

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

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VOLUME I

Postcolonial studies is attentive to cultural differences, marginalization and exclusion. Such studies pay equal attention to the lives and conditions of various racial minorities in the West, as well as to regional, indigenous forms of representation around the world as being distinct from a dominant Western tradition. With the consolidation of the field in the past forty years, the need to establish the terms by which we might understand the sources of postcolonial literary history is more urgent now than ever before. *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature* is the first major collaborative overview of the field. A mix of geographic and thematic chapters allows for different viewpoints on postcolonial literary history. Chapters cover the most important national traditions, as well as more comparative geographical and thematic frameworks. This major reference work will set the future agenda for the field, whilst also synthesizing its development for scholars and students.

ATO QUAYSON is Professor of English and inaugural Director of the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies at the University of Toronto. His publications include *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing* (1997), *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process?* (2000), *Calibrations: Reading for the Social* (2003) and *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation* (2007). He has edited *Fathers and Daughters: An Anthology of Exploration* (2007) and co-edited *Rethinking Postcolonialism* (with David Theo Goldberg, 2002) and *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory* (with Tejumola Olaniyan, 2007). He is a Fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences.

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Edited by
ATO QUAYSON
University of Toronto



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For Kamau

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Notes on contributors

DEEPIKA BAHRI is Associate Professor in the English department at Emory University. She is the author of *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature* (2003) and editor of *Between the Lines: South Asians and Postcoloniality* (1996), *Realms of Rhetoric: Inquiries into the Prospects of Rhetoric Education* (2003) and *Empire and Racial Hybridity*, a special issue of the journal *South Asian Review*. She is currently working on a project on the representation of Anglo-Indians, Eurasians and racial hybrids in postcolonial literature.

ANNE BREWSTER is Associate Professor at the University of New South Wales. Her books include *Literary Formations: Postcoloniality, Nationalism, Globalism* (1996) and *Aboriginal Women's Autobiography* (1995). She co-edited with Fiona Probyn-Rapsey a special issue of *Australian Humanities Review* on whiteness (2007). She has published articles on whiteness and Aboriginal literature in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *Australian Literary Studies*, *Feminist Theory* and *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*. She has book chapters which use experimental approaches to writing about whiteness in *The Racial Politics of Bodies, Nations and Knowledges* (2009), ed. Barbara Baird and Damien Riggs, and *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts* (2009), ed. Roger Dean and Hazel Smith. She has also published the innovative writing, using the methodology known as fictocriticism in Australia, in *The Space Between: Australian Women Writing Fictocriticism* (1998), ed. Heather Ker and Amanda Nettlebeck, and the electronic journal *Outskirts: feminisms along the edge*, *TEXT*, *Cultural Studies Review* and *Australian Humanities Review*.

GLENDA R. CARPIO is Associate Professor of African and African American Studies and English at Harvard University. Her book *Laughing Fit to Kill: Black Humor in the Fictions of Slavery* was published in 2008. She is currently working on a book tentatively entitled 'Ambivalent Alliances: Black and Latina/o Fiction in the Americas'.

JOE CLEARY is Professor of English at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, and Visiting Professor of English at Yale University. He was educated at NUI Maynooth and Columbia University, New York, where he studied with Edward W. Said. He is the author of *Literature, Partition and the Nation-State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge University Press, 2002) and *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (2007). He has also co-edited *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (with Claire Connolly; Cambridge University Press, 2005). His articles on modern Irish writing and literary history have appeared in American, British and Irish journals including *South Atlantic Quarterly*, *Boundary 2*, *Textual Practice*, *The Irish Review* and *The Field Day Review*.

ELIZABETH DELOUGHREY is Associate Professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is the author of *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (2007) and co-editor, with Renée Gosson and George Handley, of *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture* (2005). Recently she completed an edited collection with George Handley entitled *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (2011).

LINDIWE DOVEY is Senior Lecturer in African Film and Performance Arts at SOAS, University of London. Her book, *African Film and Literature: Adapting Violence to the Screen* (2009), was selected as a Choice outstanding academic title. She is founding director of the Cambridge African Film Festival; curating African film and making films have always been integral to her research. Her current interests are film festivals, postcolonial film and literature, and film and migration, and she has recently also launched an African Film Podcast series through OpenAir Radio at SOAS.

UZOMA ESONWANNE is Associate Professor in the Department of English and the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto. In addition to *Critical Essays on Christopher Okigbo* (2000), he has published numerous essays and interviews on African literature and popular culture, literature of the African diaspora, and literary theory and criticism in journals such as *Cultural Critique*, *New Formations*, *African American Review*, *Research in African Literatures*, *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne Littérature Comparée* and *Postcolonial Text*.

MONIKA FLUDERNIK is Professor of English Literature at the University of Freiburg, Germany. Her major fields of interest include narratology, postcolonial studies, 'Law and Literature' and eighteenth-century aesthetics. She is the author of *The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction* (1993), *An*

Introduction to Narratology (2009) and the award-winning *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (1996).

DEBJANI GANGULY is Head of the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University. She works in the areas of postcolonial literary and historical studies, and comparative/world literature in the era of globalization. Her other areas of research and publication include language worlds in South Asia, dalit life narratives, South Asian diasporic fiction, cultural histories of mixed race, and the globalization of Bollywood as a creative industry. Her books include *Caste, Colonialism and Countermodernity* (2005). She has edited *Edward Said: The Legacy of a Public Intellectual* (2007) and *Rethinking Gandhi and Nonviolent Relationality: Global Perspectives* (2007). She is currently completing a monograph entitled *Literary Worlds After 1989: Suffering Multitudes, Spectatorial Mediations*. Debjani is an elected Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society of the UK and Ireland, and a member of the international advisory board of the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI).

GARETH GRIFFITHS is Winston Professor of English and Cultural Studies at the University of Western Australia and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. He has authored and edited many books and articles on postcolonial issues. His books include *A Double Exile: African and West Indian Writing Between Two Cultures* (1978), *African Literatures in English (East and West)* (2000), *Disputed Territories: Land, Culture and Identity in Settler Societies*, co-edited with David Trigger (2003), *Guanya Pau: A Story of an African Princess* by J. J. Walters (1891), co-edited with Jamie John V. Singler (2004), *Mixed Messages: Materiality, Textuality, Missions*, edited with S. Scott (2005), and with Bill Ashcroft and Helen Tiffin *The Empire Writes Back* (1989, 2nd ed 2002), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (1995, 2nd edn 2005) and *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (1998, 2nd edn 2007). He is currently working on a joint authored study of early indigenous Christians in postcolonial spaces and a study of texts by Africans educated in America in the late nineteenth and early centuries.

ABHIJIT GUPTA is Reader in English at Jadavpur University, Calcutta. His chief area of research is the history of printing and publishing, and bibliography. He is the co-editor, along with Swapan Chakravorty, of the Book History in India series, of which two volumes have been published: *Print Areas* in 2004 and *Moveable Types* in 2008. He was also associate editor for South Asia of the *Oxford Companion to the Book* (2010). He has just completed an online database and location register of all books printed in Bengali from 1801 to 1867 and is currently at work on the period 1868–1914. His other

research areas include science fiction, graphic novels, crime fiction and the nineteenth century.

DANIEL HEATH JUSTICE is a US-born Canadian citizen of the Cherokee Nation, and Associate Professor of English and Aboriginal Studies at the University of Toronto. In addition to numerous published essays on issues of Indigenous literary expression, he is the author of *Our Fire Survives the Storm: A Cherokee Literary History* (2006), the Indigenous fantasy epic, *The Way of Thorn and Thunder: The Kynship Chronicles* (2011) and a forthcoming cultural history of badgers.

PHILIP HOLDEN is Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at the National University of Singapore. He researches and teaches life writing, and the historical development of literatures and associated cultural forms under colonialism, decolonization and global modernity – with a particular, although not exclusive, emphasis on Singapore and anglophone writing in Southeast Asia. His most recent books include *Autobiography and Decolonization: Modernity, Masculinity, and the Nation-State* (2008) and *The Routledge Concise History of Southeast Asian Writing in English* (with Rajeev Patke, 2009). He is at present working on a project on W. Somerset Maugham and the limits of cosmopolitanism.

LENE M. JOHANNESSEN is Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of Bergen, Norway. Her areas of research and teaching are generally focused on literatures of and in migration and the ideological, cultural, social and aesthetic manifestations and negotiations of the en-route as these are refracted in narratives, specifically in American and postcolonial literature. Johannessen has written several articles and essays in the above areas, and is the author of *Passage of Crisis: Threshold Time in Chicano Literature* (2006) and the forthcoming *Horizons of Enchantment: Essays in the American Imaginary* (2011). She is also a member of the international research projects ‘Border Aesthetics’, ‘Uganda Folklore as Repository of Traditional Wisdom’ and ‘Literary Transculturations’.

ANANYA JAHANARA KABIR is Professor of Humanities in the School of English at the University of Leeds. Her research interests range from investigations into the politics of memory in South Asia to the relationship between medievalism, modernity and the British Empire, and she is currently examining Latin American and South Asian postcolonialisms from a comparative perspective. She is the author of *Paradise, Death and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge University Press, 2002) and *Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir* (2009) and co-editor, with Deanne M. Williams, of *Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages: Translating Cultures* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

SARA LENNOX is Professor of German and Scandinavian Studies and Director of the Social Thought and Political Economy Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her recent research focuses on postcolonial and transnational approaches to German Studies and on peoples of the African diaspora in Germany. She is author of *Cemetery of the Murdered Daughters: Feminism, History, and Ingeborg Bachmann* (2006) and co-editor of *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy* (with Sara Friedrichsmeyer and Susanne Zantop, 1998) and *Feminist Movements in a Globalizing World* (with Silke Roth, 2002). In 2007–8 she was president of the German Studies Association. Together with Randolph Ochsman of the University of Mainz, she was recipient of a grant from the Volkswagen Foundation of a collaborative project on Black European Studies and a grant from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for a project on Black German Studies. She is currently completing work on an edited book entitled *Remapping Black Germany: New Perspectives on Afro-German History, Politics, and Culture*.

VICTOR LI is Associate Professor in the Department of English and the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto. His research focuses on literary theory, postcolonial literatures, primitivism and globalization studies. The author of *The Neo-primitivist Turn: Critical Reflections on Alterity, Culture, and Modernity* (2006), he has published widely in journals such as *ARIEL*, *boundary 2*, *Criticism*, *CR: The New Centennial Review*, *Cultural Critique*, *Interventions* and *Parallax*. He is the co-editor of *The University of Toronto Quarterly* and is on the editorial advisory boards of *ARIEL*, *CR: The New Centennial Review* and the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. His current project is a critical examination of the representationalist ontology that underwrites discourses on globalization.

JOHN MCLEOD is Professor of Postcolonial and Diaspora Literatures in the School of English at the University of Leeds. He is the author of *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* (2004) and *J. G. Farrell* (2007), and has edited *The Revision of Englishness* (2004) and *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (2004). A second edition of his highly successful book *Beginning Postcolonialism* appeared in 2010. He has published scholarly articles on postcolonial and diasporic writing of Britain in a range of international journals, and is a member of the editorial boards of the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *Moving Worlds: A Journal of Transcultural Writings* and *Adoption and Culture*.

GABRIELLA MAZZON is Chair for English Linguistics at the Institut für Anglistik, Leopold-Franzens Universität Innsbruck. Her main research interests

are connected to the field of varieties of English as a second language, especially in relation to the sociolinguistic value attached to the presence of English in such communities, and historical linguistics, especially in relation to historical sociolinguistics and pragmatics (forms of address, dialogic sequences), but also as concerns changes in forms (lexical change, history of negative forms). She has published extensively in both strands of research, and is currently working on Middle English dialogue and rhetoric, and on Post-Colonial English.

ELISABETH MUDIMBE-BOYI is Emerita Professor of French and Comparative Literature at Stanford University. Her research and teaching focus on contacts of cultures; history and memory in literature; intellectuals, literature and politics. She is the author of *Jacques-Stephen Alexis: une écriture poétique, un engagement politique* (1992); *Essais sur les cultures en contact: Afrique, Amériques, Europe* (2006), and co-editor of *Images, mémoires et saviors: une histoire en partage* (with Isidore Ndaywell, 2009). Among her other publications, she is the editor of *Empire Lost: France and Its Other Worlds* (2009), *Remembering Africa* (2002) and *Beyond Dichotomies: Histories, Identities, Culture, and the Challenge of Globalization* (2002). Her current projects include *La Révolution haïtienne et ses textes* and *Mémoire familiale: une histoire en fragments*.

