Three Gorges. The River of Yangtze, a familiar trope of China and its historical development, has come to a stop, with the passengers "stranded in the midst of history" (40) and confronted by historical sites and citations at the critical moment of personal and national emergency. This suspension, and the subjection of historiography to sandwriting and the throw of dice, can be seen, in Walter Benjamin's definition of historical materialism, as "a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop," a specific life and a specific era "[blasted] out of the homogeneous course of history" (262-263). The victory

over Japan is one of those critical moments in Chinese history pregnant with great possibilities for the people and the country, before Mao Tse-tung and Chiang Kai-shek, each claiming a "legitimate" government "representing" the Chinese people, plunge China into another civil war and a permanent division.

"Not-a-Virgin" Before the Law; a Female Ghost Before the King of Hell

"Mulberry and Peach" induces a binary opposition in our reading of the novel and the character. Indeed, the novel invites a clear schematization. Nieh says in her 1986 preface that she aims to portray two worlds: realist and allegorical; that the novel is split along the main character--the story of Mulberry and that of Peach; and that while Mulberry seeks freedom, Peach disintegrates mentally in a freedom without social responsibility and moral constraints. The derogatory tone towards Peach can also be found in the critic Bai's comments which Nieh quotes approvingly in her preface. In the text, however, Peach has a different value scale:

> "Mulberry ... was afraid of blood, animals, flashing lights. I'm not afraid of those things. Mulberry shut herself up at home, sighing and carrying on. I go everywhere, looking for thrills. Snow, rain, thunder, birds, animals, I love them all. Sometimes Mulberry wanted to die, sometimes she wanted to live. In the end she gave up. I'd never do that. Mulberry was full of illusions; I don't have any. People and things I can't see don't exist as far as I'm concerned. Even if the sky fell and the world turned upside down, I still wouldn't give up." (6)

Peach sounds quite Deleuzian. Her letters describing her involvement with the hippies catch well the spirit of 1960s idealism / cynicism as represented in the quoted lyrics to "Blackbird" (62-63) and "Nowhere Man" (65) by John Lennon and Paul McCartney. The contrast between Mulberry and Peach is highlighted in the fourth part of Mulberry's notebook, in which Mulberry's voice is italicized. In the italicized words Mulberry sounds stricken with moral guilt, blaming herself for being a whore; in the non-italicized words, Peach sounds a total rebel of freedom beyond guilt. In terms of post-structuralist criticism, Mulberry represents the omnipresence of Foucauldian power--in this case patriarchy--that

has shaped her as a moral subject; Peach is the Deleuzian body of desire with a decentered subject. Both are waiting for a Spivakian ideological interrogation of the subaltern interest, which will show that in both capacities, Mulberry/Peach is susceptible to male domination and exploitation, though a new ethical subjectivity can also emerge miraculously in between.

Mulberry and Peach are not always clearly marked in separate discourses. That Mulberry's voice should be italicized in her own notebook (USA) shows a gradual transition from one personality to another. Peach's letters preceding each notebook serve to remind the reader of her existence in Mulberry in the same way that the chronologically later episode is used as the Prologue announcing two selves. Throughout her life, desire and guilt seem inseparable. Her early flight from home with the jade griffin is regretted in terms of parricide even when she is in America (166). Her first sexual experience with the Refugee Student is later treated in terms of owing a debt and getting even (53-54). Her marriage with Chia-kang is ambiguous: it could be for economic security; it could be for returning to a family similar to her own; Mulberry may also feel she is only fit to marry into a family as corrupt as her own, with a man as "impure" as herself. Her affair with Uncle Ts'ai can be a mixture of gratitude, revenge, desire, and self-degradation. Her relationship with Teng and I-po is likewise ambiguously poised between active seduction and self-degradation. In a word, it is as difficult to separate Mulberry and Peach as it is to separate Law and its Transgression. A more extreme case of this paradox is the death-bed confession of Chia-kang's mother, both a victim and a victimizer, both a defender of patriarchy and its deadly nemesis. Her transgressions of the prohibitions (e.g. concerning woman's body as a special commodity and the normal passage in the growth of her son) not only say "yes" to the Law, but also corrupt it from within with her flesh (by now on the verge of decomposition). She conscientiously bears an (il)legitimate son to consolidate her position in the patriarchal family, only to corrupt him with indulgence, and even invites him to engage in an erotic massage of her bound foot (70-71) in the manner of her dead

husband (86). The Transgressions exceed the Law in their sliding between horror and desire, in their animality of "the *sacred* [which] announces a new possibility: it is a leap into the unknown, with animality as its impetus" (Bataille 93).

Binary opposition is characteristic of the language of Law. For Chinese politics, it is the Communist Party vs. Kuomintang; for morality, it is pure vs. impure, good vs. bad; for legality, it is innocence vs. guilt; for the U.S. immigration, it is fact vs. fiction, and within facts, Communism vs. the free world; for the culturalist, it is Occident vs. Orient. To these categories, Mulberry's answer is that she is "an innocent criminal" (114) and a "BAD GOOD WOMAN" (119). The necessity and the inadequacy of language as inscriptions on the woman's body mean that she is *before* the Law--prior to, subject to and specular (in Irigaray's sense of *speculum*) of the Law.

Mulberry's wedding night, supposedly a time of consummation of harmony, provides an intriguing illustration of woman before the Law. The wedding ceremony starts with a speech full of the patriarchal clichés in a descending order from virtue, to the state, and the family, to the present husband as an example of virtue and finally to the place of woman (88-89). The legal witness's speech is interlaced by radio broadcasts from both the Communist and Kuomintang propagandas. The intercutting and interjoining of the discourses reveal both the turmoil during the transition of dynasties and the resilience of the old within the new. Patriarchy is more profound than the change of hands between male rulers, and women remain at the bottom, and the foundation, of the hierarchy.

The Law works in language. Mulberry, no longer a virgin, adopts the trick of remaining silent, thereby putting Chia-kang in a position of incurring bad luck if he gives the verdict (according to a folk tradition):

> "Mulberry, you're not a virgin!" He pushes into my body and blurts out the first words of the wedding night. Then he clenches his teeth. He is the first one to speak tonight. (93)

Virginity is the trope of male fantasy always to make the first penetration, to be the first to *know*, to discover what is behind the hymen. Since the hymen is folded within, virginity

is always pronounced after its penetration, after its trace of blood. Language therefore does not discover, but rather restores virginity as a sign of purity in distinction to impurity. And purity is always discovered when it is no longer there.

The male fantasy to be the first is also the colonial fantasy to be the first to discover and name, the fantasy of mimetic language to confer identity on the referent, the fantasy of *fiat*. However, the positive term of reference is also haunted by its negative; virgin by its prior loss; law by its simultaneous transgression. The language of the Law is characterized by "not," which is digital rather than analog communication. "Not" has no referent in the natural world. Since "virgin" can only be ascertained by producing "not a virgin," are we to surmise that "virgin" already contains within itself its own negation? That the very term forces language to return upon itself into a specular image of the fold? A specular reversal since now we have "virgin" after "not a virgin."

What is this "not a virgin" which can go before or after "virgin"? Shall we spell it as "not-virgin" in an antinomian way? Curiously, there is no antonym to the word "virgin," so that language can only use "not"--with nothing out there, it folds upon its own. "Whore" exists as its antonym only in a limited moral sense: one does not refer to one's mother as either virgin or whore except in the Virgin Birth. The only word to substitute "not a virgin" is woman in its idiomatic usage, which might as well stretch to its general usage for all women as a gender before the Law, or even to its deconstructive usage as catachresis without referent. "Not-Virgin" exists prior to the Law, in the *staged* primordial silence which Mulberry re-enacts in her wedding night. But "Not-Virgin" also exists after "virgin," always already violated, impure, already inscribed and over-written. The "original" is an illusion.

My play on "before the Law" is borrowed from Derrida's reading of Kafka's "Before the Law" (*Acts of Literature* 181-220). Indeed, even before her Kafkaesque hide-and-seek with the U.S. Immigration in part VI and in the introduction to all the four parts in the text, Mulberry/Peach has always been an outlaw. Her exile starts with the theft of the symbol of

her family's patrilineal seed, the jade griffin. She breaks the law of chastity. She hides as outlaw in Communist China, Kuomintang's Taiwan, and the U.S. As a woman that is not one, Mulberry/Peach challenges the notion of a juridic subject both in patriarchy and in essentialist feminisms. On this point, Judith Butler's argument is forceful:

> Indeed, the question of women as the subject of feminism raises the possibility that there may not be a subject who stands "before" the law, awaiting representation in or by the law. Perhaps the subject, as well as the invocation of a temporal "before," is constituted by the law as the fictive foundation of its own claim to legitimacy. The prevailing assumption of the ontological integrity of the subject before the law might be understood as the contemporary trace of the state of nature hypothesis, that foundationalist fable constitutive of the juridical structures of classical liberalism. (2-3)

However, since there is no essence and no one woman, terms like "before," "outside," "exteriority," are still useful in deconstructive criticism so long as we bear in mind that the outside is the inside. Butler's hasty anti-foundational dismissal of "before" suggests an implicit foundation of "within," which may lead to ready and utopian solutions.[14] Hélène Cixous has inserted in a more poetic style a woman before Kafka's Law, and added that the outlaw has also internalized law in her long wait, thus undoing the distinction between outside and inside (63-131). An outlaw is both inside and outside. Such is the treachery of language that style often exceeds the logic of rational argument. To break down the distinction between inside and outside, before and after, should not mean a rationalist deduction that everything is inside the law, or a dismissal of the inevitable aporetic catachresis on the borderline as "essentialism."

Chia-kang's fantasy for the original happens either in his dream of love-making on the shrine of the Alter of Heaven, or in his obsessive inquiries about Mulberry's "first" experience with Refugee Student, as if in hopes of vicariously "discovering" the virginal Mulberry. A similar fantasy for an authentic Mulberry drives the U.S. immigration service to dig out all the details of her sexual relations and political affiliations. Thus "intimate" is replaced by the more legally precise "commit adultery," "sleep together" by "have sexual intercourse" (164). The investigative process reduces the play of linguistic ambiguity to a

simple behaviourist language as the basis of juridical discourse. Mulberry might as well die in this making and remaking of her self, and turn herself into a zombie.

One can argue of course that Mulberry used to be a virgin, and that the passage from virgin to woman is clearly recorded in her "first" sexual experience with the Refugee Student on the boat. However, the very term "virginity" is not only moralistic, but also a heterosexual construct. Prior to (this "before" is of course merely an effect of narrative convention) the first heterosexual intercourse, Mulberry has already been intimate with Lao Shi, who plays the role of "masculinity" and rivals with the Refugee Student. Her heterosexual experience, however, marks her as a woman with virginity, a commodity for exchange even outside the institution of marriage, so that the Refugee Student uses the language of debt and commerce later, bartering for a commodity constructed by language and culture ("incest taboo" and heterosexuality). The objects of exchange are the constructs of patriarchal law itself, hence the jade griffin thrown in by Mulberry.

Virginity as a fetishized commodity fails to be delivered on Chia-kang's wedding night. He recuperates the loss by imaginary identifications with the Refugee Student. Whether Mulberry is treated as whore or virgin makes no difference here, since the marriage system is itself an institutionalized prostitution, with women as commodities under what Irigaray calls "the reign of hom(m)o-sexuality" (Irigaray 171). Both the virginal woman and the prostitute facilitate the exchange between men. Chia-kang's "homosexuality" is further revealed by his excessive attachment to his mother (a calculated revenge on her part to disrupt the Law) and his involvement with his big brother's ex-girlfriend.

Mulberry's dissimulation of a "speech-less statue" is part of the masquerade of the wedding night. The masquerade suggests that any recourse to a "purity" or essence before language is always a stylized posture. "Womanliness" is "masquerade," and there is no femininity or masculinity "prior to mimicry and the mask" (Butler 53).

Woman as speculum of cultural inscriptions produces strange pastiches of Chinese political propaganda, popular lyrics of heroes and prostitutes, and American TV images. In

the siege of Peking, for example, the radio brings in fragments from different stations (77-78): the communist and the Kuomintang propagandas are interrupted by a female ghost's soliloquy, and the famous opera lyrics about the wars during the Three Kingdom period. In between these stylized voices, we may sense a continuity of the warrior tradition that marginalizes women: the female ghost is confessing to the "most honored King of Hell," about Chang San and Li Ssu (common Chinese male names), her parents and the old Procuress' demands on her. It would be risky to assert that the original text is "feminist," though the genre is a favorite with women audiences, performed by prostitutes and quasi-prostitutes/artists. The whole pastiche as a literary discourse is a speculum refracting patriarchy in its hegemony of power. The voice of women is the voice of "ghost" speaking in mimicry of other voices and haunting the official propagandas of a patriarchal tradition. How else can a "ghost" speak except in borrowed voices of the zombies, giving the official discourses an eerie aura of the living dead? There are many examples of pastiche in the text, all with specific political implications, and as such not to be dismissed simply as symptoms of a post-industrial consumerism.[15]

I have pointed out earlier that the old man's story about the woman split between the Chungking bombing and the Nanking Massacre belongs to the genre of Chinese Gothic tales. There are two more such tales, one about a bee girl in the green dress (107), the other about a female ghost eating the living (130-34). The ghost stories in the form of rumours can be traced to the origins of the Chinese novel, in those literary notebooks of recorded short tales from a folk oral tradition. It is in those notebooks that one can find women with daring thoughts of romance, who are transformed from, or transform into, foxes, spiders, ghosts, etc., consumed with passions of unfulfilled love and vengeance for their victimization. One off-branch of these tales includes popular operas (such as the excerpt mentioned in the above example of the pastiche) adapted from them, which are a favorite with women audiences. The insertion of the Chinese Gothic tales then marks a continuation of the female ghostly voice of the novel ("little tales" in Chinese) as

supplementary to the more official genres (history, classics, anthologies and poetry) of patriarchy. It is "ghostly" rather than "authentic," since its composition mixes anonymous folk tales with the writing of retired or unemployed literary gentlemen, thus on the edge of the official culture which only records chaste widows and sacrificial virgins: ghostly to the official records, and ghostly in its necessarily over-determined, borrowed voices.

A ghostly existence lies on the edge of language, best exemplified in Part III describing the attic life of Mulberry's family. Here language is reduced to the minimum for the survival of their life. Schematically, Chia-kang is the outlaw, Mulberry is the "innocent criminal," and Sang-wa is the child of innocence struggling to make (non)sense of an absurd borderline existence. Language is reduced to its minimalist expressivity: "COUNTRY / KILL / WARFARE / THIEF / ESCAPE / CRIME / ..." (120), or even to drawings of "the *Adventures of Little Dot* on the margins of old newspapers" (126), all the more chilling as games played by the giggling Sang-wa. Time has stopped in the attic; there are no stories except cannibalistic fantasies, nightmares, and other stories collected from elsewhere, a series of hearsays, rumours, and newspaper clippings ranging from politics to ghosts, the politics of terror shadowed by apparitions. As Sang-wa is told that the earth is a huge attic, and as she sings "The Girl on the Great Wall" while drawing over the great events of modern China in a newspaper (129), the ghostly existence of the attic "home" becomes an uncanny (*unheimlich*, "unhomely") double of the world at large, a repetition of a song "that ... is too old" (130). The private, invisible, and illegal existence of no identity interrogates and supplements the public, normal(izing), and legal life of "identity cards" (142). The traumatic ambivalences and ambiguities of a "BAD GOOD WOMAN" and an "innocent criminal" in Mulberry's double existence between the attic and the outside are finally clinched in her daughter Sang-wa's innocent betrayal of her father to the police, thus further mixing and reversing the guilty and the innocent in their ghostly life between the domestic and the public, between "imprisonment" and "freedom." As Homi Bhabha says, "The unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal,

psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence": "the personal-*is*-the political; the world-*in*-the home" (*Location* 11).

The Site/Sight of Chinese "Woman"

It is ironic that when Mulberry finally reaches the land of the free, her unfreedom continues in INS's Kafkaesque investigation into her true identity and sexual / political history. However, other legally free characters are not free either, as can be seen in the messy lives of the mixed race couple Chiang I-po and Betty, or the couple Jerry (American-born Chinese) and Tan-hung. These are passive drifters lost in the freedom in which they fail to create meanings out of their empty life, fail to connect with other human beings, and fail to make responsible commitments. Though the more positive characters Teng and Peach are like them in many ways, what distinguishes the two is their purposive effort to reach something more meaningful beyond themselves even in their marginalized positions doomed to constant failures.

Teng speaks two discourses: cultural nationalism and Sartrean existentialism. His anguished nostalgia for China seems more genuine than that of the melodramatic hypocrite Professor Chiang I-po. And his existentialist political activism shows more responsibility towards life than Jerry's futuristic cynicism. In this crude cultural schematization, Teng seems to represent a more authentic synthesis of the East and the West, so that in the end, Peach the narrator says, "In his heart he's found freedom. Because he has decided his own course of action" (204).

Teng's discourses, however, do have their aporetic moments. When his Sartrean Action Committee of Free Chinese cannot decide on a course of action due to "an internal split" (198), he heads out on a sexual chance encounter to create meaning out of a personal action, only to have his existentialist nationalist subject split again. This comic sexual encounter is politicized by Teng and racialized by the American girl, both inscribed by the history of colonialism and racism. Thus Teng recalls the colonial humiliation in the sign

CHINESE AND DOGS NOT ADMITTED at a park in the foreign concession in Hankow, as if his present entry into the forbidden territory of the American girl marked a symbolic victory of cultural nationalism.[16] The American girl's verdict "This little Chinaman on me has a huge prick" (198), however, conflates two conflictual racist discourses in American history: unspeakable debauchery and white slavery in the secret opium dens of Chinatown; emasculated littleness of Charlie Chan's asexuality. "Teng suddenly went limp." His nationalist discourse finds its male egoism mocked by its mirror image of racism, while his existentialist subject is fractured by its anterior "other" in the mirror. It is a familiar failure of masculinist discourses, an often repeated aporia between race and gender.

Mulberry/Peach is also involved in an existentialist choice: to have the child or not, and for what reasons--an inner conflict that literally splits the woman into two distinct discourses. It is significant that Mulberry's thoughts are italicized in her own notebook, signaling her death and Peach's takeover as the notebook moves closer in time to the composition of Peach's letters. A victim, made / maid in patriarchal values, Mulberry has been fleeing various forces of patriarchy, only to fall into one trap after another, "from the wolf's lair into the tiger's mouth," as the Chinese saying goes. When Peach emerges, there is a qualitative difference in her life: she makes a responsible decision for herself as a woman.

Mulberry wants to abort the child, or to put the child up for adoption, or to have Chiang's illegitimate child to spite him. Whichever way, she acts out of guilt/transgression as Law internalized, thus perpetuating her own victimization and self-degradation even in her deliberate rebellion and retaliation. Her first child Sang-wa is conceived within the patriarchal ideology of extending the Shen family line (101-103, 105), which will ironically be cut off by Sang-wa's parricidal betrayal. Peach's decision to have the child, however, is based on a new sense of responsibility to another life (180, 183). She even refuses Chiang's offer of marriage after Betty's death. A new ethical subject emerges for the first time in her life, taking responsibility for her own self with another life in her. A new

ethical subject emerges, as well, out of the final miraculous car accident, out of an unknown and unknowable "woman's identity" (204). The new birth, difficult to negotiate in the world of reality, has to be given more weight through the mythology in the epilogue, which involves a metamorphosis from a woman into a bird, from a proper-noun name (Nü-wa) into a common-noun name (Princess Bird), from the mundane realm of necessity into the sovereign realm of freedom.

Peach's final decision about herself and her child not only saves the child, but also gives a new life to herself. As she declares at the beginning of the book following chronologically the end of Mulberry / Peach's story, "'I came back to start over. First, I want to have a baby so that human beings won't become extinct'" (13). Hers is the ultimate assertion of motherhood portrayed in the Chinese ideogram "woman." The very names "woman" and "man" as meaning "a pregnant woman" (through ideogrammatic imitation of her shape) and "a field labourer" are indicative of the initial division of labour as one of the passages from nature to culture. A feminist interrogation of the genealogy of naming will reveal the patriarchal power at work throughout history, such as in Mulberry's first pregnancy. However, as catachresis, the word "woman" in Chinese also points to Beauvoir's description of the female body in gestation as the site (and Chinese ideogrammatic sight) of the wholly other, according to Spivak's essay "French Feminism Revisited" (*Outside in the Teaching Machine* 148). In Cixous' more poetic evocation of the female body in gestation,

> Really experiencing metamorphosis. Several, other, and unforeseeable. That cannot but inscribe in the body the good possibility of an alteration. It is not only a question of the feminine body's extra resource, this specific power to produce some thing living of which her flesh is the locus, not only a question of a transformation of rhythms, exchanges, of relationship to space, of the whole perceptive system, but also of the irreplaceable experience of those moments of stress, of the body's crises, of that work that goes on peacefully for a long time only to burst out in that surpassing moment, the time of childbirth. In which she lives as if she were larger or stronger than herself. It is also the experience of a "bond" with the other, all that comes through in the metaphor of bringing into the world. (90)

The difference between Mulberry's first pregnancy and Peach's second one would obviate any suggestion of biologism or essentialism. Nor is there any sociological, cultural, or geographical reason. Birthing as an experience of the other can only belong to the miraculous, like the final survival from the car accident whose cause is not known.

Back to the Future in a Ghost Town

Mulberry and Peach presented to the Law is a refracted madness of inscribed images on the "not-a-virgin" woman living as an/other migrant diasporic on the edge of "great" historical events in modern Chinese history--the Japanese invasion, the communist takeover, the Kuomintang rule of terror, and exile in the U.S. The last part, of course, has become indispensable in any modern history of the Chinese in the twentieth century. It is also the place of ultimate disillusionment for dreams of modernity, with the West as the symbol of progress for a bright future that has informed modern Chinese novels since the May Fourth 1919 enlightenment movement, hence the fragmentation of the narrative, the pastiche of images past and present, Western and Chinese, the split of the main character/narrator on the verge of madness, the shifting of the grounding on which a coherent point of view is no longer possible. The suspension of modernity's teleology of progress and liberation is what makes the novel "postmodern."

Nieh's novel lies between two familiar genres in immigrant literature: the liberationist and the nostalgic. The former delights in presenting to the white readership techniques of foot-binding and Oriental despotism, and adopts modernity's ideology of progress consistent with a metropolitan perspective from the place of its composition. The latter indulges in a nostalgia for the past coupled with a Manichean aesthetic of cultural nationalism. Both versions have failed to interrogate the grounding of their own composition. In contrast, *Mulberry and Peach* self-consciously presents its "confession" to a white male authority--to modernity itself as a site of narrative teleology. Its disillusionment with the West is not only a product of the 1960s idealism, but more

importantly bespeaks the sense of loss and cultural dislocation of Taiwan middle-class students in the U.S., with no home of their own physically, emotionally or politically. The mood is summed up in Peach's comment, "'We're stranded here in this ghost town listening to Chinese debate how to take action'" (175).

One could argue that a deconstructionist critical perspective is possible only after living in the West and reading Western literature and theory, so that such a perspective is necessarily "metropolitan." However, a questioning of enlightenment ideology is inevitable after modernity fails to deliver what it promised, whether one lives in the "late" capitalism of the West, or in the "early" capitalism of the Asian Pacific, or in the aftermath of colonialism as the double of European modernity. After all, feminism does not invent the marginalization of women under patriarchy, in the nationalist rhetoric, or in various ideologies of modernity. "Women's time" does not follow chronological narratives of the East and the West. Nor did the fragmentation of the self and the disjunction of the nation have to emerge after the post-industrial cultural logic in the late twentieth century West.

If America represents the myth of modernity and its undoing, the ultimate making and unmaking of the modern individual, its presence is not confined to Part IV of Nieh's novel. The prologue and Peach's letters cut up Mulberry's China diaries, while contramodernity informs her Chinese narratives. That is why when we reach Part IV, we have a sense of *déja vu* (except for the final miracle of a new birth), like Teng and Peach lost in the ghost town listening to Chinese debates. The split personality, the juxtaposition of popular lyrics with great events (this time the American landing on the moon), the guilt and the compulsion to transgress, the life transformed into symbols from the past,--haven't these happened before, in the migrants' earlier lives in China? Aside from the technical question of consistency and the difficulty of covering such a long journey over several decades, is Nieh "postmodernizing" modern Chinese history? Or is she "Orientalizing" the U.S. as just an extension of China, like Sam Selvon and Salman Rushdie tropicalizing London? Indeed the Chinese experience of modernity's fragmentation and deterritorialization began

much earlier than the West, as soon as modernity reached China as both a curse of colonialism and a dream of modern nationalism through democracy and science. The violent history of twentieth century China provides the experience of national and personal disjunction and dislocation in a more extreme form than the relatively stable Western civil society has ever experienced. In writing out the diasporic experience of contra-modernity and the marginalization of Chinese women, Nieh is working in the tense of *anterior future*,[17] so that the U.S. experience literally comes *after* the Chinese experience, and the problems posed by post-structuralist poetics have *already* been raised and experienced *elsewhere*, on another scene of semi-colonial, semi-feudal modernity of imperialist invasions and feudal war-lordism in the name of nationalism. The interrogation of modernity and patriarchy does not have to start in the metropolitan center of late capitalism; it has begun long ago in the margin, in the ghostly voice of the past, in a song that is too old.

This argument of coloniality "before" postmodernity has been advanced by Homi Bhabha:

> My growing conviction has been that the encounters and negotiations of differential meanings and values within "colonial" textuality, its governmental discourses and cultural practices, have anticipated, *avant la lettre*, many of the problematics of signification and judgement that have become current in contemporary theory--aporia, ambivalence, indeterminacy, the question of discursive closure, the threat to agency, the status of intentionality, the challenge to "totalizing" concepts, to name but a few.
>
> In general terms, there is a colonial contramodernity at work in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century matrices of Western modernity that, if acknowledged, would question the historicism that analogically links, in a linear narrative, late capitalism and the fragmentary, simulacral, pastiche symptoms of postmodernity. (*Location* 173)

Toni Morrison states the same argument from the history of black slavery,

> From a women's point of view, in terms of confronting the problems of where the world is now, black women had to deal with postmodern problems in the nineteenth century and earlier. These things had to be

addressed by black people a long time ago: certain kinds of dissolution, the loss of and the need to reconstruct certain kinds of stability. (qtd. in Gilroy 221)

The colonial or slavery anteriority ("postmodern" *avant la lettre*) as a ghostly double is disruptive of historicism rather than restoring a new history of linear narratives. If our present enunciative position is inevitable in our construction of the past (not-a-virgin as both object and its representation), the enunciated past as such also returns to split the enunciative present, to disrupt and interrogate the spatial postmodernity of the metropolitan centres, to supplement the positional superiority of the narrative construction. The ghostly voice of the Chinese past returns to haunt the ghost town of America through a "back to the future" double writing that leads to a time warp in a non-place--such is the exilic energies of the post-colonial discourse that introduces another time, another space, for us to think *other*wise through a Derridean *hauntology*.

Appendix: A Translation of Hua-ling Nieh's Preface to the 1986 Revised Chinese Edition[18]

The Tragic Song of a Migrant

--------Preface

I am a conventional writer.

Mulberry and Peach is an "unconventional" attempt by a "conventional" writer.

Some critics say it is realism; some say it is impressionism; some say it is symbolism; some say it is surrealism; and some say it is stream of consciousness.

I don't know those isms. I follow the demands of art; I write at the dictates of art.

My aim is to write authenticity, which, in *Mulberry and Peach*, is the objective "authenticity" combining the outside world and the inner world of the characters. The events in the novel are important, but their importance is confined to their influence upon the characters as well as the characters' reactions. The most important in the novel is the "human being."

How did I seek objective "authenticity" in the novel? I tried to combine the narrative, dramatic, poetic and allegorical techniques of the traditional novel.

I described the "authenticity" of the outside world, i.e. the "authenticity" of its details and events.

I tried to tell stories in the dramatic mode. The stories in *Mulberry and Peach* happened between 1945 and 1970. I couldn't tell all of the stories of those twenty-five years. When I was preparing for the novel, I had a very thick notebook full of details, events and characters relevant to the novel, enough to fill in five novels! But I chose only four episodes from Mulberry's life for condensing, concentrating, and deep "digging." Each of the four episodes is a story, though they are connected through a common theme. Therefore, *Mulberry and Peach* is not narrated straight-forwardly by the author; instead the author selects each scene for the characters to perform on stage, without the author's comments, analysis, or even appearance.