ANKHI MUKHERJEE is CUF (College University Fellow) Lecturer in the Faculty of English Language and Literature at the University of Oxford, and Fellow of Wadham College. Her research and teaching interests include Victorian and modern literature, critical and cultural theory, particularly psychoanalysis, and postcolonial studies. She is the author of *Aesthetic Hysteria: The Great Neurosis in Victorian Melodrama and Contemporary Fiction* (2007), co-editor of *A Companion to Literary Criticism and Psychoanalysis* (2011), and has published articles on a wide variety of topics in refereed journals such as *PMLA*, *MLQ* and *Textual Practice*. Her current book project, 'What is a Classic?' *Postcolonial Rewriting and Invention of the Canon*, examines ideas of canonicity, literary tradition, counter-readings, vernaculars and translation, the 'anxiety of influence', and nostalgia in twentieth- and twenty-first-century English literature. It focuses specifically on postcolonial literary production, the emergence of world literary systems, and the function of literary criticism in an international frame.

H. ADLAI MURDOCH is Associate Professor of French and Francophone Literature and African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His articles have appeared in *Callaloo*, *Yale French Studies*, *Research in African Literatures*, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies*, *L'Esprit créateur*, the *Journal of Romance Studies* and the *Journal of*

Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies. He is the author of *Creole Identity in the French Caribbean Novel* (2001) and *Creolizing the Metropole: Migratory Caribbean Identities in Literature and Film* (2011). He is the co-editor of the essay collection *Postcolonial Theory and Francophone Literary Studies* (2005).

JULIAN MURPHET is Professor of Modern Film and Literature at the University of New South Wales. He is the author of *Literature and Race in Los Angeles* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) and *Multimedia Modernism* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), and the co-editor of *Literature and Visual Technologies* (2004). He has published on film, theory, race and literature in *Critical Quarterly*, *SubStance* and *Screen*.

MUHSIN AL-MUSAWI is Professor of Arabic and Comparative Studies at Columbia University, MESAAS. He has published extensively in English and Arabic. His books include: *Scheherazade in England: A Study of Nineteenth-Century English Criticism of the Arabian Nights* (1981), *Anglo-Orient* (2000), *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel: Debating Ambivalence* (2003), *Reading Iraq: Culture and Power in Conflict* (2006), *Arabic Poetry: Trajectories of Modernity and Tradition* (2006), *Islam on the Street: Religion in Modern Arabic Literature* (2009) and *The Islamic Context of the Thousand and One Nights* (2009). He is the editor of the *Journal of Arabic Literature*, and the recipient of the prestigious Owais Award in literary criticism.

MARCOS P. NATALI is Associate Professor of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature at the University of São Paulo in Brazil. He is the author of *A Política da Nostalgia: um estudo das formas do passado* (2006) and has written on twentieth-century and contemporary Latin American literature and literary theory for journals and book collections in Brazil, Mexico, England and the United States.

STEPHANIE NEWELL teaches postcolonial literature at the University of Sussex. She has published widely on West African literatures and colonial African print cultures, including *The Forger's Tale: The Search for Odeziaku* (2006) and *West African Literatures: Ways of Reading* (2006). Her recent work focuses on literary culture in colonial newspapers, particularly the uses of pseudonyms and anonymity in the West African press.

FRANCISCO A. ORTEGA is Associate Professor in the History Department and in the Cultural Studies graduate programme at the National University of Colombia, Bogotá. He obtained his PhD from the University of Chicago in 2000, where he specialized in Colonial Latin American studies and critical cultural theory. He was a visiting scholar at Harvard University (1995–9) and an Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2000–4). He

edited an anthology on Michel de Certeau, *La irrupción de lo impensado: Cátedra Michel de Certeau* (2004) and a collection of essays by anthropologist Veena Das and local Colombian authors focusing on social violence, language and interpretation, *Sujetos de dolor, agentes de dignidad* (2008). He is currently based at the University of Helsinki working on the Research Project Europe 1815–1914 as a postdoctoral researcher, where he is completing a manuscript on the political culture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Latin America.

RAJEEV S. PATKE is Professor of English Literature at the National University of Singapore. He is the author of *The Long Poems of Wallace Stevens* (Cambridge University Press, 1985, rpt 2009), *Postcolonial Poetry in English* (2006), and the co-author of *The Routledge Concise History of Southeast Asian Writing in English* (2009). His book on *Modernist Literature and Postcolonial Studies* is forthcoming in 2012. He has co-edited *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures: Continental Europe and its Empires* (2008), and also produced two audio compact discs of poetry from Singapore. His other publication and research interests include contemporary poetry from Ireland, the writings of Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, the cultures of modern cities, and the relation between poetry and painting.

BHEKIZIZWE PETERSON is Professor of African Literature at the University of the Witwatersrand. He has held invited Fellowships at Yale University and Birmingham University (UK) and served on various editorial, statutory and artistic committees, juries and boards across the continent. He is the author of *Monarchs, Missionaries and Intellectuals* (2000) and has published extensively on African literature, performance and cultural studies as well as black intellectual traditions in Africa and the diaspora. He has been active as a writer, activist and participant in Black cultural practices since the late 1970s and he was a founding member of the Afrika Cultural Centre and the Dhlomo Theatre. He is the writer and/or producer of internationally acclaimed films including the features *Fools* and *Zulu Love Letter* (directed by Ramadan Suleman) and the feature documentaries *Born into Struggle* and *The Battle for Johannesburg* (directed by Rehad Desai).

SANDRA PONZANESI is Associate Professor in Gender and Postcolonial Critique in the Department of Media and Culture Studies at the University of Utrecht. Among her interests are the reception of postcolonial literature in relation to the literary award industry and the exploration of digital literacies of migrant youth in transnational contexts. She has published on postcolonial critique, transnational feminist theories, Italian colonial history, visual culture

and postcolonial cinema. Among her publications are *Paradoxes of Post-colonial Culture: Contemporary Women Writing of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora* (2004) and *Migrant Cartographies New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-colonial Europe* (with Daniela Merolla; 2005). She is currently working on a volume on *Postcolonial Cinema Studies* with Marguerite Waller (forthcoming 2011) and on *Postcolonial Conflict Zones: Gender, Globalization and Violence*.

ANJALI PRABHU is Associate Professor of French and Francophone Studies and on the Board of the Cinema Studies Program at Wellesley College, where she has held the Whitehead Chair in Critical Thought. She works in the fields of postcolonial studies, cultural studies, francophone studies, African studies and cinema studies. She published *Hybridity: Revisions, Transformations, Prospects* (2007), while her forthcoming book is entitled *Contemporary Cinema of Africa and the Diaspora*. Her work has appeared in *Diacritics*, *Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature*, *Contemporary Literature Studies*, *Research in African Literatures*, *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, *Levinas Studies*, *Oeuvres et critiques*, *Présence Francophone* and *French Forum*.

G. J. V PRASAD is Professor of Literature at Jawaharlal Nehru University. His research interests are Indian English literature, postcolonial literatures, contemporary theatre, dalit writings and translation theory. Prasad is also a poet and novelist. He has co-edited with Sara Rai a collection of stories from Indian languages, *Imaging the Other* (1999). His academic publications include *Continuities in Indian English Poetry: Nation Language Form* (1999) and four edited volumes of critical essays, *Vikram Seth: An Anthology of Recent Criticism* (2004), *The Lost Temper: Essays on Look Back in Anger* (2004), *Translation and Culture: Indian Perspectives* (2010) and *Indian English and Vernacular India* (co-edited, 2010). He edited the Penguin (now Longman) Study Edition of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (2004) and John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (2005). His forthcoming publication is *Writing India, Writing English* (2011). Prasad is the current editor of *JSL* and Secretary of the Indian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies.

ATO QUAYSON is Professor of English and inaugural Director of the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies at the University of Toronto. His publications include *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing* (1997), *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process?* (2000), *Calibrations: Reading for the Social* (2003) and *Aesthetic Nervousness: Disability and the Crisis of Representation* (2007). He has edited *Fathers and Daughters: An Anthology of Exploration* (2007) and co-edited *Rethinking Postcolonialism* (with David Theo Goldberg, 2002) and

African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory (with Tejumola Olaniyan, 2007). He is a Fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences.

IRA RAJA teaches in the Department of English at the University of Delhi, India. She is currently on a three-year postdoctoral fellowship at La Trobe University, Australia. She has edited *Grey Areas: An Anthology of Contemporary Indian Fiction on Ageing* (2010), and co-edited with John Thieme, *The Table is Laid: Oxford Anthology of South Asian Food Writing* (2007). Her essays have been published in *Narrative*, *Women's Studies*, and the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*.

JAHAN RAMAZANI is Edgar F. Shannon Professor of English at the University of Virginia. He is the author of *A Transnational Poetics* (2009), winner of the Harry Levin Prize of the ACLA; *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (2001); *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (1994), a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award; and *Yeats and the Poetry of Death: Elegy, Self-Elegy, and the Sublime* (1990). He edited the third edition of *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry* (2003) and, with Jon Stallworthy, the eighth edition of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, volume F, *The Twentieth Century and After* (2006). He is a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, an NEH Fellowship, a Rhodes Scholarship, and the MLA's William Riley Parker Prize.

ELAINE SAVORY formerly at the University of the West Indies, is now Associate Professor in Literary Studies at New School University, New York City. She has published widely on Caribbean and African literatures, especially poetry, drama and theatre, gender and literary history. She has a special interest in Jean Rhys, on whom she wrote *The Cambridge Introduction to Jean Rhys* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), and Kamau Brathwaite, on whom she is in the process of completing an edited volume. She is also completing *The Quarrel with Death: Elegiac Poetry in the Shadow of Empire*, as well as an edition of the selected work of Bruce St John.

JAMIE S. SCOTT is Professor of Humanities and Director of the Graduate Programme in Interdisciplinary Studies at York University, Canada. Author of *Christians and Tyrants: The Prison Testimonies of Boethius, Thomas More and Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (1995), he contributed essays to and edited *And the Birds Began to Sing: Religion and Literature in Post-Colonial Cultures* (1996), and co-edited *Mapping the Sacred: Religion, Geography and Post-Colonial Literatures* (with Paul Simpson-Housley, 2001), *Canadian Missions, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad* (with Alwyn Austen, 2005) and *Mixed Messages: Materiality, Textuality, Missions* (with Gareth Griffiths, 2005). He is currently working on a study of Christianity and film.

WINFRIED SIEMERLING is Professor of English at the University of Waterloo and an Associate of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard. His books include *Canada and Its Americas: Transnational Navigations* (with Sarah Phillips Casteel, 2010), *The New North American Studies* (2005; French translation, 2010), *Cultural Difference and the Literary Text* (with Katherine Schwenk, 1996), *Writing Ethnicity* (1996), and *Discoveries of the Other: Alterity in the Work of Leonard Cohen, Hubert Aquin, Michael Ondaatje, and Nicole Brossard* (1994). He is currently writing a book on the historical dimensions of African Canadian Literature.

MARIANO SISKIND is Assistant Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures at Harvard University. He teaches nineteenth- and twentieth-century Latin American Literature with emphasis on its world literary relations, as well as the production of cosmopolitan discourses and processes of aesthetic globalization. He is the editor (with Sylvia Molloy) of *Poéticas de la distancia: adentro y afuera de la literatura argentina* (2006) and has published essays in *Comparative Literature Studies*, *Conradiana*, *Comparative Literature*, *Revista Iberoamericana*, *Variaciones Borges*, *Hispanamérica*, *La Biblioteca* and in several edited volumes. His book entitled *Cosmopolitan Desires: Globalization and World Literature in Latin America* will be published in 2012.

DOMINIC THOMAS is Chair of the Department of French and Francophone Studies and Chair of Italian at the University of California Los Angeles. He is the author of *Nation-Building, Propaganda and Literature in Francophone Africa* (2002) and *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration and Transnationalism* (2007). As editor, he has published *Francophone Studies: New Landscapes* (with Françoise Lionnet, 2003), *Textual Ownership in Francophone African Literature* (with Alec G. Hargreaves and Nicki Hitchcott, 2006), *Global Francophone Africa* (2009), *Museums in Postcolonial Europe* (2009), *A Companion to Comparative Literature* (with Ali Behdad, 2011), *Francophone Sub-Saharan African Literature in Global Contexts* (with Alain Mabanckou, 2011), and *The Francophone Documentary* (with Philippe Met, 2011). He is also the editor of the fiction in translation series 'Global African Voices' at Indiana University Press.

CHRISTOPHER WARNES is Lecturer in the Faculty of English, and a Fellow of St John's College, University of Cambridge. Recent publications include an essay on the Afrikaans novel in *The Cambridge Companion to the African Novel* (Cambridge University Press, 2009) and *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel: Between Faith and Irreverence* (2009).