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I tried to catch the "authenticity" of the characters' inner world in the poetic mode. To borrow the poet William Yee's comments on my novels in his *On Modern Chinese Writers*, my novel "initiates from the outside world into the inner world." I tried to project the sensuous "objects" and "moods" inward to illuminate the inner world of the characters. The characters are not two-dimensional sketches, but three-dimensional, transparent statues for the readers to feel and know. There is no use for abstract and empty adjectives such as "cruel," "terrible" or "lonely."

I made an "unconventional" experiment with language in *Mulberry and Peach*. The novel describes the tragedy of a schizophrenic Chinese who has been through the turmoils in China and who ends up in exile. History is progressing, events are evolving, Mulberry is changing, and so is the language of the novel, not only expressive of her gradual maturation from a sixteen-year-old girl into a middle-aged woman, but also of the process of her disintegration: different languages for different states of mind. From Part I, the language is gradually elasticized. By Part III, when Mulberry's family, wanted by the police, hide in an attic in Taipei, their language can no longer be normal. The language of the attic is word by word, sentence by sentence, concise, to the point, elastic. Even its punctuation is reduced to "full stop" only. It's the language of terror.

In *Mulberry and Peach*, I made an "unconventional" experiment in narrative form. Since the novel describes a schizophrenic woman, its form is also split into Mulberry's and Peach's stories of parallel development. Mulberry seeks freedom; Peach disintegrates in a freedom without social responsibility and moral restraints.

I was seeking two worlds in my composition of the novel: the real world and the allegorical world. It is up to the readers to read it as realism or as allegory, and I am not sure I have put my message across, though that was what I tried to do during my composition. (I made a similar attempt in my story "Wang Da-nian's Good News.") Part I "Qu-tang Gorge" describes "being stranded" in an old wooden boat before the victory of the War of Resistance ("being stranded" is a recurring image in the novel). The wooden

boat is "stranded" in the dangerous Qu-tang Gorge, surrounded amid the historical relics of ancient heroes and talents. As the old man in the novel says, "We're stranded in the midst of history!" Isn't it the predicament of the Chinese during that period? The old man stands for the old society; the Refugee Student stands for the new forces. I like the Peach-flower Woman from the countryside: she "sits on the deck, nursing her child. The baby sucks on one breast, patting the other with its hand in rhythm with its sucking, as if keeping time for itself, pressing the milk out. Drops of milk dribble onto the baby's plump arm. Peach-flower Woman lets her milk dribble out." I also like the captain of the wooden boat. He does not change colour in the life-and-death crisis, puffing away on his empty pipe. Only when the confetti of victory float on the river does he suddenly call out, "There are thunderheads on those mountains. It's going to rain. We'll float away." The people on the boat are saved, floating away on the roaring river. Isn't that the presage of a new page in history? Peach-flower Woman and the captain are the Chinese rooted in the soil and the river. Their fresh, primitive life force represents the soul of the several-thousand-year old Chinese nation and sustains their survival through one disaster after another in history. Part II of the novel describes the crumbling of the old system amid the siege of Peking by the People's Liberation Army. The dying Mrs Shen represents the old system. The dilapidated temple in the no man's land represents the desolation before the imposition of the new system. "Suddenly the kite catches fire, blazes red above the village." Part III describes the inner world of the "attic people" in Taipei. It is also an allegory: the isolated island of Taiwan is an attic. Three different people "stranded" in the attic have three different psychic responses, permutations and changes in personality. The "drama" of this part lies in the conflicts between the characters in the different stages of change. I tried to use the authenticity of the concrete outside objects to reflect the inner "authenticity" of the characters. I even used advertisements and news reports from Taiwan newspapers, such as "DREAM OF GOLD IN DESERTED MOUNTAIN," "MASTER SAN-FENG'S TECHNIQUE TO PRESERVE POTENCY," "a dismembered corpse" and "scenes of old

Peking." Those are the news clippings collected by the "attic man" Chia-kang, who enjoys re-reading them. They reflect the Taiwan society through realistic details. They also reflect the instinctual desire for life in the spiritually dying "attic man": "scenes of old Peking" reveals his longing to return to his homeland.

Part IV is what Kenneth Bai describes in "The Migrant Chinese--the Theme of Exile in Taiwan Fiction":

> ... the story develops into a Kafkaesque nightmare. Mulberry flees to America, only to be sought by the Immigration Service. Like "K" in *The Trial*, she has a marathon struggle with the Immigration Service. When the immigration officer asks where she would like to go should she be deported, her answer is representative: "I don't know." Her answer bespeaks the tragedy of the migrant Chinese today. They have no where to go, no motherland to return to. From Peking to Taipei to the U.S., their journey is full of pain and suffering. Mulberry disintegrates into Peach, thus committing a spiritual suicide in which her traditional values and morality are totally shattered. She sinks into the bottom of her spirit, into virtual madness. By the end of the story, she is still fleeing the Immigration Service, hitch-hiking on American freeways and drifting with whoever cares to take her ....

Mulberry and Peach is a tragic song of the migrant. It has been sung in Taiwan, in our homeland--an incomplete song on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Now that it is printed in a new edition in Hong Kong by Wah Hon Publishing Co. with the permission of the Friendship Publishing House, many thanks to both companies!

Hua-ling Nieh,

Iowa, 1986.

Notes

[1] Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*; and his recent essay, "The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality" in *Race and Class* 36.3 (1995): 1-20; Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*; Masao Miyoshi, "A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-state"; Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism." These writers criticize post-colonialism from different perspectives which may not be compatible with each other. Dirlik's critique is valid in many places on what appears to be, or what he construes to be, a blurring of distinction between postmodernism and postcolonialism (see note 6 of Chapter One). For example, he claims that "postcolonial criticism repudiates all master narratives, and since the most powerful current master narratives are the products of post-Enlightenment European constitution of history and therefore Eurocentric, postcolonial criticism takes the critique of Eurocentrism as its central task" (334). However, Spivak has insisted in many of her essays that deconstruction is not destruction; that "we cannot not want to inhabit this great rational abstraction" of Enlightenment and American Constitution (*Outside in the Teaching Machine* 279). Mere repudiation of master narratives is not the kind of postcolonial discourse as practised by Spivak. Dirlik seems to conflate postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism.

[2] Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: the Politics of Reading Between West and East* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). Many mainland-born Chinese scholars, armed with Western post-structuralist theories and American university degrees in Chinese literature, like to attack Liu Zaifu's Western Marxist humanism prevalent in China before the Tiananmen massacre. To a great extent, the students' idealism for democracy seemed to be the last heroic sacrifice for humanism in modern Chinese history. The strange mixture of a repressive regime and multinational capitalism may produce the worst of both in marginalization, political democracy and social welfare.

[3] The most cogent defense of humanism against Rey Chow et. al.'s deconstruction of Liu Zai-fu's theoretical and Chinese students' political enthusiasm for humanist values of democracy is Zhang Longxi's "Western Theory and Chinese Reality" in *Critical Inquiry 19* (Autumn 1992) 105-130. It was specifically written in answer to Rey Chow's "Violence in the Other Country: Preliminary Remarks on the 'China Crisis,' June 1989," *Radical America 22* (July-Aug. 1988), later revised as "Violence in the Other Country: China as Crisis, Spectacle, and Woman," in *Third World Women and Politics of Feminism*, ed. by Chandra Talpade Mohanty et. al. (Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 81-100.

[4] For example, in Xiaobing Tang's essay "The Function of New Theory: What Does It Mean to Talk about Postmodernism in China?" *Public Culture* 4.1 (Fall 1991), once the hegemony of communism is set up, any foreign ism becomes subversive. Isn't humanism also subversive against communism, as argued by Zhang Longxi? Theoretical rigour has to rise beyond the model of repression in a simplified version of communism. I think the model of post-colonial criticism that focuses on the complex, multiple alliances of power (patriarchy and modernity) is more useful for the Chinese reality in which patriarchy, modernity and "communism" have all worked in conjunction and disjunction in shaping modern Chinese history.

[5] A picky demystification of the exile theme may argue, in the mode of Ahmad, that "exile" is not appropriate since there is no specific political persecution. I have no disagreement with Ahmad's Marxist reading, except that I am wary of a right-wing conservative use of this demystification against minority intellectuals who have at least made an effort to speak for the marginalized. Spivak has repeatedly made distinctions between metropolitan migrants and Indian subaltern women; however, I do not think she means to lend any support to the present anti-immigrant waves in the West, or to the anti-PC campus conservative backlash.

[6] For example, Rushdie's *Shame* has been criticized by Sara Suleri and Ahmad for displacing the real political struggles in Pakistan with magic realism, which Spivak also thinks problematic in representing rural India in *The Satanic Verses*. Margaret Paul Joseph thinks that the exile model no longer applies to the new generation of contemporary writers no longer under the shadow of Caliban.

[7] I have in mind Su Tong's numerous novels and stories that give the reader a sense of time warp and nightmarish, alienated history. In a preface, he acknowledges his debt to classical Chinese fiction as well as to Western masters from Chekhov to Raymond Carver. In movies, there is the so-called "fifth-generation directors" like Zhang Yi-mou whose works offer revisionist views of modern Chinese history. Cui Jian's rock song "Nothing to My Name" bespeaks the loss of a "postie" generation caught not only in the mourning of the old but also in the anxiety of the new.

[8] Hualing Nieh, *Mulberry and Peach: Two Women of China* (15-16). The quotation in the context describes Peach-flower Woman only. However similar descriptions are applied to Peach-flower woman and the captain in Nieh's 1986 preface.

[9] I quote Barthes as a Western critic in accordance with the academic conventions in which I write this dissertation. The Zen Buddhist and Taoist philosophy in the pastiches scrawled on the wall in Peach's room (4) should warn against binary categorizations of the West and the East.

[10] In the English version, this reference is freely translated as "modern-day Gothic" (43).

[11] The idea comes from Spivak's reading of Derrida's reading of Nietzsche. See Spivak, "Feminism and Deconstruction, Again: Negotiations" in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* 121-140.

[12] *I-Ching* has been translated as *The Book of Changes*. As the famous Chinese scholar Qian Zhong-shu has pointed out, since *I* means both stasis and change, somehow equivalent to the German word *Aufhebung*, Hegel is simply wrong in saying that the Chinese language is incapable of philosophical thinking for lack of such an equivalent. This *I* contains both yin and yang, which as I have argued in Chapter Two, do not necessarily lead to dialectical sublation. On the other hand Hegel's *Aufhebung* has been susceptible to its own emptying out and reversal such as done by Georges Bataille. (See Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy," in *Writing and Difference* 275.)

[13] Revisionist histories of modern China are written mostly by novelists and filmmakers in Taiwan and China, e.g. the so-called "fifth generation" directors such as Zhang Yi-mou ("Red Sorghum", "Raise the Red Lantern").

[14] For a detailed discussion of gender, heterosexuality and the Law, see Judith Butler, "Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix," in *Gender Trouble* 35-78. The "Outside" is the "Inside" and we need this term under erasure to maintain the supplementary space of alterity. Claiming that she can tell the story of the origins of ourselves and the Law (67), she offers alternative ways of pre-Oedipal identifications against the heterosexual matrix, which she says preceded the incest taboo. While she displaces the heterosexual assumptions of the Oedipus complex with the homosexuality taboo, she does not explain why human cultures were heterosexual in the first place. Her liberation discourse rests on parodic masks and individual identifications, leaving no room for alterity that is beyond the individual dispositions or choices.

[15] Jameson has a special definition of pastiche as a blank parody without its ulterior motive and latent sense of normalcy. See his *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (17). My use of the term in the context of Nieh's novel points to the minority literature not treated in Jameson's book.

[16] Earlier, he picks up an American girl after he suffers from a racist humiliation (172). This is a familiar male sexual / racial fantasy of conquest and achievement. We can find such examples in the works of George Lamming, Sam Selvon, V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Franz Fanon, many Afro-American male writers, Spike Lee's movie *Jungle Fever*, and Chinese-American writer Frank Chin, and the personal / political lives of Clarence Thomas and O. J. Simpson.

[17] See Derrida, "Double Session" in *Dissemination* (190). I am using the anterior future in the sense of the imitated art and the later imitator (copy): "the image can precede the model," and "the double can come before the simple" (190).

[18] Hua-ling Nieh, "The Song of the Migrants--Preface", *Mulberry and Peach* (Chinese) (Hong Kong: Wah Hon, 1986), 1-5.

Chapter Six: *The Satanic Verses:*

The Interstitial Space of the Migrant World

The novels I have considered so far in my study challenge modes of literary representation through a series of doubles that fracture the image of realism and the subject of the narrative voice. Yet even these diasporic experiments in novelistic representation may appear limited, even parochial, in an era when the endless manipulation of images of reality--immigrant or otherwise-- is *de rigueur.* The postmodern culture of high-tech media has suspended reality and the human subject through the proliferation of images manufactured for post-industrial markets. From pseudo-controversial Benetton ads to real-life TV dramas about some supreme court nominee and ex-sports star and the aestheticization of urban decay, simulations of "reality" have become a game of hard sell in a society built on the conscious play of endless images.

In this respect, and unlike any of the other novels analyzed here, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* is a media event, for an East and West united by their susceptibility to the power of media campaigns. While there have been many criticisms on the novel as an event, the text itself has not received adequate attention--a text, one might say, with a name only, without substance. In this chapter, I will discuss *The Satanic Verses* as an immigrant novel. Yet apart from the themes of the immigrant novel that get repeated in Rushdie's text, which functions as a latter-day summation of the tradition, the text does contain many media images in its description of the Black British immigrant life of the 1980s. It would seem, then, to court the postmodern milieu in which so much of its own substance has been obscured. Is it just another exoticization of the other, as some critics have argued who read the novel as an event? How does it claim its own unique position amid the mainstream cultural manufacturing of ethnic images that it critiques in the novel? It is worthwhile, I think, to explore within the text various ways in which Rushdie, fully

conversant with modes of realism, modernism and postmodernism, tries to negotiate

newness into the world.

One of the questions asked above is actually posed and answered by Salman Rushdie in

his essay, "In Good Faith" (1990), explaining and defending his own novel,

> If *The Satanic Verses* is anything, it is a migrant's-eye view of the world. It
> is written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and
> metamorphosis (slow or rapid, painful or pleasurable) that is the migrant
> condition, and from which, I believe, can be derived a metaphor for all
> humanity.

> Standing at the centre of the novel is a group of characters most of whom
> are British Muslims, or not particularly religious persons of Muslim
> background, struggling with just the sort of great problems that have arisen
> to surround the book, problems of hybridization and ghettoization, of
> reconciling the old and the new. Those who oppose the novel most
> vociferously today are of the opinion that intermingling with a different
> culture will inevitably weaken and ruin their own. I am of the opposite
> opinion. *The Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling,
> the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of
> human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in
> mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. *Mélange*, hotchpotch,
> a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*. It is the great
> possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace
> it. *The Satanic Verses* is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is
> a love-song to our mongrel selves. (394)

While Rushdie's post-*fatwa* explication suggests the levels of disjuncture in the novel, it

cannot quite catch what the novel does as an enunciative site in which the postmodern

celebration of hybridity is itself yet another image open to manipulation and contestation.

Such playfulness is suggested by the repetitions of the statement in *The Satanic Verses*:

"How does newness come into the world? How is it born? / Of what fusions, translations,

conjoinings is it made?" (8) The first time it is asked in the authorial voice, seriously.

Then it appears when Valance the cynical businessman praises Thatcher's revolution as

"Newness coming into this country that's stuffed full of fucking old *corpses*" (270). The

third time it is repeated by a con artist / film producer Sisodia in the context of producing a

theological--another Indian pop media farce (272). The fourth time it is used when

Chamcha realizes with bitterness that the British new self he has sought turns out to be a goatish fiend (288). The last time it is inserted in the political rhetoric of a shady figure Dr Simba, conveyed by another shady figure Hanif Johnson: *"newness will enter this society by collective, not individual, actions"* (415). Through such repetition, newness is itself put under doubt, subsumed under repetitive anterior and posterior "already-there-ness." What cannot be reproduced? Parodied? Imitated? Made an image of something else?

These questions themselves betray a nostalgia for stable meaning. As one critic has pointed out in discussing the devil in Rushdie's epigraph (a quotation from Defoe):

> The *destinerrance* of his vagrancy, his lack of address which summarizes
> his delinquency, his nomadic refusal to recognize the law of settlement, is
> an eternal escape from the transcendental signified--God. (Aravamudan 16)

Rushdie raises the question of newness, only to let it be parodied in various contexts and drowned amid different voices. Meaning is emptied through repetition, and the materially repeatable discourse supersedes any transcendental signifieds, or the speakers as the originator of meanings (*fatwa* irony notwithstanding). Such a move does not lead to ludic absurdity, or if it does, only for those keen on looking for stable meaning. Through repetition, Rushdie directs our attention to his textual maneuvers, to what he does with ways of perceiving the world and newness.

An emblematic scene of newness coming into the world may be found in the second birth of Gibreel and Chamcha--through a terrorist explosion of the AI-420 flying from India to England. The mid-wife/terrorist is the dream-woman Tavleen with a Canadian accent, and she knows her business, unlike her fellow men who are merely stage-acting what they have seen on TV--"reality aping a crude image of itself" (78). Newness is born in terror, from a dream-reality elsewhere, a surreal zone that is neither pure West nor pure East, nor a repetition of media images, in mid-air. The landing place is perceived by Chamcha as "not England or perhaps not-England, some counterfeit zone, rotten borough, altered state" (132). The difference between "not England" and "not-England" is the Kantian difference between negative judgment and negative determination. "Not-England"

introduces an antinomian zone beyond the contradictions of positive spaces, neither here nor there, neither dream nor reality, neither England nor elsewhere in the world. Such is the zone of migrant communities, whose stories are introduced by the bilingual refrain "*Kan ma kan / Fi qadim azzaman* ... It was so, it was not." Yet this antinomian zone can also be said to inhabit within traditions and across boundaries.

Critics have praised and scoffed at Rushdie for imitating Joyce by creating a postmodern novel of multiple puns, parodies and intertextual references (Booker). To what extent is the novel an Anglo-exotic imitation, to what extent is it also a conscious critique?[1] For Rushdie knows the game well and foregrounds it in the text. Chamcha's voice-over partner Mimi Mamoulian says,

> "... I am an intelligent female. I have read *Finnegans Wake* and am conversant with post-modernist critiques of the West, e.g. that we have here a society capable only of pastiche: a 'flattened' world. When I become the voice of a bottle of bubble bath, I am entering Flatland knowingly, understanding what I'm doing and why. Viz., I am earning cash.... Don't teach me about exploitation. We had exploitation when you-plural were running round in skins. Try being Jewish, female and ugly sometime. You'll beg to be black. Excuse my French: brown." (261)

Mimi's logic follows the "flattened" path: the fashionable image of epidermic fetishization is internalized into her own inferiority complex, while for Chamcha's Indian girlfriend Zeenat, Chamcha cannot sell his Indian face on TV, only his mimicking voices. Thus Mimi's "flattened" logic remains two-dimentionally schizophrenic, more a postmodern symptom than its explanation. Mimi's language is imprecise: does she mean a postmodernist critique of the West, or a critique of postmodern pastiches in the West? In other words, are the critiques themselves part of the phenomenon of the postmodern West, so that their grounding is yet another mirroring image of the object for critique? Mimi refers to the outside reality of her Jewishness, gender, and appearance, yet how much of this internalized sexism and anti-Semitism is itself a stereotypical media image? While ugliness may have some physical reality, however contextualized, the other two epithets are more contingent in the market circulation of images, if her wish is merely to be black or

brown. On a deeper level of social (un)conscious, though, Jewishness does become a signifier of racial uncertainty sliding between white and black, when a "Paki" is described as "a brown Jew" (300). Mimi's world is neither pure reality nor pure fantasy, nor a flattening of the two (which could hardly relieve her anxiety); neither internal nor external, a divided subjectivity which cannot let go of its ego and yet which is not in control. It is exactly this disjuncture that post-colonial discourse seizes to open space of otherness and elsewhere, to shatter the endless mirroring of postmodern images without reverting comfortably to Enlightenment ideals. The new space resides between, and engages different narratives.

The novel, then, can be divided into three levels: a realistic tale of a prodigal son returning to his fatherland; images doubling and shadowing reality, whether made by individuals or by the corporate media; the fantastic otherness of a dream world. These three worlds intersect, undercut, and illuminate one another, opening a new space for post-colonial immigrants to emerge in all their heterogeneity.

From Fear of Images to their Cultural Proliferation

In chapter IV, "Ayesha," there is a description of the Imam (an allusion to Khomeini) in exile. "The Imam is the enemy of images" (206). When he moves into a rented apartment in London, he removes all the pictures and only allows a few postcards on the mantelpiece "bearing conventional images of his homeland" and a portrait of "his other," his enemy Ayesha the Empress of his homeland. In this way, the Imam controls the meanings of these images against anarchic proliferation. This suggests the fundamentalist hatred of images, a desire to safeguard his God against this impurity. However, in the final assault of the religious revolution, the exiled Imam uses the American convert Bilal and the western technology of radio hams--"the voice of American confidence, a weapon of the West turned against its makers, whose might upholds the Empress and her tyranny" (211). If images are the inventions of secularism, religious fundamentalists will also use them in a

selective way for their own purposes. An American voice announcing the advent of the Imam is a reverse image of Chamcha being paid to imitate English voices (60), a prime example of postmodern pastiche, the juxtaposition and fusion of the most advanced and the most backward, the colonizer and the colonized, the West and the East, or should we put the epithets in brackets in this flattened world of two dimensionality? A three-dimensional contextualization may historicize advanced democracy and a backward fundamentalist tyranny in terms of modes of production; while a two-dimensional flattened world may reveal the two as uncanny doubles. Between history and fantasy lies the space of the post-colonial exilic as an excess abiding on the edge of exhaustive and exhausted ideologies: various fundamentalisms, historicisms and postmodernisms.

In contrast to the Imam's fear is the Western media's delight with the proliferation and manipulation of images. Chamcha and Mimi both take part in *The Aliens Show*, which is a hodgepodge of ethnicities, simulations and aliens of "the latest computer-generated imagery" (62). To Chamcha, it is just entertainment; to radical commentators, it is stereotyping of "aliens-as-freaks" produced by Chamcha as a "Brown Uncle Tom" (267); to Chamcha's Indian girl-friend, it is proof of his "toadiness" that he gets a role for only his simulated English voice and not his Indian face. But for the cynical producer Valance whose avowed patriotism includes selling the country to the world, the circulation of images is finally reterritorialized in cash. Threatened by black radicals, *The Alien Show* can easily be "de-politicized" by

> firing Chamcha and putting a huge blond Teuton with pectorals and a quiff inside the prosthetic make-up and computer-generated imagery. A latex-and-Quantel Schwarzenegger, a synthetic, hip-talking version of Rutger Hauer in *Blade Runner*. The Jews were out, too: instead of Mimi, the new show would have a voluptuous shiksa doll. (268)[2]

In Valance's play of postmodern cynicism, racism is subordinate to the pursuit of money; indeed, the profit motive lies behind the display or disappearance of ethnic images.

He easily out-plays Dr Simba, the black radical leader employing image criticism. Again, in the rupture, the media event loses definition.

The real motive for Valance's show is profits, not racial stereotyping. Later when Valance announces the bad news of Chamcha's shrinking ethnic universe, it becomes clear that the market can turn against using black images as easily as it exploits them. Thus Dr Simba's campaign seems misguided both in aim and in strategy, and misses the real substance of transnational capitalist exploitation, in which class has more relevance than race. One can argue further that Dr Simba is really creating a media image for self-promotion, given the sexism and violence of his shady character.

These qualifying undercuttings as narratives of the real world, however, do not totally explain away race and image with the "real" of class consciousness. Dr Simba may be a bad person in real life, yet the police brutality and the politics of anti-racism can make him a symbol of solidarity, an eloquent postmortem voice of political mobilization heralding an apocalyptic scene of racial violence and fire baptism, just as Bob Dylan's song *I Pity the Poor Immigrant* can be misread and redefined into a rallying song for collective action (416). Dr Uhuru Simba is born Sylvester Roberts, adopts this warrior name out of an African language. His death turns him into an image of a lenticular badge: *Uhuru for the Simba / Freedom for the Lion.* There is no original meaning of an image, nor is it a matter of true vs. false, as the Iman and Dr Simba would claim. It is what one does with the image, and the struggle to seize the power to signify, that lies at the center of contemporary cultural politics. Throughout the work, image haunts realist narrativization. Even the cynical Valance cannot escape. Valance, himself "a monster: pure, self-created image" (266), bases his decision on the image of ethnics constructed by suspect audience surveys, which show "'that ethnics don't watch ethnic shows. ... They want fucking *Dynasty*, like everyone else.'" (265) Ethnic particularity is replaced by universality. Or if seen as part of a postmodern pendulum swinging back and forth between these poles, both images of ethnicity tell more about the racial fantasy and the desire to control and exploit the other in

the post-Enlightenment West, than about the immigrants and their desires. How can the West know the other except through constructed images which are really self-reflections? Like the Imam's manipulation, Valance's returns us to the edge of the cracked mirror, to the third space of indeterminacy and heterogeneity between Enlightenment ideals and the virtual reality of postmodern computer-generated images. It is also the site of subaltern resistance, where identities are shattered, images are melted down or recoded and political forces are remobilized into a community of differences for the right to signify, the right "'to change things'" (414) as the immigrants themselves are changed.

The Satanic Verses is encyclopedic in its catalogue of disjunctive stories about the universe of the migrant experience. In my engagement with Enlightenment and postmodern explanations of the contemporary experience, I have shown in a limited way their inadequacies when the exilic and the migrant community politics emerge somewhere in between those grand theories and narratives. If the novel is about "chang[ing] things" as the immigrants themselves are changed (415), how does this theme translate into personal stories of cultural migration? And how does the narrative form itself engage with cultural translation?

Personal Journeys of Cultural Migration

The Satanic Verses is the first novel in which Salman Rushdie writes substantially about the life of the immigrant communities in London, and addresses migration on a personal level: as an Indian immigrant, an ex-colonial in the metropolis, and a Westernized intellectual from the Third World. In his previous novel *Shame*, the narrator uses the privilege of magic realism to meditate on the migrant experience in general, on his own experience and lessons of migration, and introduce other stories, some of which are about sub-continental immigrants in London: "All stories are haunted by the ghosts of the stories they might have been" (125). This truism is borne out by the improbable and the fantastic in the stories, and by ruminations on what other stories could have been told. In *The*

Satanic Verses, Rushdie tells the "ghost" stories about himself and other London immigrants directly, stories of human interest, but still haunted by "ghostly doubles."

Many of the stories about the immigrants appear "true" in their realistic immediacy and experiential roots. Chamcha's kipper-eating incident, for example, is taken from Rushdie's private school experience at Rugby.[3] Chamcha's "one thousand voices" mimicry for advertisements can be compared to Rushdie's career of writing commercial ads before he becomes a proper writer. The racist deportation of an Asian trader (Rushdie's friend), which Rushdie discusses in his essay "The New Empire within Britain" (1982), is slipped into the novel (181). Such insertions of personal experiences, community politics and news clippings, as in the earliest novels, obscure the boundaries between fact and fiction, and ground the novel in the interracial tensions of contemporary London. Indeed, such stories of human interest need not be true in the literal sense; the paradigms of these Western immigrant tales are only too familiar. So Chamcha is the familiar Third World colonial desiring the West, despising his poor country, only to realize after many sufferings in his adulthood his Indian roots and his love for his estranged father. Or consider Sufyan and his wife Hind. After migrating to London, Sufyan loses his respectable teaching profession while his wife makes a success story through multi-cultural cuisine, which she originally learned to please her scholar husband. Yet Hind still misses her former honorable position as the teacher's wife and indulges in Indian movies for cultural sustenance. In these stories Rushdie indulges in a familiar species of authentic realism, even to the point of cultivating a certain sentimentality, or, at best, a compassionate if ironic distance, the stance in the brief narration of the Sufyan household (245-251).

To read *The Satanic Verses* on the realistic level alone would be, of course, inadequate, just like a reading of the novel as a mere imitation of Joyce, or a transcendental meditation on abstract Good and Evil. The migrant experiences inevitably lead to other experiences, dreams and fantasies that keep on returning to haunt our reality of masks, voices and

identities. This can be illustrated through a reference in the novel to a 1950s Hindi movie *Shree 420*.