Acknowledgments

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Chronology

	Historical and political events	Literary and cultural events
1492	Columbus sails from Palos, Spain (3 Aug); discovers Watling Island in Bahamas (12 Oct); Cuba (18 Oct); Haiti (6 Dec)	
1494	Treaty of Tordesillas: Spain and Portugal divide New World between them Parliament of Drogheda marks subservience of Ireland to England	
1498	Vasco da Gama arrives in Calicut, India	
1500	Pope Alexander VI proclaims a Year of Jubilee, and imposes a tithe for crusade against Turks Moorish revolt in Granada suppressed	
1503	Casa Contratacion (Colonial office) founded in Madrid to deal with American affairs Zanzibar becomes Portuguese colony	
1510	Portuguese acquire Goa	
1514		<i>Septem horae canonicae</i> first book published in Arabic type, published in Italy

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|------|--|---|
| 1515 | | The Lateran Council's decree, 'De impressione librorum', forbids printing of books without permission of Roman Catholic authorities |
| 1518 | The Barbary States of Algiers and Tunis founded | |
| 1521 | Hernando Cortes assumes control of Mexico after destruction of Aztec state | |
| 1522 | Spanish forces conquer Guatemala | Jacopo Sannazzaro, 'De partu Virginis', religious poem fusing pagan and Christian myth |
| 1526 | Babar establishes Mogul dynasty in Delhi | |
| 1532 | Francisco Pizarro leads expedition from Panama to Peru | |
| 1540 | Afghan rebel Sher Shah becomes Emperor of Delhi | |
| 1547 | | Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Spanish writer, born (d. 1616) |
| 1548 | Gonzalo Pizarro, son of Francisco Pizarro, defeated at Battle of Xaquixaguane (Peru) by Pedro de la Gasca and executed | |
| 1555 | French colony founded on the Bay of Rio de Janeiro | An Aztec dictionary published |
| 1560 | | Hsu Wei, <i>Ching P'ing Mei</i> , first classic Chinese novel |
| 1564 | Spaniards occupy Philippines and build Manila | William Shakespeare born (d. 1616) |
| 1569 | | Alfonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga, <i>La Araucana</i> , Spanish epic on the conquest of Chile |

- 1572 Luís Vaz de Camões, *Os Lusíadas*, Portuguese epic poem on voyages of Vasco da Gama
- 1575 Tasso, *Gerusalemme liberata*, epic poems about the Crusades
- 1590 The Emperor of Morocco annexes Timbuctoo
- 1592 Portuguese settle at Mombasa
- 1595 Dutch begin to colonize East Indies
- 1596 Pacification of Ireland *Merchant of Venice* first performance (first printed 1600)
- 1598 Dutch take Mauritius
- 1599 Building of the Globe Theatre, Southwark, London, where Shakespeare's plays are performed
- 1600 British East India Company founded
- 1601 Bento Teixeira Pinto, *Prosopopya*, first Brazilian epic
- 1603 Lord Mountjoy conquers northern counties of Ireland
- 1604 *Othello* first performance 1604–5 (first printed 1622)
- 1605 Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 1 published
- 1606 *Antony and Cleopatra* first performance between 1606 and 1607 (first printed 1623)
- 1610 Jesuit state of Paraguay created
- 1610 Skirmishes between English and Dutch settlers in India
- 1611 *The Tempest* first performance (first printed 1623)

- 1613 English colonists in Virginia
destroy French settlement at
Port Royal, Nova Scotia;
prevent French colonization
of Maryland
- 1615 Cervantes *Don Quixote*, part 2
- 1620 Pilgrim Fathers, leaving
Plymouth, England, in
Mayflower for North
America, land at New
Plymouth, Mass., to found
Plymouth Colony
- 1625 French occupy the Antilles
and Cayenne
- 1626 English author and traveller
George Sandys makes first
translation of a classic in
America, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*
- 1627 Shah Jahan (1592–1666),
succeeding his father
Jahangir, becomes Great
Mogul of India (–1658)
Barbados, West Indies, claimed
as English colony
- 1628 Dutch occupy Java and Moluccas
- 1630 John Winthrop, English Puritan
leader (1587–1649), sails with
Plymouth Company's
expedition (Apr); arrives in
Massachusetts with 1,000
settlers; founds Boston; 16,000
more settlers follow (–1642)
- 1632 Portuguese driven out of Bengal
- 1634 Island of Curaçao captured by
Dutch forces
- 1635 Dutch occupy Formosa, English
Virgin Islands, French
Martinique

- 1636 Dutch settle in Ceylon
- 1640 French finish occupation of Alsace
- 1643 Confederation of New England
formed by Connecticut, New
Haven, Plymouth,
Massachusetts Bay Colony
- 1644 French occupy Rhineland
- 1645 Dutch occupy St Helena
- 1646 English occupy Bahamas
- 1649 England declared a
commonwealth
- 1650 Dutch and English agree about
respective frontiers of their
North American colonies
- 1652 Dutch establish settlement in
Cape Town
- 1654 Treaty of Westminster ends
Anglo-Dutch War; Dutch
recognize Navigation Act
Portuguese finally drive Dutch
out of Brazil
- 1655 English capture Jamaica from
Spain
- 1656 Dutch take Colombo from
Portuguese
- 1661 Famine in India, no rain since
1659
- 1663 Charles II grants charters to
Royal African Company and to
eight proprietors of North
Carolina and Rhode Island
- 1664 Swedish colonies on Gold Coast
given to Dutch
- 1666 French capture Antigua,
Montserrat and St Christopher
English privateers take Tobago

- 1668 British East India Company takes control of Bombay
- 1670 Spain formally cedes Jamaica to England
- 1669 Venetians lose Crete, their last colonial possession, to the Turks
- 1673 French expedition against Ceylon Robert Clavel, *Catalogue of All the Books Printed in England Since the Dreadful Fire of London in 1666*
- 1680 French colonial empire, reaching from Quebec to mouth of Mississippi River, is organized
- 1682 La Salle claims Louisiana territory for France and takes possession of Mississippi Valley
- 1683 Peace treaty between William Penn and North American Indians
- 1685 All Chinese ports open to foreign trade Publication of Alexander Oliver Esquemeling's *History of the Buccaneers of America*
- 1686 Federation of New England formed by James II in order to remodel British colonies in North America
French annex Madagascar
- 1687 Arguin, Guinea, established as colony by Brandenburg
- 1689 Natal becomes Dutch colony
- 1691 New East India Company formed in London
- 1693 National Debt begins in England
- 1697 French under André de Brue attempt to colonize West Africa

- 1707 Union between England and Scotland under name Great Britain
- 1708 British East India Company and New East India Company merged
- 1709 14,000 inhabitants of the Palatinate emigrate to North America (c. 100,000 Germans will follow during next 100 years, and 5 million during 1800s)
- 1710 Mauritius, formerly part of Dutch East Indies, becomes French
- 1711 Rio de Janeiro captured by French
- 1713 Spain agrees at Utrecht to cede Gibraltar and Minorca to Great Britain
- 1714 Tripoli becomes independent of Turkey
- 1719 Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*
Fray Francisco Ximénez translates fragments of *Poþol Vuh* into Spanish
- 1726 Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*
- 1749 Establishment of Halifax, Nova Scotia, as English fortress
- 1756 120 British soldiers imprisoned and die in India ('Black hole of Calcutta')
Start of Seven Years' War between English and French in North America that leads to the English acquisition of Quebec (~1763)

- 1760 Dutch explorer Jakobus Coetsee
advances beyond Orange
River, S. Africa
- 1763 British Proclamation provides
government for Quebec,
Florida and Grenada
- 1768 Secretary of State for Colonies
appointed in Britain
- 1773 Boston Tea Party: protest against
tea duty imposed by Britain
- 1774 Quebec Act, to secure Canada's
loyalty to Great Britain,
establishes Roman
Catholicism in Canada
- 1775 American Revolution (–1783)
- 1780 Rebellion in Peru against Spanish
rule
- 1783 Britain recognizes independence
of the US
- 1784 Pitt's India Act; East India
Company under government
control
Founding of Asiatic Society
- 1787 Constitution of US signed
Penal colony founded in Botany
Bay, Australia
- 1788 *Kālidāsa Shakuntala* translated
into English by William Jones
- 1789 The French Revolution; French
Royalists begin to emigrate
- 1790 Canada Constitutional Act
divides the country into two
provinces, Upper and Lower
Canada
Slaves revolt in French Santo
Domingo
- 1791 The Haitian Revolution (–1804)

- 1792 Denmark is the first nation to
abolish the slave trade
- 1801 Act of Union of Great Britain and
Ireland comes into force
- 1802 France sends expedition to Haiti
under General Leclerc to
reintroduce slavery, which is
defeated by Toussaint
L'Ouverture
- 1805 Establishment of modern Egypt;
Mehmet Ali proclaimed Pasha
Break between Britain and US
over trade with the West
Indies
- 1807 France invades Portugal;
dethroned royal family flees to
Brazil
Britain abolishes slave trade in its
colonies
- 1808 US prohibits importation of
slaves from Africa
- 1809 Napoleon annexes Papal States
French lose Martinique and
Cayenne to British
Ecuador gains independence from
Spain
- 1810 Venezuela breaks away from
Spain
Simón Bolívar emerges as major
figure in South American
politics
British seize Guadeloupe, last
French colony in West Indies
Revolts in New Granada, Rio de
la Plata and Mexico
- 1811 Paraguay declares independence
from Spain
British occupy Java
- 1812 US declares war on Britain

- 1813 Americans capture York
(Toronto) and Fort St George
Mexico declares itself independent
- 1815 Brazil declares itself independent
from 1816 under Dom John
- 1816 Argentina declared independent
Java restored to the Netherlands
- 1817 Simón Bolívar establishes
independent government of
Venezuela
- 1818 Chile proclaims its independence
Border between Canada and the
US agreed upon
- 1819 British settlement established in
Singapore by East India
Company
Florida purchased by US from
Spain
Simón Bolívar becomes
President of Colombia
- 1821 Peru proclaimed independent
from Spain followed by
Guatemala, Mexico, Panama
and Santo Domingo
- 1822 Brazil becomes independent of
Portugal
- 1823 Guatemala, San Salvador,
Nicaragua, Honduras and
Costa Rica form
Confederation of United
Provinces of Central America
The Monroe Doctrine closes
American continent to colonial
settlements by European
powers
- 1825 Bolivia becomes independent of
Peru, Uruguay of Brazil
Portugal recognizes Brazilian
independence

- 1826 Pan-American Congress in Panama
- 1827 Peru secedes from Colombia Washington Irving, *History of the Life and Voyage of Christopher Columbus*
- 1828 Uruguay, since 1821 part of Brazil, becomes independent republic following Treaty of Rio de Janeiro
- 1829 Venezuela withdraws from Gran Colombia to begin its independent existence Tennyson, *Timbuctoo*
- 1830 France captures Algeria
Ecuador secedes from Gran Colombia and becomes independent republic
Mysore added to Britain's possessions in India
- 1831 Syria, since 1516 part of Ottoman Empire, conquered by the Egyptians
- 1832 Britain occupies Falkland Islands
- 1833 Muhammad Ali is given Egypt and Syria; founds the dynasty that rules Egypt until 1952 The great German Shakespeare translation (began in 1794) by A. W. von Schlegel, in collaboration with Ludwig and Dorothea Tieck and W. von Baudissin, completed
- 1834 Sixth Kaffir War (–1835); severe clashes between Bantu people and white settlers on eastern frontier of Cape Colony
Dutch farmers of the Cape Colony begin to settle in the country north of the Orange River
- 1836 Boer farmers launch ‘The Great Trek’ systematic emigration across the Orange River away

- from British rule; founding of
Natal, Transvaal and Orange
Free states
- 1838 First British–Afghan War (–1842)
- 1839 Treaty of London settles the
dispute between Dutch
and their former Belgian
subjects
The independent republic of
Natal founded by the Boers
- 1840 Lower and Upper Canada united
by Act of Parliament
- 1841 Britain’s sovereignty proclaimed
over Hong Kong
USS *Creole* carrying slaves from
Virginia to Louisiana is seized
by the slaves and sails into
Nassau where they become
free
New Zealand becomes British
colony
- 1842 Treaty of Nanking ends First
Opium War between Britain
and China and confirms
cession of Hong Kong to
Great Britain
- 1843 William H. Prescott, *History of the
Conquest of Mexico*
- 1845 Maori rising against British rule
in New Zealand
- 1847 Liberia proclaimed independent
republic William H. Prescott, *History of the
Conquest of Peru*
- 1849 Britain annexes Punjab by treaty
with the Maharajah of Lahore
- 1851 Elgin treaty between Britain
and US on Canadian trade
- 1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle
Tom’s Cabin*