When Chamcha and Gibreel fall through the exploded AI-420, the toady Chamcha starts to sing "Rule Britannia," while Gibreel sings a song about his shoes being Japanese, trousers English, his red hat Russian and his heart Indian (5). The Hindi movie, from which the song is taken, depicts an innocent migrant going to the city, where he is corrupted, and finally he comes back to the country. The motif fits well with Chamcha's journey to the metropolis London, suffering through vicissitudes of life, and finally regaining his new life back in India. The countless comic situations in which he finds his masks and voices betraying his Indian self only serve to underline his Indian roots. The more Chamcha tries to distinguish himself from his own people, the more toadyish he becomes, and the more ludicrous he is, for he has to find shelter in the Shaandaar Café and get help from the Indo-Pakistani immigrant community after he is translated into a goatish fiend at the hands of racist London police and immigration officers. While he starts with repulsion for his fatherland, he ends up with love, love for his own people, and forgiveness for the British. As his name is changed back to Salahuddin Chamchawala, he is neither an ambitious conqueror (Saladin) nor a phoney toady (Chamcha) of England, but a new political self rooted in his fatherland, among his own people, with more solid commitments.

Shree 420 also describes the protagonist making a fast buck in the big city, so that it has the suggestion of "all riches as ill-gotten gains, obtained by hoodwinking and cheating a gullible public: a rich man is a 'Mr. 420'" (Aravamudan 7). In an astute reading by Srinivas Aravamudan, Chamcha is seen as Ariel while Gibreel is Caliban. Chamcha survives by going "native" and assuming innocuous moral virtue, with "the slyly ironical last laugh of the devil"; "Gibreel-Caliban would always remain monstrously inassimilable, whether in the periphery or the metropole" (15). What is more, the devil finally gets his money from his father. This reading renders the happy ending morally ambiguous. In

fact, as Nair and Bhattacharya have pointed out, Rushdie could be parodying "the happy ending of too many Hindi films of the 60s and the 70s" (25). Thus after laughing at Chamcha as toady, as the Saladin who gets colonized by the land he comes to conquer, it is the spineless compromiser who survives.

While the Caliban-Ariel reading of Aravamudan opens up more possibilities for the devil-signifier to slip away from the transcendental signified, it would be fool-hardy to pursue the comparison too rigorously, and assign moral values, or at least survival values to the concept of change. The narrator comments on the precariousness of change,

> A man who sets out to make himself up is taking on the Creator's role, according to one way of seeing things; he's unnatural, a blasphemer, an abomination of abominations. From another angle, you could see pathos in him, heroism in his struggle, in his willingness to risk: not all mutants survive. Or, consider him sociopolitically: most migrants learn, and can become disguises. Our own false descriptions to counter the falsehoods invented about us, concealing for reasons of security our secret selves. (49)

The slipperiness of the language is shown through the fact that he does not leave us with absolute values of stasis and change. What is Chamcha? A pathetic toady, a heroic surviving mutant, a sly devil of no identity, a postmodern time-serving Ariel? What is the ontological status of the dichotomy between "disguises" and "secret selves"? At one time it is "Masks beneath masks until suddenly the bare bloodless skull" (34). At another time it is "He fooled them [the English] the way a sensitive human being can persuade gorillas to accept him into their family..." (43). The textual/interpretive oscillation between "true selves" and "masks that grow into one's identities" re-enacts the Imam's fundamentalist distrust of images and the postmodern play of images, the critical debate between essentialism and constructivism, between the three-dimensional depth of subjectivity and the flattened world of pastiche. To argue for a self capable of disguises shows the same respect to the humanist subject as the essentialist talk of ethnic roots. Both are caught within the debate between Lucretius and Ovid: the former thinks changes bring death to the

old self while the latter thinks the soul remains the same despite the physical changes in shape (276-277).

How does newness come into the world? The evocation of a new self is always haunted by the return of the repressed, "unfinished business" (540), which is the figure of Gibreel, Chamcha's shadow and double. It is the Gibreel/Saladin Farishta/Chamcha pair that must be considered for opening a new space in-between Lucretius and Ovid, cosmopolitan multicultural liberalism and "nativist," nationalist atavism. As the God of migrants says,

> "We are not obliged to explain Our nature to you .... Whether We be multiform, plural, representing the union-by-hybridization of such opposites as Oopar and Neechay, or whether We be pure, stark, extreme, will not be resolved here." (319)

The non-resolution is exactly the ethical alterity of the heterogeneous other, the problem being not epistemological translatability or untranslatability, but the ethical issue of migrant survival through transculturation in the interstitial space between grand narratives of cultural explanation.

The Incommensurable Zone of Transculturation

Cultural incommensurabilities are introduced through the figure Gibreel, who is more an enigma than a human character. He is in every way the shadow and parasite of Chamcha: non-human, insane, angelic/devilish, parodic, repetitious.... Not exactly the opposite, which would make the battle an easier one to fight, but more like fighting one's own shadow, one's own created image. Caliban has come to haunt Ariel; the "unfinished business" of the past has returned to shake the ground of the present; the Empire writes back!

Gibreel is born together with Chamcha after the plane crash, or rather, Chamcha is born the second time with a nightmare from India to unmake his carefully constructed self as a British citizen. At first, their arrival is welcomed by 88-year-old Rosa Diamond as the

apparition of Willie-the-Conk, a ghost, "unfinished business," the return of the glorious days such as the battle of Hastings (129-130). Yet immediately Gibreel and Chamcha become opposites: good breath/bad breath, angel/devil. Chamcha, the proper British citizen, becomes the illegal immigrant; Gibreel, the Indian visitor, becomes the proper English gentleman. However, the mirror images are non-symmetrical: Gibreel does not will the change; he is bewitched by the nationalist fantasy and the "buried desire" (134) of Rosa Diamond into a zombie of her dead husband, in his "maroon smoking jacket and jodhpurs," "smelling faintly of mothballs" and protected by a golden halo (141). Property is theft. The proper is borrowed from elsewhere; the colonizer is resurrected as an entranced ex-colonial, thus producing an image of the living dead in holy smoke to scare the bobbies away.

Chamcha earnestly sings the praise of the empire, the dirge of the faded grandeur of a once great civilization, while his upper-class-accented wife Pamela counters with her radical criticism of the tradition and the class from which she is alienated. Conquering Pamela is conquering and joining England, though ironically he has caught a traitor to the English tradition. Gibreel operates from another zone: he is induced by Rosa to dream other identities, to become her lovers from elsewhere, in Argentina. Rosa's narrative sorcery enthralls him with stories of desire and lust, and lures him into the blurred scene in which the dreamed lover Martin de la Cruz either violates her or leaves her virtue intact (152):

> ... it was not possible to distinguish memory from wishes, or guilty reconstructions from confessional truths,--because even on her deathbed Rosa Diamond did not know how to look her history in the eye. (153)

If her narrative is the mirror into which she likes to look for "the silver land of the past" (145), Gibreel's dream fractures the mirror between the abandonment of desire and the fear of virtue, between going native and keeping civilized, with the center the nada of lust and violence that finally sends Henry and Rosa home to England. "The trouble with the Engenglish," according to the stammering Sisodia, "is that their hiss history happened

overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means" (343). They need the colonial to dream their history and to simulate/imitate their lust. Rosa is compared to "Some ancient Morgan Le Fay singing a young Merlin into her crystal cave" (144). Merlin of course is not the only one enchanted in English literary history. Shakespeare's Prospero also rules by magic. The Gibreel-Rosa relationship is portrayed, I think, after George Lamming's novel *Water With Berries* (1971), in which the exiled West Indian artist Teeton grows attached to his landlady the Old Dowager, and is transported by her will onto a desert island, where he has to burn away the spell and burn his way to freedom. The text enfolds post-colonial exile, memories of colonial violence, and a modern *Tempest*, with the old Dowager as Prospero's deserted wife. Rushdie's handling of the subject is more subtle, more fantastic. The magic of colonialism produces its own zombies of Ariels and Calibans, and the fear of desire and violence can only be a fractured mirroring of bungled histories and split selves, a staging of puppets and pantomimes, a feverish delusion of willed sex and dying gasps.

Prospero's knowledge of magic and witchcraft is the source of his power, the power of books and writings to create other peoples without histories and put them under the spell of colonialism. Chamcha's transformation is but one out of many that have already happened elsewhere, as he discovers other strange creatures at the Detention Center: the manticore, the blind Moaner Lisa, the water-buffalo, the Nigerian with sturdy tails, the Senegalese turned into slippery snakes and so on:

> "But how do they do it?" Chamcha wanted to know.
> "They describe us," the other [the manticore] whispered solemnly. "That's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct." (168)

Hell breaks loose when these mutants of creatures, plants, and even brick and stone escape the Center, "free, going their separate ways, without hope, but also without shame" (171). Images acting as the return of the repressed come to haunt migrant communities and the London police, the zone of conflict where these mutant images have always circulated beneath racial stereotypes. Chamcha appears in migrants' dreams, starting whispered

rumours, and causing devil-worship even among the police. "Illegal migrant, outlaw king, foul criminal or race-hero, Saladin Chamcha was getting to be true" (288). Against Mishal's excited urge for political action, Chamcha can only mutter Prufrock's refrain, "'This isn't what I wanted. This is not what I meant, at all'" (287).[4]

Since Chamcha is neither willing to engage in the political war of seizing images through primitive rumour or through high-tech media, nor able to retreat into his liberal neutrality in his already racialized body, what does he want and what actions can he take? He wants to restore his own humanity by settling a personal grudge with Gibreel, who he thinks is responsible for all his transformation and misery. Here, a new space of ethics of Good and Evil is opened up alongside and amid the on-going race-riots and police brutalities.

Chamcha is finally "*humanized* ... by the fearsome concentration of his hate," when he imagines Gibreel's face on all the waxworks dummies and lets out a long, foul breath. "Who should the Devil blame but the Archangel, Gibreel?" (294) Though settling a personal grudge, he is actually summing up the ethical significance of the previous meltdown of Maggie's image amid the Baldwinian chant "The fire this time." How can the devil come into being if there is no angel? In the novel, there are many speculations that originally good and evil are inseparable, that Satan is invented later to bear evil as separate from God (323). But in His admonition to Gibreel, God has also warned that there is no clear answer to such questions about Our nature (319). Can we go beyond good and evil as moral representatives of civilization? How can one imagine the antinomian zone where newness will come into being? Chamcha's new life at the end of the novel, at least, is born out of hatred, out of the choice of evil over good, hate over love, in an apparent parody of the beauty and the beast fairy tale.

The Chamcha-Gibreel-Alleluia triangle is a re-enacting of *Othello*, which Sufyan "explained was really Attallah or Attaullah except the writer couldn't spell, what sort of writer was that, anyways?" (248) It is Chamcha's favorite play, though Pamela charges

Shakespeare with racism for creating Othello and Shylock (398). In this post-colonial re-enactment of an English classic, Chamcha as Iago gets from Gibreel details of the sexual life of Gibreel and Alleluia and then makes obscene phone calls to drive the already jealous Gibreel crazy, until he finally kills her. The narrator announces their re-enacting of *Othello* with several important qualifications (424-425).

First, it is "the echo of tragedy, the full-blooded original being unavailable to modern men and women, so it's said." Like Sufyan's annotation, this statement displaces the originality of Shakespeare. The re-enactment of the play by these dark men and a Jewish woman may well be a closer echo to the full-blooded original imported from elsewhere, in which case Shakespeare's play would be a tame copy of the more violent post-colonial echo.

Second, it is "[a] burlesque for our degraded, imitative times, in which clowns re-enact what was first done by heroes and by kings." Instead of blank verse or iambic pentameter, we have Chamcha's advertising jingles. Gibreel's theological movie career and his schizophrenic life as farce bring in a touch of B movie black humour.

Third, our novel characters are no characters out of Shakespeare; they are just "costumed in such explanations." Here the narrator disavows the original/copy model, only to have Gibreel / Chamcha introduce their play: "the curtain rises on a darkening stage."

Fourth, the question is "the nature of evil," "the enigma of Iago." Since Chamcha has been civilized through his British education, has indeed become a toady of cultural refinement, his only redemption lies in hatred, which paradoxically restores his human shape. Nietzsche's genealogy of morals points out that good and evil are not absolute moral values, but are themselves names given by the noble and the lordly to describe attributes associated with different social classes. Chamcha has to experience evil, to choose the Kantian radical Evil, so as to have a new self beyond the moral bonds of the old toady self.

Thus the post-colonial re-enactment of *Othello* is more than a parody, more than a copy, at once less than the "original" and a doubling of it, an imitation that also threatens to displace the "original" through more authenticity, an altogether different drama that merely borrows Shakespeare's play for explanation, an oscillation between tragedy and burlesque, and an ethical return to the possibility of evil as anterior to the moral choice of good or bad. In such a surreal zone, Gibreel's and Allie's death is simply too melodramatic to be taken seriously; it is more like a bad movie finally coming to its end. Both are imagined into existence to be imposed upon by Chamcha's troubled heart (437). Chamcha's new self looks suspiciously like a clone to the happy-ending movies that Gibreel has left behind. The narrator does not even bother to inform us that the show has ended.

However, their roles of extreme hatred, jealousy, love, evil, and violence do serve a purpose of teaching the audience about redemption, in the sense that hatred and evil restore humanity to Chamcha and in the sense that Gibreel tropicalizes London. For "the trouble with the English was their: ... *their weather*," as Gibreel solemnly pronounces (354). London city needs to be metamorphosed into a tropical city for such benefits as increased moral definition, institution of a national siesta, the replacement of hot-water bottles[5] by slow and odorous love-making, and so on. "'For truth is extreme, it is *so* and not *thus*, it is *him* and not *her*, a partisan matter, not a spectator sport. It is, in brief, *heated*" (354).

Both Chamcha and Gibreel are mimic men (both in Naipaul's phrase and in Bhabha's sense of mimicry). The former does it in earnest; the latter does it in schizo farce. Gibreel is a patchwork of roles that turn everything into melodrama. He invokes uncanny doubles, "walking corpses, great crowds of the dead, ... corpses mutinously continuing to behave like living people, shopping, catching buses, flirting, going home to make love... *Zombies*" in a city that "becomes vague, amorphous" (458-59). History, "unfinished business," has returned to haunt the present, "the impotence of its selfish, angry present of masks and parodies, stifled and twisted by the insupportable, unrejected burden of its past, staring into the bleakness of its impoverished future" (320). In the game of reading, it is

Gibreel who always hovers over there, opening fantastic antinomian zones of other histories, other peoples, other scenarios. What the archangel does is trumpeting out distant echoes, staging fantasmic dramas, cracking existent worlds, untuning the skies. His in-between universe invades Chamcha's personal journey of cultural migration, even inducts Chamcha into his drama of extreme passion shows; it also lends an apocalyptic unreality to the all-too-familiar burning scenes of race riots and confrontations, the baptism of fire repeated in other immigrant novels and movies.[6] Newness comes out of the very fusion of these three levels of the personal, the political, and the fantastic, their disjunctive tension and mutual invading / informing / intersecting.

Postmodern Images, Rationalist Narrativization, and Rumours

The final scene of baptism by fire and the showdown of forces between the migrant communities, the police, the media, and the white mobs is apocalyptic, though it is also a classic scene of race riot and urban insurgency. Rushdie is certainly aware that he is rewriting a familiar, often mediatized scene of decay and violence. Rushdie's position, of course, is "politically correct": on the side of Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, at one with the more recent works of Spike Lee and Hanif Kureishi. The images he works against are those of the mass cinema: series such as Batman or Robocop, or the seemingly more realistic *Bonfire of the Vanities*, movies that pit law enforcement heroes against anonymous urban violence, delinquency, and criminality. The images are also created by news media (e.g. TV cop shows), whose camera shots mask their own biases with a false sense of immediacy and hyper-reality. Rushdie recognizes that the war of race and class is also a war of media communications in a post-industrial society in which high technology sits side by side with newly created urban slums and unemployed victims of racial discrimination and class oppression.

In the scene of TV cameras catching the police raid on Club Hot Wax (454-57), the narrator of the novel describes the limitations of media "hyper-reality." Since the noise of

helicopter rotor blades drowns the noise of the crowd, video recording equipment is less sensitive than the human ear. A camera is a fragile machine that requires law and order as a shielding wall; therefore it inevitably chooses sides, even chooses not to see certain events. It is the omniscient narrator's voice that offers "real" versions of what is happening. In the war between images and narratives, the narrator wins all too easily, especially among readers of the novel rather than the "illiterates" hooked on TV and video machines. He may also be, in the eyes of certain critics of postmodernism, renewing "historical materialism" and "the Enlightenment project" by launching "a counter-attack of narrative against the image, of ethics against aesthetics, of a project of Becoming rather than Being..." (Harvey 359). Indeed, is not the novel the prime tool of reason, equality, and class consciousness, while video images are a contemporary product of the 1980s politics, economics and aesthetics? By writing in the form of a novel, isn't Rushdie critiquing two-dimensional video images with a more in-depth three-dimensional tool of enlightenment? Or is there some other distinction than that between crudely popular postmodern images and elitist Enlightenment narratives?

The question is difficult to answer since the novel oscillates between the serious and the facetious, and it is not always possible to distinguish their mirror images. On one level, it does try to get the facts straight: the Granny Ripper is not Dr Simba, but a white male (453); Jumpy and Pamela are murdered by the police (465); and so is Dr Simba apparently (449). Yet even the coy narrator dare not claim the privilege of omniscience all the time. The ironic, realist voice of Chamcha cannot be sustained for long before the subject himself swoons into "the kind of blurring associated with double vision" (416) of the real world and the phantom world. Instead, much of the fire scene is narrated through the schizo mind of Gibreel in a surreal style blurring the narrated object and the narrating subject: he blows out the fire through his trumpet, the fire of violence, the fire of anger, the fire of cleansing ....

That Gibreel should be the medium of "reflecting" subaltern insurgency without the humanist subject, I would suggest, opens up a new space beyond the postmodern images and Enlightenment narratives. If we read the sections on migrant London through a series of causal links, we may find the primal cause is also the primal means of communication among subalterns. It all starts from witchcraft and rumours. First, Chamcha is bewitched into a goatish fiend, appearing in people's dreams and starting a series of rumours. Then even the police stations become witches' covens, as the rumour goes. The Granny Ripper appears at the same time, a half imaginary and half real figure whose symbolic value is more significant than the actual threat. Dr Simba's arrest is presumably directly linked to his investigation of the police witch covens. The means of communication among migrants lies in "rumours": in Gibreel's escape, there is "[t]he official version" and "the rumour" (352); the arrest of the real Granny Ripper is "accompanied by a slew of rumours"(453) about the police cover-up; "[s]tories of police brutality ... spread throughout the communities" (451); even before the news coverage of the raid on the Hot Wax Club is on TV, "the news is already running wild in the streets: Pinkwalla!--And the *Wax*: they smashed the place--*totalled* it!--Now it's *war*" (457). It is significant that the news is relayed anonymously, in broken sentences, in an inflammatory tone. Subaltern insurgency is also a masked guerilla war, with irregular irruptions of daily struggle and survival. Rushdie is here writing history into the novel. Apart from the distant echo of Jack the Ripper, there is the more recent 1970s construction, by the press and various state agencies, of "mugging" as a "black on white" crime.[7]

If the medium is the message, how should we historicize "rumour"? It seems to belong with witchcraft to an earlier age of orality, before European Enlightenment, print-capitalism and post-industrial computer age. According to Tzvetan Todorov, it is this oral culture that hindered Aztec natives' ability to deal with the Spanish conquerors armed with a written culture of reading signs and relating them to the larger world. However, since Prospero's witchcraft continues to be employed by his descendants, the distinction is not that clear. If

witchcraft is part of the official narrative, then rumour is the means of the subaltern counternarrative. In the deconstructive sense of writing and speech, "rumour" has a subversive "writing-like (*scriptible*) character," as Gayatri Spivak points out in discussing Indian history:

> ... its [rumour's] "functional immediacy" is its non-belonging to any *one* voice-consciousness. This is supposed to be the signal characteristic of writing. Any reader can "fill" it with her "consciousness." Rumor evokes comradeship because it belongs to every "reader" or "transmitter." No one is its origin or source. Thus rumor is not error but primordially (originarily) errant, always in circulation with no assignable source. This illegitimacy makes it accessible to insurgency. (*In Other Worlds* 213-14)[8]

"Rumour," as an ancient form of subaltern insurgency, cuts across the authority of truth and lies. "It is so, and it is not." What counts is not its epistemological origin as true or false, but the mobilizing forces it can evoke in its performative act. Its ontological double is witchcraft, which is neither science nor superstition, and more than both of them in its avowed aim to break down the barrier between knowledge and reality, between the knowing subject and the known object. Witchcraft is Prospero's art, but the genii it releases are more real than the master's text of images and narratives. It is exactly this kernel of density/obscurity, this original oscillation between sense and non-sense, the subaltern history of the living dead somewhere between nature and culture, that changes the conservative, divisive politics of identity into the politics of identification. Rumours tropicalize London.

It is in this tone of intellectual uncertainty between sense and non-sense that the London section closes off. When Gibreel and Chamcha are in an unconscious delirium, with Gibreel muttering out a delirious babble about his magic trumpet, Mishal remembers Chamcha as a devil, and she is attracted to the possibility of the occult. Hanif as the community spokesman dismisses this as a mere movie scene and draws a historicist conclusion, "'We're talking about history: an event in the history of Britain. About the process of change'" (469). Yet when Gibreel continues his other-worldly mumblings,

Hanif's tone becomes less certain, "'Just make-believe, that's all.'" His final thoughts, without quotation marks but italicized, are neither mystical nor historical, but existential: "*Stay with me. The world is real. We have to live in it; we have to live here, to live on*" (469). It is the survival of the minorities that cuts across the disputes between Lucretius and Ovid, between old and new, between the angel and the devil, between postmodernism and the Enlightenment, between fundamentalism and liberal humanism.

The space of the migrant survival is located in the Shaandaar café with its overcrowded rooming arrangements for the homeless migrants. Such cheap hotels are a recurring image of the unhoused conditions in post-colonial literature: Anna Morgan in Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark*, and the narrator/protagonist in Naipaul's *Mimic Men* both end up living in temporary lodgings as their permanent abode. The fire in Rushdie's novel presents a haunting tableau of the helpless migrants frozen in mid-air: "elsewhere in the burning Shaandaar, faceless persons stand at windows waving piteously for help, being unable (no mouths) to scream" (463). This window-framed existence is the vanishing point for the migrants being driven out of their last dwelling. The window divides the world from the home; through the window, the migrants see the world and are being seen at the same time. Through the glass darkly, what is seen (scene) is blurred; the full "humanity" of domestic interiority becomes "unhomely" estrangement of "faceless persons" with "no mouths"-- which visualizes aphonia of linguistic alienation. To borrow Homi Bhabha's words discussing "window," "house" and "strangeness of framing" in James's *The Portrait of a Lady*:

> The recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting. (*Location* 9)

The haunting image from Rushdie's novel not only collapses the boundary between home and world, it also projects the public into the private unconscious. Those faceless and

languageless strangers emerge in the nightmarish scene of the unconscious as the return of the repressed, the other of the silent murmuring of things beneath recurring anti-immigrant waves from Powellism to Thatcherism. The strangers are always lurking there in the national unconscious for a history that happens elsewhere.

The Text, the Event and Literary Evaluation

Reading *The Satanic Verses* inevitably brings us into the immediacy of contemporary cultural politics and theories, competing narratives and polemics. The novel actively engages these various cultural and political positions in its almost impossible task to bring "newness" into a world pronounced capable only of pastiches, to insert a new space of migrant communities amid escalating hostilities in Western countries, to open up new questions beyond the all too familiar dichotomy between fundamentalism and liberal humanism, to assert an ethical alterity between universalist pluralism and ethnic particularism, and to explore possibilities of a new community of differences. It would be against the very spirit of the novel itself to say that it has provided answers to these on-going critical debates; its contemporaneity is shown in a sensitive awareness of, and an active engagement with, the issues that haunt the volatile field of minority discourse and race politics. To counter an excessive concern with the Rushdie affair, perhaps it is time to turn the attention to the text itself, for what is inside the text also opens up to our world of mass migrations and unprecedented dislocations of population.

The Satanic Verses poses a serious problem for reading post-colonial texts with an excessive share of postmodern "tricks." The migrant theme is all too easily overlooked when the critics' attention focuses on postmodern forms of pastiche and citation, the play of the text and intertextuality that ignores the ethical concern of alterity central to the survival of the migrant communities. As I have shown in my reading, Rushdie is aware of the danger of the facetious levity in postmodern manipulation of ethnic images, which is different in form from the essentialist assumptions of racial stereotyping, though the

hegemony in the enunciative act remains the same. I have tried to negotiate a reading beyond postmodernism and a return to realism (which can take the form of dismissing Rushdie as a postmodern sophisticate), to open up the interstitial space of the migrant world that has been covered up among various disputes concerning the novel. Obviously the critical difficulties are also those of the novelist, and indeed those of the post-colonial project and minority discourses within contemporary cultural politics of increasing complexity and sophistication. Despite all this, the post-colonial space is still haunted by the "unfinished business" of European modernity and its Other, and it is here that we can begin to build newness into this world, not more symptoms of late capitalism, but its solutions.

Since the Rushdie affair (unfortunately, another still unfinished business), it has almost become the protocol of reading to discuss both text and event. In fact, the event has received more attention than the text itself, turning out an unusually large number of "critics" on a single novel. Here I will not supply yet another dossier of various "misreadings" that not only challenge the authority of the author, but threaten his very life. The event changes the text, so that one can no longer pretend a reading uninfluenced by literally murderous "misreadings." However, since the event is so typically "postmodern," one can also argue that in this one case reality simulates fiction, that the event is already contained within the text in its complexity and openness to the other. The text plays a role in the event, which also mirrors it through a ludic *mise-en-abyme*. What more performativity can one expect! In the rest of this chapter, I will only offer some thoughts on the event in so far as my particular reading of the text is concerned, in order to underline the importance of my reading through yet another tautological hermeneutical circle.

The first casualty of the event is the author. Though Rushdie echoes Chamcha's Prufrockian refrain "That is not what I meant at all," the meanings of the text are impossibly lost by his post-*fatwa* insistence on freedom of speech, which is itself by no means "free," constrained as it is by a rhetorical appeal to the "free" West to save his life.

Freedom of speech has never been unconditional, even in the supposed "free" West. As Tom Stoppard says in commenting on the Rushdie affair,

> Literature--the freedom of expression--is not unimportant to me but freedom of expression is not fundamental, as we acknowledge in our own laws. The proscription against writing which seeks to incite race hatred sits as comfortably in the Western liberal conscience as the proscription against falsely shouting "Fire!" in a crowded theatre. (MacDonogh 117-118)

With freedom of speech goes the writer's responsibility and respect for others. Yet, the text, the author, and the rhetoric of freedom of speech have become occasions for yet more racist attacks on Moslem minorities in Britain. Within this scenario of the staging of the text, there is no point in constructing humanist character stories such as how privileged Rushdie has become,[9] how egomaniacal he is, as if that "origin" of the person somehow determines the meanings of the text, and the unfolding of the event. In Rushdie's text, Dr Simba and Hanif Johnson are both shady characters; yet their "personality" does not have much bearing on their acquired "meanings" recoded in the contingency of history. Chamcha's self-construction of a British man of property is rewritten both at the hands of British police and among his own people, despite his Prufrockian protest. Moreover, in theory, have we not decided since the New Critics that the author is not important (except in gossipy columns in *The New York Times Book Review*, or in "new histories") ?