- 1855 Britain annexes Oudh, India, and establishes Natal as Crown Colony
- 1857 Indian mutiny over British rule; siege of Delhi begins; Delhi captured; British enter Cawnpore
- 1858 East India Company transfers power to British Crown; beginning of British Raj
- 1861 Charles-Étienne Brasseur de Bourbourg translates *Popul Vuh* in its entirety into French
- 1867 British North America Act establishes Dominion of Canada
- 1868 W. E. B. Dubois born (d. 1963)
- 1869 Mahatma Gandhi born (d. 1948)
- 1873 Republic proclaimed in Spain
Abolition of slave market and exports in Zanzibar
- 1874 Britain annexes Fiji islands
- 1875 Britain buys 176,602 Suez Canal shares from Khedive of Egypt
Founding of the Theosophical Society
- 1879 British Zulu War: Zulus massacre British soldiers in Isandlwana, British capture Cetewayo
French Panama Canal Company organized under Ferdinand de Lesseps
- 1880 France annexes Tahiti
Transvaal declares itself independent of Britain; Boers led by Kruger declare a republic
- 1882 James Joyce, Irish novelist, born (d. 1941)

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| 1883 | British decide to evacuate Sudan | Oliver Schreiner (South Africa);
<i>The Story of an African Farm</i> |
| 1884 | Berlin Conference of 14 European nations on African affairs
Germany acquires protectorate of German East Africa, German Southwest Africa, Cameroon, Togo and German New Guinea | |
| 1885 | The Congo becomes a personal possession of King Leopold II of Belgium
Germany annexes Tanganyika and Zanzibar
Great Britain establishes protectorate over North Bechuanaland, the Niger River region, and south New Guinea; occupies Port Hamilton, Korea
First Indian National Congress meets | |
| 1887 | First Colonial Conference opens in London | |
| 1888 | Suez Canal convention | |
| 1890 | Britain exchanges Helgoland with Germany for Zanzibar and Pemba | |
| 1893 | Natal granted self-governance
Swaziland annexed by Transvaal
France acquires protectorate over Laos | |
| 1894 | Uganda becomes a British protectorate | Kipling, <i>The Jungle Book</i> |
| 1895 | British South Africa Company territory south of Zambezi becomes Rhodesia
Cuba fights Spain for its independence | |
| 1896 | France annexes Madagascar | |

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| 1897 | | Joseph Conrad, <i>The Nigger of the Narcissus</i> |
| 1898 | Russia obtains lease of Port Arthur, China; Britain, the lease of Kowloon
US declares war on Spain over Cuba; Americans destroy Spanish fleet at Manila; Treaty of Paris between US and Spain; Spain cedes Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines for \$20 million | |
| 1899 | Philippines demand independence from US | Joseph Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i>
Rudyard Kipling, <i>The White Man's Burden</i> |
| 1900 | Commonwealth of Australia created | Joseph Conrad, <i>Lord Jim</i>
Solomon T. Plaatje (South Africa), <i>Boer War Diary</i>
José Enrique Rodó, <i>Ariel</i> |
| 1901 | Edmund Barton inaugurated as first prime minister of Commonwealth of Australia
The Boers begin organized guerrilla warfare
Cuba Convention makes country a US protectorate | Rudyard Kipling, <i>Kim</i>

Nobel Prize in Literature established |
| 1902 | Colonial Conference meets in London
First meeting of Committee of Imperial Defence | J. A. Hobson, <i>Imperialism</i> |
| 1903 | British complete conquest of Northern Nigeria
King Edward VII visits Paris; French President Loubet visits London, the 'Entente Cordiale' established | E. D. Morel, <i>The Congo Slave State</i> |
| 1904 | Hereros and Nama revolt in German Southwest Africa until 1908 | Joseph Conrad, <i>Nostromo</i> |

- 1905 Sinn Fein Party founded
Alberta and Saskatchewan
become provinces of Canada
Maji-Maji uprising in German
East Africa
- 1906 Algeciras Conference gives France
and Spain control of Morocco
Self-government granted to the
Transvaal and Orange River
colonies
US troops occupy Cuba (–1909)
after reconciliation following
Liberal revolt fails
- 1907 New Zealand becomes a
dominion within the British
Empire
Nobel Prize in Literature
awarded to Rudyard Kipling
(20 Dec. 1865 – 18 Jan. 1936)
- 1908 Leopold II transfers the Congo
(his private possession since
1885) to Belgium
Union of South Africa established
Dutch establish rule in Bali
Rabindranath Tagore (India),
Home and the World
- 1909 Anglo-German discussions on
control of Baghdad Railroad
Kwame Nkrumah born
(d. 1972)
Mohandas K. Ghandi (India),
Hind Swaraj
- 1910 Egyptian premier Boutros Ghali
assassinated
Union of South Africa becomes a
dominion within the British
Empire with Louis Botha as
premier
W. E. B. Du Bois founds National
Association for the
Advancement of Colored
People (NAACP) in US
Start of the Mexican Revolution
- 1911 Iliya Abu Madi (Lebanon), *The
Memorial of the Past*
J. E. Casely-Hayford (Gold
Coast), *Ethiopia Unbound*

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| | | Muhammad Iqbal (India),
<i>Complaint</i> |
| 1912 | | Léon Damas born (d. 1978) |
| 1913 | Mahatma Gandhi, leader of
Indian Passive Resistance
Movement, arrested | Nobel Prize in Literature
awarded to Rabindranath
Tagore (7 May 1861 – 7 August
1941) |
| 1914 | Northern and Southern
Nigeria united
General Zamon becomes
president of Haiti
Start of World War I
Gandhi returns to India and
supports government | E. R. Burroughs, <i>Tarzan of the Apes</i>
Gabriela Mistral (Chile), <i>Sonnets
of Death</i> |
| 1915 | | Nikolai Bukharin, <i>Imperialism and
World Economy</i>
Mariano Azuela (Mexico), <i>The
Underdogs</i> |
| 1916 | T. E. Lawrence ('Lawrence of
Arabia') appointed British
political and liaison officer to
Emir Faisal's army | Vladimir Lenin, <i>Imperialism: The
Highest Stage of Capitalism</i>
Rabindranath Tagore (India),
<i>Nationalism</i> |
| 1917 | US purchases Virgin Islands | |
| 1918 | British government abandons
Home Rule for Ireland

End of World War I | US Post Office burns instalments
of James Joyce's <i>Ulysses</i>
published in <i>Little Review</i> |
| 1919 | Peace Conference opens in
Versailles; proposal to create
League of Nations approved;
in Treaty of Versailles
Germany loses all its colonies
War between British, Indian and
Afghan forces
Edward Carson demands repeal
of Home Rule in Ireland
US House of Representatives
moves to curtail immigration | Li Ta-chao (China), <i>A New Era</i> |

- Fighting begins between French and Syrians at Baalbek, Syria
- 1920 In Paris, League of Nations comes into being
Government of Ireland Act passed by British Parliament; Northern and Southern Ireland each to have own Parliament
Gandhi emerges as India's leader in its struggle for independence
- 1921 First Indian Parliament meets
Winston Churchill becomes Colonial Secretary
Britain and Ireland sign peace treaty
Lord Reading appointed Viceroy of India, succeeding Lord Chelmsford
- 1922 Gandhi sentenced to six years imprisonment for civil disobedience
League of Nations approves mandates for Egypt and Palestine
Arab Congress at Nablus rejects British mandate for Palestine
Mustafa Kemal proclaims Turkey a republic
Irish Free State officially proclaimed
- 1923 Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to William Butler Yeats (13 June 1865 – 28 Jan. 1939)
Albert Sarraut, *The Economic Development of the French Colonies*
- 1924 E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*
Pablo Neruda (Chile), *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair*

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| 1925 | Cyprus becomes a British Crown Colony
British Dominions office established
Frantz Fanon born (d. 1961) | |
| 1926 | | Hô Chí Minh (Vietnam), <i>Colonization of Trial</i>
Ricardo Güiraldes (Argentina), <i>Don Segundo Sombra</i>
Martin Luis Guzmán (Mexico), <i>The Eagle and the Serpent</i>
Thomas Mofolo (South Africa), <i>Chaka</i> |
| 1927 | | André Gide, <i>Voyage to the Congo</i>
Taha Husain (Egypt), <i>The Days</i> (vol. II, 1939)
José Vasconcelos, <i>The Cosmic Race</i> |
| 1928 | Italy signs twenty-year treaty of friendship with Ethiopia | Édouard Glissant born

Mario de Andrade (Brazil), <i>Macunaima</i>
José Carlos Mariátegui, <i>Seven Essays towards an Interpretation of Peruvian Reality</i> |
| 1929 | Inter-Americas Treaty of Arbitration signed in Washington
Martin Luther King born (d. 1968) | Rómulo Gallegos (Venezuela), <i>Dona Barbara</i> |
| 1930 | | Chinua Achebe born 16 Nov.
Mao Tse-tung (China), 'A single spark can start a prairie fire'
Launch of Negritude movement in Paris by francophone intellectuals including
Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire and Léon Damas
Nicolás Guillén (Cuba), <i>Son Montifs</i>
Solomon T. Plaatje (South Africa), <i>Mhudi</i> |

- 1932 Indian Congress declared illegal; Gandhi arrested Evelyn Waugh, *Black Mischief*
Gregorio López y Fuentes (Mexico), *The Land*
Ahmad Shawqi (Egypt), *Diwan*
- 1933 US Congress votes independence for Philippines Mulk Raj Anand (India), *Untouchable*
Tewfiq al-Hakim (Egypt), *The People of the Cave*
Claude McKay (Jamaica), *Banana Bottom*
Mao Tun (China), *Midnight*
Gilberto Freyre, *The Master and the Slaves*
- 1934 Gandhi suspends civil disobedience campaign in India George Orwell, *Burmese*
Jorge Icaza (Ecuador), *Huasi-pungo*
Alfred Mendes (Trinidad), *Pitch Lake*
- 1935 Jorge Luis Borges (Argentina), *A Universal History of Infamy*
Edward Said born (d. 2003)
- 1936 Mao Tse-tung, *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War*
Jayaprakash Narayan (India), *Why Socialism*
Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*
Mani Bandopadhyay (India), *The History of Puppets*
C. L. R. James (Trinidad), *Minty Alley*
Lao She (China), *Camel Hsiang-tzu*
Premchand (India), *The Gift of a Cow*
- 1937 Karen Blixen (Denmark), *Out of Africa*
Hafiz Ibrahim (Egypt), *Diwan*
R. K. Narayan (India), *The Bachelor of Arts*
Siburapha (Thailand), *Behind the Painting*

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| <p>1938 US Supreme Court rules the University of Missouri Law School must admit black students because of lack of other facilities in the area
President Roosevelt recalls American ambassador to Germany; Germany recalls its ambassador to the US</p> | <p>C. L. R. James, <i>The Black Jacobins</i></p> |
| <p>1939 Start of World War II</p> | <p>James Joyce, <i>Finnegans Wake</i>
Margaret Atwood born</p> |
| <p>1940</p> | <p>Australian journal <i>Meanjin</i> established</p> |
| <p>1941</p> | <p>H. I. E. Dhlomo (South Africa), <i>Valley of a Thousand Hills</i>
Edgar Mittelholzer (Guyana), <i>Cortentyne Thunder</i>
Ibrahim Tuqan (Palestine), <i>Diwan</i></p> |
| <p>1942</p> | <p>Albert Camus, <i>The Outsider</i>
Jorge Amado, <i>The Violent Land</i></p> |
| <p>1943</p> | <p>Ishaw Musa al-Husaini (Palestine), <i>A Chicken's Memoirs</i></p> |
| <p>1944</p> | <p>José Maria Arguedas (Peru), <i>Everyone's Blood</i>
Ismat Chughtai (India), <i>The Quilt and Other Stories</i>
Jacques Roumain (Haiti), <i>Masters of the Dew</i>
Eric Williams, <i>Capitalism and Slavery</i></p> |
| <p>1945 End of World War II</p> | <p>Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Gabriela Mistral (7 April 1889 – 10 Jan. 1957)
Gopinath Mohanty (India), <i>Paraja</i></p> |
| <p>1946 Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana and Réunion become Overseas Departments of France</p> | <p>Jawaharlal Nehru (India), <i>The Discovery of India</i></p> |