The evaluation of the text itself is difficult. One can hardly say that it fails because it has caused such a scandal, since censorship and negative public reaction do not usually detract from "artistic merits" in modern literature. Nor can one say that it is messy for being intentionally sensational ("He knew what he was doing!"), as if a writer should, or could, occupy a pure space of artistic integrity. Sara Suleri's and Homi Bhabha's readings of the text are sophisticated, without any negative evaluations. Rukmini Bhaya Nair and Rimli Bhattacharya's essay addresses the issue of postmodern playfulness with words in the text that they as critics are themselves induced to reproduce, and complains about its ethical and political irrelevance. Yet this is more a problem with Western media and academia in the

politics of interpretation. What they suggest is paying more attention to his "espousal of the immigrant's 'native' multilingualism and multiculturalism," keeping a "sustained interest in the political issues Rushdie himself raises," and "articulat[ing] with academia the specifically political implications of Rushdie's texts" (30). Timothy Brennan's nationalist reading of Rushdie and this novel acknowledges his solidarity with immigrants while critiquing his postmodern levity in the context of more embattled Black British nationalist struggles.[10] Spivak's evaluation is ambiguous: after saying, for example, that the text is "an honorable failure" in writing women into the narrative of history, she qualifies, "(But I am more interested in failed texts. What is the use of a 'successful' text? ...)" (*Outside in the Teaching Machine* 223). On the more specific and more usual charge of Rushdie's cosmopolitanism, Spivak locates his weak spot in his magic realist representation of contemporary rural India. But she qualifies her critique by saying,

> ... we must acknowledge that, writing as a migrant, Rushdie still militates against privileging the migrant or the exilic voice narrowly conceived, even as he fails in that very effort. A *mise-en-abyme*, perhaps, the eternal site of the migrant's desire, but also a persistent critique of metropolitan migrancy, his own slot in the scheme of things. The message and the medium of his book are marked by this conflict. (*Outside in the Teaching Machine* 222)

Since my interest lies in the immigrant novel, and I am not in a position to engage in the politics of representation of rural India, Rushdie's partial failure is less of a problem in my discussion, though the issues involved are central.

Given my personal interest in the immigrant experience, I will start this literary evaluation from the most visceral level. For a judgement of reliable taste, I will quote from an immigrant writer, Kazuo Ishiguro, who chanced upon *The Satanic Verses* as his delightful introduction to Rushdie novels:

> The longing for love, the warring forces within one who both embraces and rejects his origins, the search for moral parameters in a world of chaos and flux--all these things I found marvelously expressed through the novel's many diverse characters. And I am sure I am not the first to have felt at the heart of the novel, for all its exuberance and noise, a profound sense of loneliness--the sort of loneliness experienced in the middle of a crowd.

> Having myself settled in a country other than the one of my birth, I could identify with many of your characters' feelings....
>
> ... in this age of migration and "multi-culturalism", there must be countless others around this globe who will discover in your book a valuable exploration of their hopes and sadnesses. (MacDonogh 70-80)

Such "gut responses," though not shared by most of the immigrants in the Muslim communities, are the foundations of our literary evaluation, which of course will have to be justified on higher levels.

In my discussion of the text, I have tried to negotiate a reading beyond both postmodernism and a facile return to realism, a way of bringing newness into the world. This newness, for my interest, is what Said calls the anti-systemic forces of the unhoused, decentered and exilic energies in the homeless wanderers and migrants "between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages" (*Culture and Imperialism* 332). For Sara Suleri, this newness lies in Rushdie's effort to renew secular Islamism through (and between) blasphemy and loyalty, the former implying the latter, landing the text somewhere in between and beyond. Homi Bhabha's and Spivak's readings of the novel and the event share a similar hermeneutic structure as seen by Suleri, apparently derived from the text itself.

"Postmodernism and realism" may seem poles too simplistic to describe the text, indicative of the paucity, and the limit, of literary terms. Suleri says the text "begins as Joyce [and] ends as Dickens," showing "Rushdie's ability to stand canonicity on its head, and similarly skew narrative's relation to the chronology of history" (191). Spivak sees "magic realism" in the text tempered by an old-fashioned Authorial voice that reminds one of George Meredith's in *The Egoist* (*Outside in the Teaching Machine* 224). Spivak's evaluation of Rushdie, as I have quoted earlier, closely follows the ambiguities of literary form, and in a Derridean sense, of language itself as both gift and poison, a pharmakon (Derrida, *Spurs* 121).[11] It is itself, after the text and the event, a third-level critical aporia. Thus on one level, Rushdie's problem lies in his not being "postmodern" enough in using a

Meredithian Authorial voice: "The trick or turn is not to assume the representation of decentering to *be* decentering" (*Outside* 224). On another level, "Rushdie still militates against privileging the migrant or the exilic voice narrowly conceived, even as he fails in that very effort" (*Outside* 222). On yet another level, the problematic representation of rural India in Rushdie

> would lead us to a deconstructive gesture toward the claim of magical realism as a privileged taxonomic description, of decolonization, ... and a consideration of alternative styles and systems of the representation of rural India. (*Outside* 222)

In the spirit of the *pharmakon*, it seems that Rushdie's problem lies in being both postmodern yet not postmodern enough (despite his conscious effort at correction) and the solution lies in a continual experiment with language which may include a more thorough decentering of the subject in form (which is different from deconstructive identity-in-difference) and / or other ways of representation. Critical deconstruction is itself inconceivable without the European avant-garde.

The slippery configurations of "postmodernism and realism" in the text are replayed in the event of the Rushdie affair. To insist that the novel contains distorted images of Islam and various peoples (blacks, Chinese, whites, the Queen, etc.) is to carry on old-fashioned image criticism, while to excuse the irreverent blasphemy on the grounds of freedom of speech and the sophistication of postmodern techniques is to demand a more careful reading according to the protocols of metropolitanism. As the text shows self-consciously by re-citing and re-marking such postmodern aporias, neither position is absolutely right, or potentially fail-safe. On the level of the event, the conflict may be translated into a struggle between fundamentalism and liberal pluralism with competing "misreadings" overdetermined by various political interests: the Indian Muslim MP Syed Shahabuddin's demagogy, Khomeini's global Islamic ambition, the history of Western Orientalism, racism against Muslim minorities in Britain, etc. Spivak says in her Rushdie essay "that arguments from cultural relativism are profoundly complicit, when invoked at certain

moments, with racist absolutism" (231), and "that we can recode the conflict as Racism versus Fundamentalism, demonizing versus disavowal" (237). The apparent aporia in the text leads to the impasse in the event, to be broken by such new forces as the migrant feminist group "Women Against Fundamentalism" and Southall Black Sisters, invoked both by Spivak and by Bhabha in their essays.[12]

This textual invocation of "newness" in the interstitial space of the migrant world, to be realized and supplemented by migrant feminists in the event through revisionist recodings beyond authorial intentions, results exactly in a reading of the book as a bold--and somewhat flawed--attempt to accommodate different kinds of cultural histories: the history of the novel, and the brief history of literary theory, along with national histories and histories of immigration. In my previous chapters, I have dealt with some major aspects in the history of the novel: mimesis, particularity and universality, the rise of the individual, the origin and the copy, vernacular as the language of the novel and heteroglossia, and the problematic representation of subaltern woman as the ultimate other. Rushdie's novel follows postmodern conventions of the contemporary world in mixing different styles. In negotiating a reading beyond both postmodernism and a pointless return to realism, I have tried to show the tensions and the difficulties in the text itself, productive failures in the encounter between the post-colonial and the European avant-garde. The text, the event and the critique show a definite danger in acceding a hegemonic position to European postmodernist literary forms and high theories, while it is equally dangerous to return to other grand narratives. Literary history does not follow a linear historicist movement of gradual improvement and sophistication in genre. However, this is a danger one cannot avoid; it is inherent in language itself as both gift and poison, hence the critical aporia of questioning a form not even "perfectly" realized in the text itself. The same lesson of *pharmakon* applies to the national histories and the histories of immigration in that particular political agendas demand particular strategies of negotiation, that we cannot afford not to use reason, nor can we afford not to question it, and that any theory needs to

keep itself open to the other, which is really a matter of performativity involving both pitfalls and opportunities.

It is both aleatory and necessary that my dissertation should end in a "flawed" text cum event which yields a deconstructive dis-ease with forms, theories, and the problem of representation. However, my intention is not to offer "perfect" models of reading; rather, I only hope to open up more ways of engaging with the immigrant novel that acknowledge reading both as a risk-taking performative act and as an active production of new spaces and meanings.

Notes

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[1] The question may be complicated by "which Joyce?"--the modernist or the postmodernist canon figure; the Derridean deconstructive rebel; or a possible postcolonial precursor (via his Irish connection).

[2] The giddiness of role-substitutions can only be matched by the politics of the theatre in reality: Asian cultural figures like Henry David Hwang protesting against the employment of a Caucasian actor in the leading Eurasian role in *Miss Saigon*, a racist show.

[3] Rushdie went to school at Rugby, the same school as Rupert Brooke, and of which Matthew Arnold's father (Thomas Arnold) was the greatest head.

[4] This Prufrockian refrain was repeated in one of Rushdie's post-*fatwa* self-defenses, "One Thousand Days in a Balloon" (MacDonogh, *The Rushdie Letters* 22). The catachrestic seizing of the humanist subject for value-recoding is played out both in the text and in the event of *The Satanic Verses*.

[5] A reference to the Hungarian-born George Mikes' *How To Be A Brit*: "Sex: Continental people have sex life; the English have hot-water bottles" (35).

[6] Kamala Markandaya, *The Nowhere Man*. New York: J. Day, 1972; Hanif Kureishi's film *Sammy and Rosy Get Laid* (1988); Marlene Nourbese Philip, *Harriet's Daughter*. London: Heinemann, 1988; George Lamming, *Water With Berries*. London: Longman, 1971. Scenes of the living dead wandering around are taken out of horrors movies such as *The Dawn of the Dead* (1979), with a touch of social satire on race riots, urban poverty, the shopping mall, and consumerism of postmodernity.

[7] See Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke and Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978).

[8] The function of rumour in subaltern insurgency in Indian history is also discussed by Homi Bhabha, "By Bread Alone: Signs of violence in the Mid-Nineteenth Century" in *The Location of Culture* (198-211). We can trace rumour to the traditional *Fama* of Virgil, too: "The spreading rumor fills the public place" (*Aeneis*, Book 12). Another independent source is the first peasants' uprising against the first Emperor Qin Shi (221 B.C. to 206 B.C.) in Chinese history, started when the rebel leader planted a scribbled message in a dead fish: "When the Emperor Qin Shi dies, we can divide his land." Rumour as subaltern insurgency is universal.

[9] Rushdie was said to be disloyal in abandoning his agent and switching his publisher from Bloomsbury to Viking-Penguin for an advance payment of $850,000 on *The Satanic Verses* instead of Bloomsbury's £50,000. How does that affect our reading of the text?

[10] Timothy Brennan's *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation* lists "Third World cosmopolitans"--Salman Rushdie, Mario Vargas Llosa, Derek Walcott, Isabel Allende, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Bharati Mukherjee--as having "supplied sceptical readings of national liberation struggles from the comfort of the observation tower, making that scepticism authoritative" (ix.). This kind of charge sounds familiar. It is later directed against all the post-colonial critics by Aijaz Ahmad in his book *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*.

[11] Spivak uses the concept *pharmakon* for (European) reason later in her Rushdie essay.

[12] One of Bhabha's essays is specifically entitled: "How Newness Enters the World" (*The Location of Culture* 212-235).

Postscript: The Souls of the Dead

Why "postscript"? A history professor once declared at an M.A. thesis defense on Bakhtin's genre theory of the novel that a "conclusion" is inappropriate for any discussion of the dialogic novel since no conclusion can be reached. The same kind of proscription can also be applied to my dissertation of course, which would be best read, perhaps, by a deconstructive rehearsal of what has already been said in other words in the project. Another reason for not using "conclusion" is that a "conclusion," as we are taught by composition textbooks, reiterates what has already been argued in the body of the paper. Why repeat in *excess*, if the body has (not) been convincing? Or the reader has not read carefully all along?

Postscript--"a paragraph written at the end of a letter after signature, containing an afterthought or additional matter" (*Oxford English Dictionary*), writing after, another and supplementary thought, postcard, post that can always not reach its destination, signature as a sign of property and signature that can be repeated endlessly in its iterability, afterthought (what is after thought? before thought? unthought?), Derrida's différance, Freud's *Nachträglichkeit* (the "after the event" of the post-script, postponement), the computer printer on which this dissertation can have multiple copies.

Rather than subject my reader to a repetition of what has already been discussed in the previous chapters of this dissertation, I would like to end by reading: here the beginning of George Lamming's book *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960). I hope thereby to bring the different strands of my dissertation together and set them in a broader historical and philosophical perspective.

The Pleasures of Exile is a seminal work in anti-colonial literature. Written in 1959 when there were no independent countries in the English-speaking Caribbean and only three (Ethiopia, Liberia and Ghana) in Black Africa, the book is an early attempt by Lamming to take account of the Caribbean writing in exile as a dialogic engagement with

Western metropolitan culture. In his introduction to the 1984 edition, Lamming brings in

the contemporary scene of cultural difference and race relations across the Atlantic, from

London to New York, through a diasporic sensibility of exilic energies:

> Today I find that young Blacks born in London are closer in feeling and
> language to their equivalent in New York than they are to the same
> generation in any Caribbean island. Place of birth may never be felt as
> home. The word *citizen* may never acquire a meaning beyond the
> requirements of the law. (8)

Despite the inevitable datedness that Lamming himself admits, the book contains many

seminal ideas that can illuminate my dissertation as well as the current post-colonial critical

enterprise.

Lamming starts his book with a narrative of a Haitian religious ceremony of the Souls.

The ceremony is regarded by the Haitian peasant as a solemn communion between the

living and the Dead, who, by telling the secrets of their past relations with the living, can be

released from the purgatory of Water. It is an occasion for forgiveness, for redemption, to

join both the living and the Dead in their Future (9-10). The medium of communication is

the Priest. The ceremony is complicated by the drama between religion and the Law,

which allows the particular ceremony while banning Vodum rites. The peasants perform

the rites in the street by "mak[ing] certain *ververs* in the dust, and whenever two or three

are gathered together by the sign of the *ververs*, the gods are there" (10). As soon as the

police arrive, the peasants erase the signs of invocation in the dust. When the Law departs,

"the signatures will be made again" (10) for the return of the god. The moment between

the disappearance and the return is the essence of poetry as the "voice of the people" in a

new historical time, as Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin shows:

> It is the time of the gods that have fled *and* of the god that is coming. It is
> the time of *need*, because it lies under a double lack and a double Not: the
> No-more of the gods that have fled and the Not-yet of the god that is
> coming. (Heidegger 764)

Lamming's narrative is both literal and allegorical, haunted by the future anteriority of the god(s). The scene of writing becomes the mass occasion for the living to invoke the past, and to join the past with the future. Its oscillation between inscription and erasure bespeaks the difficulties of "writers" under the supervision of the Law, under the insistance of the letter in the unconscious in Lamming's somewhat dreamy scene with its chapter motto from Joyce, "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awaken [sic]." The presence and absence of writing signs in mixed temporality, and the paradox of the presence of signs to invoke the absent god, and the absence of the sign as erasure of and in preparation for more writing signs, both point to the gifts of language, to language as gift, and the concept of gift as the basis and limit of human exchange (Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*). The ceremony is the writing and (un)making of History, by Calibans who have been "colonised by language, and excluded by language" but who are determined to use their "legacy of language" to redeem "a future ... which must always remain open" (15).