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| | | Peter Abrahams (South Africa),
<i>Mine Boy</i> |
| | | Miguel Ángel Asturias
(Guatemala), <i>Mr President</i> |
| 1947 | India is proclaimed independent
and partitioned into India and
Pakistan | Salman Rushdie born 19 June
Jawaharlal Nehru delivers, 'Tryst
with Destiny' speech
Babani Bhattacharya (India), <i>So
Many Hungers!</i>
Birago Diop (Senegal), <i>Tales of
Amadou Koumba</i>
Suryakant Tripathi 'Nirala'
(India), <i>The Earthly Knowledge</i>
Badr Shakir al-Sayyab (Iraq),
<i>Withered Fingers</i> |
| 1948 | Gandhi assassinated
State of Israel comes into
existence
British Citizenship Act grants
British passports to all
Commonwealth citizens | Graham Greene, <i>The Heart of the
Matter</i>
Alan Paton (South Africa), <i>Cry,
the Beloved Country</i>
G. V. Desani (India), <i>All About
H. Hatterr</i>
Saadat Hasan Manto (Pakistan),
'Toba Tek Singh'
Ernesto Sabato (Argentina), <i>The
Tunnel</i>
Léopold Sédar Senghor (ed.),
<i>Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie
nègre et malgache de langue
française</i>
Jean-Paul Sartre, <i>Black Orpheus</i> |
| 1949 | Apartheid programme
established in South Africa
India adopts constitution as
federal republic
Holland transfers sovereignty to
Indonesia; France to Vietnam | Miguel Angel Asturias
(Guatemala), <i>Men of Maize</i>
Alejo Carpentier (Cuba), <i>The
Kindgom of This World</i>
Khalil Mutran (Lebanon), <i>Diwan</i>
V. S. Reid (Jamaica), <i>New Day</i>
Ma'ruf al-Rusafi (Iraq), <i>Diwan</i> |
| 1950 | | Pablo Neruda (Chile), <i>Canto
général</i>
Octavio Paz, <i>Labyrinth of Solitude</i>
Doris Lessing, <i>The Grass is Singing</i> |

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| | | Aimé Césaire, <i>Discours sur le colonialisme</i> |
| 1951 | | Nirad C. Chaudhuri (India), <i>The Autobiography of an Unknown India</i> |
| 1952 | Anti-British riots erupt in Egypt
Honolulu Conference of three-power Pacific Council
(Australia, US and New Zealand) | Samuel Beckett, <i>Waiting for Godot</i>
Frantz Fanon, <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i>
Ralph Ellison, <i>Invisible Man</i>
Ralph de Boissière (Trinidad), <i>Crown Jewel</i>
Andrée Chedid (Egypt), <i>From Sleep Unbound</i>
Mochtar Lubis (Indonesia), <i>A Road with No End</i>
Amos Tutuola (Nigeria), <i>The Palm-Wine Drinkard</i> |
| 1953 | London Conference of Commonwealth prime ministers | Fidel Castro (Cuba), 'History will absolve me'
Alejo Carpentier (Cuba), <i>The Lost Steps</i>
George Lamming (Barbados), <i>In the Castle of My Skin</i>
Camara Laye (Guinea), <i>The African Child</i>
Roger Mais (Jamaica), <i>The Hills Were All Joyful Together</i> |
| 1954 | Start of Algerian War of Independence (–1962) | Sahitya Akademi Award established
Samira 'Azzam (Palestine), <i>Little Things</i>
Martin Carter (Guyana), <i>Poems of Resistance</i>
Driss Chraïbi (Morocco), <i>The Simple Past</i>
Kamala Markandaya (India), <i>Nectar in a Sieve</i>
Nicanor Parra (Chile), <i>Poems and Antipoems</i>
Abd al-Rahman Shasrawi (Egypt), <i>The Earth</i> |

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| 1955 | Bandung Conference of non-aligned nations
Vietnam War starts; continues till fall of Saigon in 1975 | Amrita Pritam (India), <i>Messages</i>
Juan Rulfo (Mexico), <i>Pedro Paramo</i>
Saadi Youssef (Iraq), <i>Songs Not for Others</i> |
| 1956 | Sudan proclaimed independent democratic republic
Nasser becomes president of Egypt and seizes Suez Canal etc.
Fidel Castro lands in Cuba with intent to overthrow dictator Fulgencio Batista | Octave Mannoni, <i>Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization</i> , trans. Pamela Powesland
First international conference of black writers and artists (Paris)
George Padmore (Trinidad), <i>Pan Africanism or Communism?</i>
Carlos Bulosan (Philippines), <i>America is in the Heart</i>
Mongo Beti (Cameroon), <i>The Poor Christ of Bomba</i>
David Diop (Senegal), <i>Hammer Blows</i>
Faiz Ahmed Faiz (Pakistan), <i>Prison Thoughts</i>
João Guimarães Rosa (Brazil), <i>The Devil to Pay in the Backlands</i>
Naguib Mahfouz (Egypt), <i>Cairo Trilogy</i> (–1957)
Samuel Selvon (Trinidad), <i>The Lonely Londoners</i>
Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), <i>Ghana: Autobiography</i>
Octavio Paz (Mexico), <i>Sunstone</i>
Albert Memmi, <i>The Colonizer and the Colonized</i> |
| 1957 | Gold Coast gains independence, changing its name to Ghana | |
| 1958 | | Chinua Achebe, <i>Things Fall Apart</i>
Édouard Glissant (Martinique), <i>The Ripening</i>
N. V. M. Gonzalez (Philippines), <i>Bread of Salt</i>
Ludu U Hla (Burma), <i>The Caged Ones</i> |

- 1959 Qurratulain Hyder (India), *River of Fire*
Es'kia Mphahlele (South Africa), *Down Second Avenue*
- 1960 Belgian Congo granted full independence
Wilson Harris (Guyana), *Palace of the Peacock*
Ousmane Sembene (Senegal), *God's Bits of Wood*
George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile*
- 1961 UN General Assembly condemns apartheid
Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*
Rajat Neogy (Uganda) founds *Transition Magazine: An International Review*
Nnamdi Azikiwe (Nigeria), *Zik: Selected Speeches*
Ernesto 'Che' Guevara (Argentina/Cuba), *Guerrilla Warfare*
Adonis (Syria), *Songs of Muhyar the Damascene*
Cyprian Ekwensi (Nigeria), *Jagua Nana*
Attia Hosain (India), *Sunlight on a Broken Column*
Cheikh Hamidou Kane (Senegal), *Ambiguous Adventure*
V. S. Naipaul (Trinidad), *A House for Mr Biswas*
- 1962 Uganda and Tanganyika become independent
Alan Hill at Heinemann initiates its African Writers Series (AWS)
Mehdi Ben Barka (Algeria), 'Resolving the ambiguities of national sovereignty'
Kenneth Kaunda (Zambia), *Zambia Shall Be Free*
Patrice Lumumba (Congo), *Congo My Country*
Albert Luthuli (South Africa), *Let My People Go*

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| | Carlos Fuentes (Mexico), <i>The Death of Artemio Cruz</i> |
| | Alex La Guma (South Africa), <i>A Walk in the Night</i> |
| | Carlos Martinez Moreno (Uruguay), <i>The Wall</i> |
| | Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru), <i>The Time of the Hero</i> |
| 1963 | Kenya becomes independent republic within Commonwealth |
| | Julio Cortázar (Argentina), <i>Hopscotch</i> |
| | Ghassan Kanafani (Palestine), <i>Men in the Sun</i> |
| | Severo Sarduy (Cuba), <i>Gestures</i> |
| | C. L. R. James, <i>Beyond a Boundary</i> |
| | Govan Mbeki (South Africa), <i>South Africa: The Peasants Revolt</i> |
| | Forugh Farrokhzad (Iran), <i>Another Birth</i> |
| 1964 | Zanzibar declared a republic and unites with Tanganyika to form Tanzania |
| | Northern Rhodesia becomes independent republic of Zambia |
| | Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Martin Luther King (15 Jan. 1929 – 4 April 1968) |
| | First conference on Commonwealth Literature, University of Leeds |
| | <i>Journal of Commonwealth Literature</i> founded |
| 1965 | Gambia becomes independent replacing 1921 law based on nationality |
| | Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence, Britain imposes oil embargo on Rhodesia |
| | Paul Scott, <i>The Raj Quartet</i> (–1975) |
| | Nelson Mandela (South Africa), <i>No Easy Walk to Freedom</i> |
| | Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), <i>Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism</i> |
| | Michael Anthony (Trinidad), <i>The Year in San Fernando</i> |
| | Guillermo Cabrera Infante (Cuba), <i>Three Trapped Tigers</i> |
| | Kamala Das (India), <i>Summer in Calcutta</i> |
| | Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), <i>The Road</i> |

- 1966 Mrs Indira Gandhi, Nehru's granddaughter, becomes prime minister of India
British Guyana becomes the independent nation of Guyana
Barbados becomes independent
British Guiana becomes Guyana
- 1967 Paul Scott, *The Jewel in the Crown*
U. R. Ananthamurthy (India), *Funeral Rites*
Louise Bennett (Jamaica), *Jamaica Labrish*
Jose Lezama Lima (Cuba), *Paradiso*
Flora Nwapa (Nigeria), *Efurú*
Jean Rhys (Dominica) *Wide Sargasso Sea*
Marta Traba (Argentina/Colombia) *Rites of Summer*
Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru), *The Green House*
- Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Miguel Ángel Asturias (19 Oct. 1899 – 9 June 1974)
Oginga Odinga (Kenya), *Not Yet Uhuru*
Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia), *One Hundred Years of Solitude*
V. S. Naipaul (Trinidad), *The Mimic Men*
Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (Kenya), *A Grain of Wheat*
Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), *Idanre, and other Poems*
André Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*
Wilson Harris, *Tradition, the Writer and Society*
- 1968 Booker Prize for Literature established
British colony of Mauritius becomes independent state within Commonwealth
British government restricts immigration from India, Pakistan and the West Indies
Julius K. Nyerere (Tanzania), *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*
Ayi Kwei Armah (Ghana), *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*
Dennis Brutus (South Africa), *Letters to Martha*

- Ahmadou Kourouma (Ivory Coast), *The Suns of Independence*
Nizar Qabbani (Iraq),
‘Comments on the Notebook of Decadence’
Andrew Salkey (Jamaica), *The Late Emancipation of Jerry Stoker*
- 1969 Neustadt International Prize for Literature established
Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Samuel Beckett (13 April 1906 – 22 Dec. 1989)
Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique), *The Struggle for Mozambique*
Elena Poniatowska (Mexico), *Until We Meet Again*
Tayeb Salih (Sudan), *Season of Migration from the North*
Fadwa Tuqan (Palestine), *Horseman and the Night*
- 1970 Biafra capitulates to federal Nigerian government; end of civil war which began 2.5 years previously
Gambia proclaimed a republic within British Commonwealth
- ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature Research in African Literature* journal established
Sala ‘Abd al-Sabur (Egypt), *Journey at Night*
Ama Ata Aidoo (Ghana), *No Sweetness Here*
Merle Hodge (Trinidad), *Crack Monkey*
Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (Palestine), *The Ship*
- 1971 Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Pablo Neruda (Chile, 12 July 1904 – 23 Sept. 1973)

- V. S. Naipaul (Trinidad) wins
Booker Prize for *In a Free State*
Mahmoud Darwish (Palestine)
Lover From Palestine
Christopher Okigbo (Nigeria),
Labyrinths
Roberto Fernandez Retamar,
'Caliban'
- 1972 Bangladesh (E. Pakistan)
established as sovereign state
Britain imposes direct rule on
Northern Ireland
- Steve Biko (South Africa), *I Write
What I Like*
Dhoomil (India), *From the
Parliament to the Street*
Athol Fugard (South Africa),
Sizwe Banzi Is Dead
Manohar Malgonkar (India), *The
Devil's Wind*
Simone Schwarz-Bart
(Guadeloupe), *The Bridge of
Beyond*
Paulo Freire (Brazil), *Pedagogy of
the Oppressed*
Walter Rodney (Guyana), *How
Europe Underdeveloped Africa*
- 1973 Bahamas granted independence
after three centuries of
colonial rule
- Nobel Prize in Literature awarded
to Patrick White (Australia, 28
May 1912 – 30 Sept. 1990)
Amilcar Cabral (Guinea-Bissau),
Return of the Source
Mahsweta Devi (India), *Mother of
1084*
Eduardo Galeano, *The Open Veins
of Latin America*
- 1974
- Nadine Gordimer (South Africa)
wins Booker Prize for *The
Conservationist*
M. Gopalkirshna Adiga (India),
*Song of the Earth and Other
Poems*
Emile Habiby (Palestine), *The
Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-Fated
Pessoptimist*

- Bessie Head (South Africa/
Botswana), *A Question of Power*
Daniel Moyano (Argentina), *The
Devil's Trill*
Agostinho Neto (Angola), *Sacred
Hope*
Augusto Roa Bastos (Paraguay) *I
the Supreme*
José Luandino Vieira (Angola),
The Real Life of Domingos Xavier
Adónis, *The Fixed and the
Changing: A Study of Conformity
and Originality in Arab Culture*
- 1975 Bharati Mukherjee (India/US),
Wife
Indira Sant (India), *The Snake-skin
and Other Poems*
Antonio Skármeta (Chile), *I
Dreamt the Snow Was Burning*
- 1976 Spain relinquishes colonial
control of the Spanish
Sahara; Morocco and
Mauritania divide the
territory, ignoring the Sahara
nationalists' proclamation of
independence
Commonwealth Conference
reaches Lancaster House
agreement on future of
Rhodesia as the independent
state of Zimbabwe
Alex Haley, *Roots*
Callaloo journal established
Jaranta Mahapatra (India), *A Pain
of Rites*
Manuel Puig (Argentina), *The
Kiss of the Spider Woman*
Antonio Torres (Brazil), *The Land*
Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature
and the African World*
- 1977 Bessie Head (South Africa/
Botswana), *The Collector of
Treasures*
Elias Khoury (Lebanon), *Little
Mountain*
Clarice Lispector (Brazil), *The
Hour of the Star*

- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (Kenya),
Petals of Blood
- Sergio Ramirez (Nicaragua), *To Bury Our Fathers*
- Manuel Rui (Angola), *Yes Comrade!*
- Samir Amin *Imperialism and Unequal Development*
- 1978 Edward Said, *Orientalism*
- Noma Award for Publishing in Africa established
- Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Isaac Bashevis Singer (21 Nov. 1902 – 24 July 1991)
- Dambudzo Marechera (Zimbabwe), *The House of Hunger*
- O. V. Vijayan (India), *Short Stories*
- 1979 *Kunapipi* journal established
- Mariama Ba (Senegal), *So Long a Letter*
- Buchi Emecheta (Nigeria), *The Joys of Motherhood*
- Nuruddin Farah (Somalia), *Sweet and Sour Milk*
- Nadine Gordimer (South Africa), *Burger's Daughter*
- Roy Heath (Guyana), *The Armstrong Trilogy* (–1981)
- Earl Lovelace (Trinidad), *The Dragon Can't Dance*
- Lu Wenfu (China), *The Gourmet*
- Pramoedya Ananta Toer (Indonesia), *Buru Quartet* (–1988)
- 1980 President Carter restricts grain sales to USSR in protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan
- J. M. Coetzee (South Africa), *Waiting for the Barbarians*
- Anita Desai (India), *Clear Light of Day*

- Indira Gandhi voted back into power
Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia, gains independence
- 1981
- Salman Rushdie wins Booker Prize for *Midnight's Children*
Ariel Dorfman (Chile), *Widows*
Mongane Wally Serote (South Africa), *To Every Birth Its Blood*
Aminata Sow Fall (Senegal), *The Beggar's Strike*
Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*
Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*
Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*
- 1982
- Canada's Constitution Act comes into force, severing the nation's last legal ties to the UK
South Africa adopts a new constitution giving limited political rights to 'Coloured' and 'Asian' but not 'Black' South Africans
- Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia, b. 6 March 1927)
Thomas Keneally (Australia) wins Booker Prize for *Schindler's Ark*
Inaugural issue of the series *Subaltern Studies*, ed. Ranajit Guha
Isabel Allende (Chile), *The House of the Spirits*
Reinaldo Arenas (Cuba), *Farewell to the Sea*
Edward Kamau Brathwaite (Barbados) *The Arrivants*
- 1983
- J. M. Coetzee (South Africa) wins Booker Prize for *Life and Times of Michael K*

- Jamaica Kincaid (Antigua), *Annie John*
Njabulo Ndebele (South Africa), *Fools and Other Stories*
Grace Nichols (Guyana), *i is a long-memoried woman*
Sony Labou Tansi (Zaire), *The Antipeople*
Luisa Valenzuela (Argentina), *The Lizard's Tail*
Nirmal Verma (India), *The Crows of Deliverance*
Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other*
Abdelkébir Khatibi, *Maghreb plural*
- 1984
- Wasafiri* journal established
Rigoberta Menchú (Guatemala), *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*
Miguel Bonasso (Argentina), *Memory of Death*
Maryse Condé (Guadeloupe), *Segu*
Abdelrahman Munif (Saudi Arabia), *City of Salt*
Cristina Peri Rossi (Uruguay), *The Ship of Fools*
Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *History of the Voice*
- 1985
- Keri Hulme (New Zealand) wins Booker Prize for *The Bone People*
Tahar Ben Jelloun (Morocco), *The Sand Child*
Assia Djebar (Algeria) *Fantasia, An Algerian Cavalcade*
Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia), *Love in the Time of Cholera*
Nayantara Sahgal (India), *Rich Like Us*
Ken Saro-Wiwa (Nigeria), *Sozaboy*

- 1986 Haitian President Jean-Claude Duvalier flees to France after nationwide demonstrations against his rule
- Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Wole Soyinka (Nigeria, b. 13 July 1934)
- Nuruddin Farah (Somalia), *Maps*
- Waleed Khazindar (Palestine), *Present Verbs*
- Hanif Kureishi (UK), *My Beautiful Laundrette*
- Álvaro Mutis (Colombia), *The Snow of the Admiral*
- Caryl Phillips (St Kitts), *A State of Independence*
- Anton Shammas (Israel), *Arbasques*
- Derek Walcott (St Lucia), *Collected Poems*
- Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*
- Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797*
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*
- Frederic Jameson, ‘Third World literature in the era of multinational capitalism’
- 1987 Portugal and China agree on the return to China in 1999 of Macao, a Portuguese colony since the sixteenth century
- Commonwealth Writers’ Prize established
- Agha Shahid Ali (India), *The Half-Inch Himalayas*
- Jesus Diaz (Cuba), *The Initials of the Land*
- Daniel Maximin (Guadeloupe), *Soufrières*
- Horacio Vazquez Rial (Argentina), *Triste’s History*
- Shrikant Verma (India), *Magadh*
- Benita Parry, ‘Problems in current theories of colonial discourse’

1988

Nobel Prize in Literature
awarded to Naguib Mahfouz
(Egypt, 11 Dec. 1911 – 30 Aug.
2006)

Peter Carey (Australia) wins
Booker Prize for *Oscar and
Lucinda*

Upamayu Chatterjee (India),
English, August

Amit Chaudhuri (India),
Afternoon Raag

Michelle Cliff (Jamaica/US), *No
Telephone to Heaven*

Tsitsi Dangarembga (Zimbabwe),
Nervous Conditions

Amitav Ghosh (India), *The
Shadow Lines*

Suong Thu Huong (Vietnam),
Paradise of the Blind

Chenjerai Hove (Zimbabwe),
Bones

Tomás Eloy Martínez
(Argentina), *The Peron Novel*
Salman Rushdie (India), *Satanic
Verses*

Bapsi Sidhwa (Pakistan), *Cracking
India*

Héctor Tizón (Argentina), *The
Man Who Came to a Village*

Chandra Talpade Mohanty,
‘Under Western eyes: feminist
scholarship and colonial
discourse’

V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of
Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and
the Order of Knowledge*

1989 Khomeini announces Fatwa on
Salman Rushdie after release
of *Satanic Verses*
Pakistan rejoins Commonwealth
after leaving in 1972

Kazuo Ishiguro (Japan/UK) wins
Booker Prize for *The Remains of
the Day*

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths
and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire
Writes Back*

- Nissim Ezekiel (India), *Collected Poems*
 Ngũgĩ Ka Thiong'o (Kenya), *Matigari*
 M. G. Vassanji (Kenya/Canada), *The Gunny Sack*
 Jean Bernabé, Patrick Camouiseau and Raphael Confiante, *In Praise of Creoleness*
- 1990 Nambia becomes independent state
 Nelson Mandela (South Africa) is released from jail after twenty-seven years as a political prisoner
 Jean-Bertrand Aristide becomes first democratically elected president of Haiti
 First Gulf War, 2 Aug. – 28 Feb. 1991
 German reunification, 3 Oct.
- Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Octavio Paz (Mexico, 31 March 1941 – 19 April 1998)
 Gayatri Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic*
 Robert Young, *White Mythologies*
- Mia Couto (Mozambique), *Every Man Is a Race*
 Abd al-Wahhab Bayati (Iraq) *Love Death and Exile*
 Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson and Edward Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*
- 1991 End of twenty-year Ethiopian civil war
 Start of Somali civil war
- Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Nadine Gordimer (South Africa, b. 20 Nov. 1923)
 Ben Okri (Nigeria) wins Booker Prize for *The Famished Road*
 Khalil Hawi (Lebanon), *From the Vineyards of Lebanon*
 Timothy Mo (UK), *The Redundancy of Courage*
 Derek Walcott (St Lucia), *Omeros*
 Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991*
- 1992 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Rigoberta Menchú Tum (Guatemala, b. 9 Jan. 1959)

- Nobel Prize in Literature
awarded to Derek Walcott
(St Lucia, b. 23 Jan. 1930)
Michael Ondaatje (Canada) wins
Booker Prize for *The English Patient*
Ambai (C. S. Lakshmi) (India),
The Purple Sea
Patrick Chamoiseau
(Martinique), *Texaco*
Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Class, Nations, Literatures*
Marie Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*
Arturo Uslar Pietri, *The Creation of the New World*
Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture*
- 1993 Israel and the PLO sign peace accord
- Toni Morrison (USA), Nobel Prize in Literature (b. 18 Feb. 1931)
Roddy Doyle (Ireland) Booker Prize for *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*
Salman Rushdie (India) wins Booker of Bookers for *Midnight's Children*
Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*
Amin Maalouf (Lebanon), *The Rock of Tanios*
Vikram Seth (India), *A Suitable Boy*
Ivan Vladislavic (South Africa), *The Folly*
- 1994 The Rwandan Genocide (6 April–mid July)
Start of the Zapatista indigenous movement in Mexico
South Africa holds first post-apartheid elections, returning the African National Congress (ANC) to power
- Muhammad al-Maghut (Syria), *Joy Is Not My Profession*
Shyam Selvadurai (Sri Lanka/Canada), *Funny Boy*

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| 1995 | <p>Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Seamus Heaney (Ireland, b. 13 April 1939)</p> <p>Subcommandante Marcos (Mexico), <i>Shadows of Tender Fury</i></p> <p>A. K. Ramanujan, <i>Collected Poems</i></p> <p>Keki Daruwalla (India), <i>A Summer of Tigers</i></p> <p>Declan Kiberd, <i>Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation</i></p> |
| 1996 | <p>The Taliban seize control of Kabul, Afghanistan</p> <p>Rohinton Mistry (India/Canada), <i>A Fine Balance</i></p> <p>Nizar Qabbani (Syria), <i>On Entering the Sea</i></p> |
| 1997 | <p>Zaire renamed Democratic Republic of Congo after the overthrow of long-time dictator Mobuto Sese Seko</p> <p>Britain hands sovereignty of Hong Kong back to China</p> <p>Arundhati Roy (India) wins Booker Prize for <i>The God of Small Things</i></p> <p><i>Jouvert: Journal of Postcolonial Studies</i> (1997–2003)</p> <p>Vikram Chandra (India), <i>Love and Longing in Bombay</i></p> <p>A. Sivanandan (Sri Lanka), <i>When Memory Dies</i></p> |
| 1998 | <p>Peace Agreement signed for Northern Ireland</p> <p>Homi K. Bhabha, <i>The Location of Culture</i></p> |
| 1999 | <p>J. M. Coetzee (South Africa) wins Booker Prize for <i>Disgrace</i></p> |
| 2000 | <p>Margaret Atwood (Canada) wins Booker Prize for <i>The Blind Assassin</i></p> <p>Caine Prize for African Writing (short story) established</p> <p>Naiyer Masud (India), <i>Essence of Camphor</i></p> <p>Zadie Smith (UK), <i>White Teeth</i></p> |
| 2001 | <p>Terrorist attacks on US soil on 11 Sept. spark subsequent era of war on terror</p> <p>Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to V. S. Naipaul (Trinidad, b. 17 Aug. 1932)</p> |

	Peter Carey (Australia) wins Booker Prize for <i>True History of the Kelly Gang</i>
2002	Yann Martel (Canada) wins Booker Prize for <i>Life of Pi</i>
2003	US invasion of Iraq Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to J. M. Coetzee (South Africa, b. 9 Feb. 1940)
2004	<i>Postcolonial Text</i> established
2005	John Banville (Ireland) wins Booker Prize for <i>The Sea</i> Man Booker International Prize established
2006	Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Orhan Pamuk (Turkey, b. 7 June 1952) Kiran Desai (India) wins Booker Prize for <i>The Inheritance of Loss</i>
2007	Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Doris Lessing (Zimbabwe/ UK, b. 22 Oct. 1919) Anne Enright (Ireland) wins Booker Prize for <i>The Gathering</i> Chinua Achebe (Nigeria) wins Man Booker International Prize
2008	Aravind Adiga (India) wins Booker Prize for <i>The White Tiger</i>
2009	Alice Munro (Canada) wins Man Booker International Prize Penguin African Writing Prize launched

Introduction: postcolonial literature in a changing historical frame

ATO QUAYSON

When in 1961 Alan McLeod expressed his confidence that the new Commonwealth writing would be ‘the particular interest of English scholars in the next fifty years’, he was expressing a view shared by only a handful of people, among them Norman Jeffares at Leeds University and Bruce Sutherland at Pennsylvania State College (later University) where, with their respective colleagues, they set up the first courses in Commonwealth literature on either side of the Atlantic (Bahri and Raja, *The Cambridge History*). Even though McLeod’s sentiment has been more than confirmed in the decades since his introduction to *The Commonwealth Pen*, there is much that has changed in the field of the then Commonwealth literature, not least of which has been the shift of nomenclature from that to the now more widely used postcolonial literature.¹ Yet to view the undoubted ascendancy of postcolonial literature as merely the evolutionary consolidation of an ecumenical literary sensibility that dates from the era of the attainment of independence of formerly colonized countries is to ignore the fact that many of the tendencies and concerns central to the field today can be traced back to at least the mid nineteenth century, if not much earlier. With the consolidation of the field of postcolonial literary studies in the past forty years and its continuing interdisciplinary intersections with other interests, the need to establish the terms by which we might understand the sources of postcolonial literary history is more urgent now than ever before.