Indeed, Lamming's invocation of the communion with the past and his commitment to the future work in the mode of future anterior with an ethics of alterity, as opposed to Hegelian History dominated by the Western metaphysics of Now:

> Time, Magic and Man are the inseparable trinity of *The Tempest*. It is the ocean which made Prospero aware of Now; it is the supernatural privilege of his magic which made him feel that he might climb to the sky. But it was Man, the condition, which recalled him to his sense of decency: ... Man in the terrible apparel of Caliban: his slave, his long and barely liveable purgatory. (15)

Lamming is talking about Now, the hubris of Western episteme, and Humanism. The economy of the trinity has much to do with the ocean, the gift, humanism, circular exchange, etc. Here a comparison with Derrida's critique of time is illuminating.

In Derrida's reading of time and gift, "economy no doubt involves the values of law (*nomos*) and home (*oikos*, home, property,...)" (*Given Time* 6):

> Besides the values of law and home, of distribution and partition, economy implies the ideas of exchange, of circulation, of return. The figure of the circle is obviously *at the center*, if that can still be said of a circle. It stands at the center of any problematic of *oikonomia*, as it does of any economic field: circular exchange, circulation of goods, products, monetary signs of merchandise, amortization of expenditures, revenues, substitution of use values and exhange values. This motif of circulation can lead one to think that the law of economy is the--circular--return to the point of departure, to the origin, also to the home. So one would have to follow the *odyssean* structure of the economic narrative. (6-7)

This economic, humanist circle is also the representation of time as a circle in the history of metaphysics, the Hegelian "now" as a point, the "absolute this" (8).

Derrida's ingenious deconstruction of a set of apparently discrete terms in Western history and metaphysics through the idea of "gift" (traceable to non-Western native practices) finds its precedent in Lamming's book in a more specifically anti-colonialist challenge.[1] Instead of Ulysses' voyage, Lamming cites the voyages "in search of human merchandise" (12), as reported by Hakluyt and involving in its itinerary to "Heaven" the "long wet hell of the Middle Passage" (12). Colonial economy has depended on such triangles of exchange; Western humanism has depended on such voyages of self-discovery. Even today's multi-national capitalism is still operating within global circles of exchange, juggling with time for more surplus value from Third World cheap labour. Situating colonialism within a trinitarian economy of time, knowledge and man (similar to Derrida's situating the restricted economy of exchange within the general economy of the impossible gift) gives Lamming the vantage point of seeing the agency of decolonization as both implicated in History and heralding its death through a Messianic awakening in the future.

Caliban tears apart Prospero's "now." He has "the art of radio" (*Pleasures of Exile* 14) as an early version of tele-technology to "tune in on the forgotten secrets of the Dead ... honored by their absence; preserved in our memories, summoned by engineers to inhabit the little magic box of sound" (14)--a precursor of what Derrida calls

> virtual events whose movement and speed prohibit us more than ever ...
> from opposing presence to its representation, "real time" to "deferred time,"
> effectivity to its simulacrum, the living to the non-living, in short, the living
> to the living-dead of its ghosts. (*Specters of Marx* 169)

The dialogue with the Dead through "poetry [as] a way of listening" (14), however, does not bring us the satisfaction of the phenomenological moment of intersubjectivity.

> Studio Engineer: "Stand by, stand by, we will go ahead in ten seconds
> from ... " Now which the immortality of the Dead will not allow.
> Announcer: "Tomorrow, at nine-thirty, you can hear again ..."
> The hour may change for reasons which we on the other side of Radio
> should not investigate. It is enough to know that Tomorrow will not desert
> us; that Tomorrow cannot refuse our habitual waiting; ... (*Pleasures of
> Exile* 14)

Now is interrupted by deferral to Tomorrow which will yet be a repetition of the past ("hear again") in the ghostly voice of the Dead, Tomorrow as the other we should always leave open, the Messianic and revolutionary hour of the *arrivant(e)* beyond our programming.

Opening to the future is waiting for the event as justice from "the other side of Radio," the past that will come back for redress. Thus Lamming sets up a scene of Trial that embraces all the living: "you are on trial for the very evidence which you have given; or worse still, for withholding the evidence which it is within your power to give" (10). Lamming maintains "that there are no degrees of innocence. ... To be innocent is to be eternally dead" (11). "The confession of unawareness is a confession of guilt. ... Awareness is a minimum condition for attaining freedom" (12).

The trial involves bearing witness and giving evidence. Lamming says that both rumour and facts will be given, and an investigation may reveal that the author of fact is actually cheating while rumour may not be altogether invalid. Thus the witness can "liberate himself from his original knowledge" (11). Moreover, the trial is also a spectacle of revolutionary theatrical presentation in which the subalterns can "[change] the roles of Judge and Jury, demanding to be prosecutor as well as chief witness for the defence" (11). Caliban claims "a double privilege" (11) here: he assumes Prospero's privilege of magic,

only to denounce the use of magic against others; he sees himself as Caliban while arguing against Prospero's definition of the term; he acknowledges his descent from both Prospero and Caliban; and he is both the chief witness and the Prosecutor. Meanwhile, "the Judge is late" (10).

Post-colonial discourse, within which I have situated my discussion of generic double play in diasporic fiction, is the bearing of witness and giving of evidence by "Calibans" who act as magical agents. Caliban plays with genres, and blurs the line between fact and fiction. Caliban changes his roles and gender, appearing and disappearing, writing and erasing, listening, mimicking, announcing and postponing. He plays with his legacy of language as gift, in which his agency resides between the making, unmaking and remaking of his own being and his world. Caliban is irrevocably "post," a name only without access to, or desire for, lost origins, a ghost of a subject whose sovereignty lies not in individualism, but in the coming from the future. Generic double play is one of his double privileges in the on-going Trial for justice.

Post-colonial discourse is also a mass ceremony of the Souls with the Dead. It is a particular way of seeing the world as haunted by ghosts and doubles when it has entered the so-called postmodern and post-industrial age of global capitalism, in which, it has been plausibly argued, ethnicity and capital have become, like other signs, deterritorialized forces of subversion circulating in a world system without a proper center.[2] Alterity is turned into yet another sign of positivity (e. g. it would be easy to erase issues of race through citing examples of new ethnic affluence). Forces of subversion can also be turned into signs of diversity and dialogue, as proof that we are already in multicultural diversity, and "what more should the subalterns demand?" Liberal humanists like Charles Taylor would cite Bakhtin's dialogism and Hegelian recognition of the other (developed out of the master/slave trope in *The Phenomenology of Mind*) to advance an intersubjective multiculturalism as dialogue, following an idealistic model of mutual recognition that subalterns cannot relate to in their long history of racial and political oppression.

Post-colonial discourse does not exclude dialogue. However, the liberal humanist euphoria of intersubjective dialogism needs to be interrupted by the silent ghosts from the past and the present, by that silence and absence in colonial and racial terror in which ideal dialogue is never a possibility.[3] In its broadest sense, though, dialogue can be used as a trope for the answerability of words and for our very being as constituted by language, a being whose only chance of redemption lies in Lamming's (and West Indian) mass ceremony of the Souls with the Dead. It is a dialogue with the dead, with absence, with alterity, and the moment of communion should always be left open, patiently awaited, never programmed. Like Freud's *Nachträglichkeit* (post-script, postponement), generic double play is repetition with a différance, and works in the mode of future antérior--the sealed meanings of the past are prised open for the future coming of the other.

Death resides in the very relationship of domination between the master and the slave. Hegel's slave, supposedly for fear of death, submits to the dialectics of labour in which he finally achieves his own recognition. Allegorically, the slave as such can mean different entities. His submission to labour definitely sounds part of the capitalist ideology of instrumental reason; hence in their critiques, Nietzsche and Bataille both argue for the trope of the master as sovereignty, while Marx would focus on the alienation of labour and the surplus value. "The slave," so long as he happily submits to labour, would be today's powerful middle-class in North America, who enjoy all the well-paying jobs and boast of their own pleasure in the drudgery of their labour ("keep smiling" is part of their job description). Of course the middle class is squeezed by the global super-rich with their instantaneous cash flow around the world. The real slaves are the Mac-job holders (Douglas Coupland, *Generation X*), armies of night cleaners of down-town office buildings, migrant labourers, guest workers, welfare bums, slum dwellers, what Said calls "homeless wanderers, nomads, and vagrants, unassimilated to the emerging structures of institutional power, rejected by the established order for their intransigence and obdurate

rebelliousness" (*Culture and Imperialism* 332). There is of course a danger, in using

Hegelian terms, of inadvertently getting into Hegel's ruse of reason.

In Lacan's reading of Hegel's dialectic of the master and the slave, the slave is the

obsessional subject who

> has given way in face of the risk of death in which mastery was being
> offered to him in a struggle of pure prestige. But since he knows that he is
> mortal, he also knows that the master can die. From this moment on he is
> able to accept his laboring for the master and his renunciation of *jouissance*
> in the meantime; and, in the uncertainty of the moment when the master will
> die, he waits.
>
> ......
>
> He *is* in the anticipated moment of the master's death, from which moment
> he will begin to live, but in the meantime he identifies himself with the
> master as dead, and as a result of this he is himself already dead. (*Speech
> and Language in Psychoanalysis* 79)

The slave's identification with death brings out the truth in his Word, according to Lacan.

Freud's notion of the death-instinct, developed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, builds up

on his grandson's *Fort! Da!* game to deal with the presence/absence of his mother. From

this game comes the basic phonemic difference, language as a system of differentiation to

structure human desire. From this game the child is already implicated in the desire of

another. And this game demonstrates the child's compulsion to repeat through his

homeostasis system of being-for-death, in which "we can only say '*The goal of all life is

death,*' and, casting back, '*The inanimate was there before the animate*'" (Freud, *A General

Selection* 160). The death instinct is paradoxically a desperate affirmation of life, shown in

the third of the following triangle by Lacan as a final triumph in dénégation:

> Man's liberty is entirely inscribed within the constituting triangle of the
> renunciation which he imposes on the desire of the other by the menace of
> death for the *jouissance* of the fruits of his serfdom--of the consented-to
> sacrifice of his life for the reasons which give to human life its measure--
> and of the suicidal renouncement of the vanquished partner, balking of his
> victory the master whom he abandons to his inhuman solitude. (*Speech and
> Language in Psychoanalysis* 84)

If this sounds too metaphysical, we may recall the black slavewoman fugitive murdering her own child in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, an act of infanticide as resistance and as reclaiming the slave property from the master.[4] As George Lamming explains the historical phenomenon of poisoning of whites and blacks:

> the slaves also poisoned each other. The fewer their numbers, the more modest would be the master's enterprise in agriculture. Therefore, they would reduce their own numbers in order to cut down on the work for those who survived. Slave children as well as slave wives met their death in this way. (*Pleasures of Exile* 123)

Thus the mass ceremony of the Souls with the Dead calls for an attentiveness to the other, a responsibility to the past and to the future in an ethics of alterity. For the truth of being is in the other. "The gift is a contract from which neither participant is allowed to withdraw" (Lamming, *Pleasures* 15). That gift of language into which we are born and interpellated as subjects demands an answerability, an echo from the other, not as a positive living voice, but as shadows of death that limit "the historical function of the subject" and as "the past which reveals itself reversed in repetition" (Lacan, *Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis* 82, 83).

Notes

[1] The spirit of this dissertation does not allow for an intellectual history of influences. In his critique of Hegel's "now," Derrida follows Heidegger, whose works preceded Lamming, and whose influence through existentialism is part of the intellectual atmosphere of Lamming's time. Yet Lamming has also taken on Hegel's view of Africa as outside History, in a distinctly anti-colonialist gesture deeply ingrained in his own experience as a colonial. There are multiple origins and cross-hatchings in deconstruction.

[2] The most recent example is Frederick Buell's *National Culture and the New Global System*, which celebrates postmodern heterogeneity including urban poverty, occludes the issue of race by citing examples of ethnic affluence, and defuses political opposition through cultural diversity (not cultural difference). This of course is not an isolated example. Post-structuralism in the hands of these "diversity" critics has become another institutional tool of domestication, a new vocabulary to dress up new histories without questioning the very foundation of historiography. Buell celebrates the new global capitalist system by citing Derrida's famous essay on structures without a center, and equating a centerless structure with the disappearance of power at various levels and in various forms. Nowhere in these "diversity" critics can we see any ethical appeal of deconstruction, which Derrida demonstrates recently in criticizing the new global capitalism and conservative backlash in his *Specters of Marx*.

[3] See Aaron Fogel, "Coerced Speech and the Oedipus Dialogue Complex," and Michael Bernstein's "Poetics of Ressentiment," both collected in Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson eds. *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges* (173-196; 197-223). Fogel thinks that dialogue in reality is not the ideal kind of free, autonomous and utopian exchange of ideas that we often find in "the greatest characters in Austen, Eliot, Lawrence, and Forster" (174). Instead, it is more often coerced speech, carried on under conditions of authority and power. Oedipus interrogates others, only to get the answer that boomerangs on himself. Fogel quotes from Conrad's novels for illustration, where speech is coerced under the brutality of colonial power. Even Marlow's verbosity becomes one of "imperial assertions of 'overwhelming' force" (176). Michael Bernstein also quotes from a text tied up with colonialism to question the usual euphoria of dialogue: Caliban's use of English to curse. In the colonial situation, where cultures do meet, where we do find a polyphony of tongues and voices, we cannot find the euphoria, the sentimentalism, and the positive feeling of mutual enrichment that Bakhtin expresses when he describes an open self always in the process of becoming through dialogue with other voices.

[4] See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *With the Plantation Household* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

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