Thus we might note, for example, Hartley Dewart’s introduction to *Selections from Canadian Poets* in 1864 and George Stewart’s brief discussion in 1870 of Canadian literature in his *Literary Quarterly Magazine*.² Despite writing in the context of Canada, Dewart’s opening words to *Selections from Canadian Poets* had a peculiar resonance for many parts of the colonial world:

Only the illiterate and unreflecting adopt the sentiment, that, because more books have been already produced than can possibly be read in the compass of the longest life, to increase the number of books or the quantity of literature, is undesirable and unnecessary. The literature of the world is the foot-prints of human progress, and unless all progress should cease, and mental paralysis arrest all human activity, these way-marks shall continue to be erected along the pathway of the vanishing years. Whatever is discovered as new in the records of creation, in the capacities and relations of things, in the history of the mind's operations, or in the forms of thought and imagery by which in its higher moods soul speaks to soul, will always demand some suitable embodiment in literature.³

Both Stewart and Dewart take account of the emergence on the literary scene for the first time of poems, stories and novels written and often published not in metropolitan England but in the colony itself. As various commentators posed questions about the literary value and national significance of such new forms of writing, the directions of later postcolonial enquiries began to take shape (Siemerling, *The Cambridge History*). And it was not only in Canada that such discussion took place. Srinivasa Iyengar introduced the term 'Indo-Anglian literature' to account for the literary texts on the subcontinent that drew upon the dual traditions of Britain and India, whose roots lay in colonial contact and cohabitation from the early eighteenth century, and that were in their turn to feed into postcolonial writing in India (Kabir, *The Cambridge History*).⁴ By 1955 Aimé Césaire was to outline the earliest form of colonial discourse analysis in his monumental *Discours sur le colonialisme*. He was followed in rapid succession by Albert Memmi and Frantz Fanon in setting out a mode of analysis that was literary and poetic as well as refracting revolutionary, political and cultural ideals.⁵ From the Caribbean we might also note the works of C. L. R. James, George Lamming and V. S. Naipaul, each of whom raised key questions about nation and narration, the struggle between universalism and localism in the literature of the newly independent nations, and the fraught intersections of the aesthetic, the ethical and the political dimensions of these new forms of writing.⁶ With the exception of Fanon, these thinkers were also well-known writers and in their literary works explored the ideas they gave voice to in their more critical-theoretical offerings (Savory, Murdoch, *The Cambridge History*). Even with Fanon, it may be argued that he wrote in such a highly charged poeticized idiom that works such as *Black Skin, White Masks* should be productively read under the rubric of literature (Prabhu, *The Cambridge History*).⁷ If we add to these early strands of debate the material provided for postcolonial literary studies in slave narratives, travel writing, auto/biographies, missionary journals, photography, in the long tradition of

Asian and Black writing in Europe that dates from as early as the 1700s, and the resource matrices of orality and indigenous languages, we find that the field of Postcolonial Literature is fed by many discursive histories (Carpio, Griffiths, Holden, Mudimbe-Boyi, Esonwanne, Prasad, *The Cambridge History*).⁸

Postcolonial literature has also had a growing presence in the popular imagination outside the academy. Theatres on both sides of the Atlantic have seen musical renditions of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (directed by Tim Supple, 2003) and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (adapted by Biyi Bandele-Thomas, 1997). Rushdie's novel is being adapted for the big screen and will be directed by the renowned Indian filmmaker Deepa Mehta.⁹ There has also been an international audience for the politically oriented plays of Ariel Dorfman and Athol Fugard since the 1970s; Anthony Minghella's Oscar-winning film of Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* and various postcolonial interpretations of Shakespeare and of Greek tragedies place postcolonial literary ideas on popular screen and classical stage alike.¹⁰ These, along with a string of Nobel, Man Booker, Commonwealth, Neustadt and Pulitzer prizes to writers as varied as Octavio Paz, Pablo Neruda, Gabriel García Márquez, Naguib Mahfouz, J.M. Coetzee, Arundhati Roy, Kamau Brathwaite, Keri Hulme, Peter Carey, Jhumpa Lahiri, Ben Okri, Nadine Gordimer, V.S. Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Wole Soyinka, Doris Lessing, Derek Walcott and others have ensured that what is normally studied under the institutional rubric of postcolonial literature has had a wide and growing readership well beyond the academy. Within the academy itself the study of postcolonial literature is marked by the publication of numerous monographs and books on the area, with publishers as diverse as Routledge, Blackwell, Rodopi and the university presses of SUNY, Minnesota, California, Manchester, Oxford, Duke, Indiana and Columbia producing a steady stream of postcolonial titles. The area is now part of the curriculum of all major universities not just in the UK, the US, Germany and France, but also growing in popularity in Italy, Spain and even in Japan and South Korea. In 2005 literary scholars from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Iceland formed a Nordic Network for Postcolonial Studies with generous government funding for conferences, seminars, and other forums of discussion. Apart from this there are now major scholarly journals such as *Wasafiri*, *Kunapipi*, *Interventions*, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *Callaloo*, the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* (formerly *World Literature Written in English*) and *ARIEL* (*A Review of International English Literature*) that are exclusively devoted to the discussion of postcolonial literature and literary theory (Raja and Bahri, *The Cambridge History*). This is not to speak of the many articles on postcolonial literature and the special issues on postcolonial topics to be found in the most important journals in the

humanities and social sciences. To highlight just one example from a non-literary field, by the end of the twentieth century *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* ran regular essays on postcolonial topics. The late 1990s saw articles in the journal by Barnett, Schech and Haggis, and Best that liberally referenced the work of writers such as South African J. M. Coetzee and Australian Christopher Koch, as well as postcolonial critics Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Arjun Appadurai, among various others.¹¹ This trend continues with several journals that do not originally address a literary constituency.

This somewhat celebratory list of institutions, writers, publishers, journals and popular productions must not obscure the controversies that have also made themselves evident periodically in postcolonial literary studies. In a 1982 *New York Review of Books* piece, the astute and otherwise flawless Helen Vendler criticized what she termed the ‘ventriloquism’ of Derek Walcott, future Nobel Prize laureate, whom she found ‘peculiarly at the mercy of influence’.¹² The issue is not so much whether Vendler’s criteria of evaluation were accurate or not, as that Walcott presented a difficult case for anyone intent on unearthing the authenticity of his poetic voice. Is Walcott best understood via a model derived from T. S. Eliot’s ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, in which the contribution of a writer fits into the temple of established literary monuments by means of their subtle reconfiguration of the already established aesthetic standards? Or is he best assessed through the model of the agonistic or even adversarial ‘writing back’ that Bill Ashcroft and his colleagues made famous in *The Empire Writes Back* in 1989?¹³ And if that is the case, what is the usefulness of cognate terms such as adaptation, appropriation and intertextuality? (Mukherjee, Dovey, *The Cambridge History*). How do we account for the fluid and ongoing relationship between orality, popular culture and the more highbrow postcolonial literature of Africa, India, and Latin America that has been the assumed and thus far unchallenged focus of pedagogical interest in schools and universities everywhere? (Esonwanne, Newell, Gupta, *The Cambridge History*). Add to all these Amitav Ghosh’s voluble dismissal of the label ‘postcolonial’ writer, and the field shows itself to have as much controversy as it has points for celebration.¹⁴ It is impossible to think coherently and creatively, much less with any sense of authority, about these and other questions without a proper literary historical context in which to read and study postcolonial literature.

What, when and how is the postcolonial?

Though it is now conventional to ascribe the birth of the field of postcolonial studies to the publication of Edward Said’s landmark *Orientalism* in 1978, with

further insights being extrapolated from Ashcroft *et al.*'s already mentioned and now classic *The Empire Writes Back*, the prehistory of the term 'postcolonial' itself proves slightly more colourful than generally supposed.¹⁵ The earliest instance of the word, used in a largely temporal sense and with a hyphen, appeared in academic writing in a 1910 essay by T. W. Allen in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* with reference to some minor poets of the pre-Homeric era. In various scattered instances up to 1950 it was used in historical journals mainly with reference to early American and Latin American republics. The term's first unhyphenated application was in language studies and appears to have been in a 1952 issue of the journal *American Speech*. That essay, by A. R. Dunlap and E. J. Moyne, dwelt on traces of the Finnish language along the Delaware River. Its first use in literary studies, again unhyphenated, appeared in 1958 in the journal *Comparative Literature* in an article by Justus M. Van der Kroef on the colonial novel in Indonesia translated from Dutch.¹⁶ By the 1960s and 1970s the term had shifted to the field of African and Pacific area studies where the two variant uses (hyphenated and unhyphenated) were deployed interchangeably. The term entered the comprehensive MLA Bibliography in 1967, with the *PMLA*'s list of Forthcoming Meetings and Conferences in 1981 publicizing the South Pacific Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies held at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand under the topic 'Nationalism, Regionalism, and Internationalism in Postcolonial Literature'; it appeared in *PMLA* articles only in 1990. Apart from the 1990 *PMLA* pieces – an introduction to the special issue on African and African American Literature by Henry Louis Gates Jr and an essay by Debra A. Castillo on Coetzee's *Dusklands* respectively¹⁷ – in each of the early published usages of the term it was deployed as a temporal marker to indicate the period after colonialism, whether this was in colonial antiquity with reference to the pre-Homeric era, or with respect to the cultural realities of post-independence America, or in relation to the end of empire in the mid twentieth century. After *The Empire Writes Back*, and vastly expanding the significance of the *PMLA* pieces by Gates and Castillo, the 1990s saw a decisive shift of usage from the merely temporal to the more discursive and theoretical, with Robert Young, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Aijaz Ahmad, Bart Moore-Gilbert, Ania Loomba, Elleke Boehmer, Ato Quayson and Achille Mbembe among others providing key parameters for debating the field.¹⁸ Williams and Chrisman's *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* was the first to gather diverse essays that collectively provided a genealogy of orientations in the field, with Ashcroft *et al.*'s *Post-Colonial Studies Reader* following a similar format and rapidly becoming a standard text.¹⁹ Even though none of the early anthologies had a specifically literary historical bent, texts like them now abound in the

field and provide a plethora of viewpoints for students and scholars. Despite the 1990s marking the expansion and consolidation of the field, it is nevertheless 1983 that we must take as the totemic date for the use of the term in an exclusively non-temporal sense in public academic debate, with the MLA panel chaired by Gayatri Spivak, then of the University of Texas at Austin, entitled *Colonialist and Postcolonialist Discourse* being the landmark event. Her co-panellists were Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, then at the University of Sussex, and William Pietz, who has since left academia to work in green politics and neurocognitive training.²⁰ Spivak, Said and Bhabha have long been hailed as providing the most significant early theoretical ideas for the field of postcolonial studies, so that the 1983 panel, coming half-way as it did between the publications of the late 1970s and what was to later become a veritable flood from the 1990s, acquires special significance in this regard.

When we outline the meanings of the term through current usage rather than from the etymology of first appearance, the unhyphenated version is taken to denote the field as an area of recognizable interests, debates and controversies. Understood not as limited to the implicit temporal marking of the ‘post-’, but as the sign of a critical orientation towards colonialism and its legacies, postcolonial literature then designates the representation of experiences of various kinds including those of slavery, migration, oppression and resistance, difference, race, gender, space and place, and the responses to the discourses of imperial Europe. It is conventionally assumed that postcolonial literature is as much a reflection on conditions under imperialism and colonialism proper as about conditions coming after the historical end of empires.

European expansion and the colonial world

Despite the designation of postcolonialism as a field of discursive practices as opposed to the temporal supersession of colonialism, the collective attempt to outline a literary history of postcolonial writing foregrounds certain conceptual and methodological difficulties for the elaboration of such a history. The *time* and *inception* of the colonial and how they are understood as processes as opposed to singular ruptures is decisive for both determining the literary writing that is taken to fall under the rubric of postcolonialism and the criticism that sees itself as doing justice to such writing. The process of imperial and colonial expansion from Europe proceeded in two main phases, both of which overlapped and were tied to the formation of the global political economy. The first expansion of modernity (1492–1650) was set in motion primarily by the Spanish and Portuguese crowns in the long sixteenth century, while the second

modernity (1650–1945) saw a decisive shift away from the multiple repercussions of Iberian ambition towards the interests of England, France, the Netherlands and Germany. Each historical phase of modernity also generated its own internal and external imaginative borders, such that whereas in the first modernity the expansion of Spain into the Americas coincided with the expulsion of Arabs and Jews from Spanish lands in the name of ‘blood purity’, a concomitant assumption of the heathen status of the natives the Spaniards encountered in what later became Latin America was also maintained. The second modernity, on the other hand, saw the progressive construction of the uncivilized Other (Chinese, African, Caribbean, Southeast Asian) that needed to be reformed through the light of reason and colonial governmentality.²¹ The imaginative connection between the two modernities of expansion is provided in the relentless stream of letters, reports, chronicles and travel narratives by Europeans from the earliest period of contact which typified the non-Europeans they encountered as pagan and strange (Griffiths, *The Cambridge History*).²² An example of these was to be wryly noted by Gabriel García Márquez in his 1982 Nobel acceptance speech:

Antonio Pigafetta, a Florentine navigator who went with Magellan on the first voyage around the world, wrote, upon his passage through our southern lands of America, a strictly accurate account that nonetheless resembles a venture into fantasy. In it he recorded that he had seen hogs with navels on their haunches, clawless birds whose hens laid eggs on the backs of their mates, and others still, resembling tongueless pelicans, with beaks like spoons. He wrote of having seen a misbegotten creature with the head and ears of a mule, a camel’s body, the legs of a deer and the whinny of a horse. He described how the first native encountered in Patagonia was confronted with a mirror, whereupon that impassioned giant lost his senses to the terror of his own image.²³

The deadpan inflection of the ‘strictly accurate’ in Márquez’s account coupled with his nonchalant listing of what are evidently fantastical elements from Pigafetta’s journal are stylistic devices that will by now be familiar to vast numbers of readers of his novels all over the world.

As Edward Said and others were to show, what started out as chronicles, histories and travel narratives was by the eighteenth century to be transformed into Orientalism proper, possessing an internal logic and ultimately tied to issues of colonial governmentality. But the two periods are also connected through the complex forms of resistance *and* complicity that proliferated everywhere Europeans found themselves. Despite the significance of the early fifteenth-century intercultural encounters to the forms of postcolonialism some literary writers were to represent, it is the inception of the second

modernity, with the elaboration of variant mechanisms for the governance of different peoples under the impress of empire, that currently provides the bulk of interest for postcolonial studies. Complicated factors affected the acquisition of territories, dependencies and protectorates throughout the period of formal colonial expansion, consolidation, and demise from the mid seventeenth century to the 1960s, when the bulk of colonized countries gained their independence. Several interrelated themes animate this period.²⁴

As Patke adroitly shows in his chapter on 'Postcolonial literature in Southeast Asia', the pattern of trade-offs among European countries was central to the demographic and political constitution of that region; yet the pattern can be shown to have been endemic to the constitution of empire and colonialism in general. The British, in strong rivalry with the Dutch, established the Straits of Settlement (Penang, Singapore and Malacca) between 1786 and 1824, while also gaining increasing control over the princely states of Malaya between 1874 and 1914. The Opium Wars with China ended with the Treaty of Nanjing that effectively ceded Hong Kong to Britain. On the other hand, whereas 1783 saw Britain formally recognize the impossibility of holding on to the thirteen colonies that came to form the nucleus of the United States of America, the contours of empire were already being redrawn in that part of the world some twenty years earlier at the close of the Seven Years' War (1756–63) that concluded in the Treaties of Paris and Hubertusburg. With these treaties Britain acquired Quebec, Nova Scotia, Cape Breton and India from France, with Florida also being ceded to them by Spain. In the Caribbean, Britain took control of Dominica, Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Tobago. Perhaps more significantly, the loss of the thirteen colonies of the eastern coast of the United States made them unavailable for convict deportation. This recognition ultimately led to the establishment of a penal colony in Australia's Botany Bay in 1788.

Significantly, the period from the seventeenth century was to be characterized by vast movements of populations from Europe to different parts of the world. The instigations for these movements were many, and included dire demographic transitions in Europe, acute living and social conditions due to the population explosion, and last but not least, the rabid religious persecutions and zeal for renewal that marked the Reformation and Counter-Reformation of the seventeenth century in particular. The plagues that afflicted London at various times during the 1600s (1603, 1625 and finally 1664–6) were estimated to have killed at least 100,000 people, with the Great Fire of 1666 gutting a large section of central London. The plagues and natural disasters exacerbated the religious persecutions that raged in the period, and in combination they led to a stream of migrations to the Americas and other parts of the world. While

merchants and other adventurers had been encouraging people to relocate to the Americas to settle new lands as early as the 1530s, by the 1650s the trend had shifted to embrace ordinary people desperate to escape the vagaries of Europe. As A. N. Porter points out, 'as many as 400,000 people may have crossed the Atlantic from the British Isles during the seventeenth century, half of them between 1630 and 1660. In these decades of religious and political upheaval, harvests were poor and wages low; there was much unemployment and underemployment.'²⁵

Sometimes such dispersals also became handy instruments of demographic control, especially with regard to race, poverty, and crime. Thus whereas West Africa had long been considered unsuitable for a penal colony in favour of Australia, a settlement was still established in Sierra Leone for London's 'black poor' from 1786 to 1791; these were subsequently joined by black settlers from Nova Scotia. The term Nova Scotians at the time did not refer to persons originally from what is now a Canadian province; rather, a large majority of those that migrated to what was subsequently to become a West African colony in 1808 were ex-slaves from Virginia and South Carolina, who had moved as Black Loyalists to British Nova Scotia in 1783, before leaving again in 1787 and then in 1792 because of broken promises of free land.²⁶ The resolution of issues of poverty in Britain through the movement of segments of its own population was not limited exclusively to the plight of the black poor. As early as 1618 a hundred 'vagrant' children in London were rounded up and transported to the colony of Virginia. The policy of enforced child migration continued piecemeal throughout the colonial period, with orphaned children being sent off to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa and the Swan River Colony in Australia in 1832 and New Brunswick and Toronto in Canada in 1833. An estimated 150,000 poor children were transferred in this way until the outbreak of World War II, with at least 80,000 of these being sent to Canada alone. Many of the children ended up in dastardly slave-like conditions of labour servitude.²⁷ The child exploitation that William Blake was to rail against in his *Songs of Innocence and Experience* in the 1790s clearly had its counterparts in the situation of the many children that were scattered across empire. It is a profound irony that despite the moral panic often expressed in many parts of Europe and North America today at the prospect of immigrants and asylum seekers on their borders, the period of extensive migrations from Europe itself in the seventeenth century and after was marked by the same forces that have underpinned the desperate movement of populations from the global South to the global North from the latter part of the twentieth: spasmodic nation states, famine and natural disasters, inter-ethnic conflicts and

religious persecutions. These later population movements, as we shall come to see presently, have also left their imprint on postcolonial writing.

Another underlying factor to imperial expansion and colonial administration comes from the conditions that were generated for the sometimes voluntary and often forced movement of colonized peoples across states and regions all over the world. This overlapped with the European dispersals we have noted yet bore implications for the postcolonial world that were ultimately quite different from those earlier population movements. Examples can be multiplied several-fold that might serve to illustrate the effects of demographic criss-crossings and the intersections, controversies and hybrid identities that were produced by these colonial population movements. North and West African *tirailleur* (light infantry) regiments were to fight alongside the French in their various campaigns from as early as the Napoleonic period, with many of them progressively ending up in Paris and its suburbs to impact upon the racial character of France itself well before the wave of migrants from its former colonies were to arrive from World War II onwards. The *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* conscription supplied an estimated 170,000 troops for France in World War I alone, with many of them fighting and dying in Europe.²⁸ On the other hand, in East Africa the British indentured labour policy that operated from the 1880s until the 1920s was to have a major impact on the demographic constitution of the region. The indentured labour policy was itself designed as a response to the abolition of slavery in 1833 to take account of the needs of plantation owners who now felt their plantations were under threat of collapse due to the loss of slave labour. When the policy was extended to East Africa it was mainly to provide non-African labour for building the East African railway. Of the roughly 32,000 Indian men brought in, roughly 6,700 stayed behind to work in the commercial and business sectors. After the official termination of the indentured labour flows colonial policy encouraged family reunion along with more voluntary migration from South Asia. By the end of World War II the Indians in East Africa were an estimated 360,000, with many of them firmly in control of the commercial trade in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. After the independence of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania in the 1960s the Indians had not only become a central part of the civil service administration but also considered themselves African.²⁹ The ill-advised policy of Africanization in the region and the racially based economic policies aimed at wealth redistribution were later to lead to the migration of this population to other parts of the world, with the ascension to power of Idi Amin, the Ugandan dictator, in 1971 entrenching their violent diasporization. The conditions in East Africa speak to hybridity as much as to nationalist aspirations, which both impact upon the

ways in which we might think of the literary history of the region. Postcolonial writers that have come to write specifically about the long presence of Indians in East Africa include Shiva Naipaul, V. S. Naipaul (his brother and 2006 Nobel Prize laureate), M. G. Vassanji and Yusuf Dawood, among others. In thinking about a postcolonial literary history, it is no longer adequate to stipulate that sub-Saharan Africa is a space in which orality and literacy are the only elements that struggle for literary ascendancy. Rather, as Uzoma Esonwanne (*The Cambridge History*) shows, the very nature of our key terms has to take cognizance of the foundational nature of the mixings that have taken place everywhere on the continent.

The final animating thematic to empire and colonialism follows from the previous themes of dispersal yet takes us in a different direction. The many varied demographic and hybrid criss-crossings that took place in the period of colonial expansion also served to speak back to the colonial metropolitan centres and ultimately to affect social relations there. While several scholars have persuasively shown that ships were the travelling crucibles and microcosms of transnational multicultural societies, composed as they were of seamen from across the colonial world, it is the port towns in various parts of imperial metropolitan Europe that were to carry the permanent signs of these decisive mixings.³⁰ In the seaports of Bristol, Liverpool and Cardiff for example, a real multicultural and transnational identity was shaped by being recursively constituted through the dynamic impact that African, Asian and Arab seamen had on the social relations of the port communities of which they were a permanent feature by the start of World War I.

The Liverpool black community is particularly interesting in this regard. Genealogically varied, this community dates from the middle of the eighteenth century. After the abolition of slavery, and beginning in the 1870s, shipping firms were to hire Africans in large numbers, particularly from the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, the Gambia, Liberia and Nigeria. Shippers in Liverpool also hired Afro-Caribbeans and Lascars (demobilized Indian soldiers), Chinese, Arab and Somali seamen.³¹ By the beginning of the twentieth century Liverpool had come to dominate the British trade with West Africa and indeed much of the colonial world. Estimates are that up to a third of the labour force on British ships from 1901 to the 1950s, or roughly 66,000 men, were from West Africa, East Africa, the Caribbean and the Arabian peninsula.³² Significantly, however, the numbers of coloured seamen hired by British ships changed according to the availability of their white counterparts. The two world wars of the twentieth century saw a shortage of white seamen and a concomitant rise in non-Europeans for the shipping industry. The popularity of the latter also

fell just after the wars.³³ After World War I, the demobilized black soldiers who remained in Liverpool were to face significant racism and violence. Thus in June 1919 Charles Wooton was murdered by a white mob in Liverpool, provoking an uprising of blacks in almost all areas where they had settled. Indeed, it is this first race riot in Liverpool that was to reveal the intricate connections between domestic social relations in Liverpool and Britain and the politics of colonial governance in Britain's colonies.

Given that the seamen in Liverpool from different parts of the empire were male, by settling down and entering different forms of relations with white women they introduced a sexual dynamic into metropolitan Britain whose results could not have been originally anticipated by colonial policy. After the 1919 riots colonial policy makers struggled unsuccessfully to accommodate the requests made by African seamen to return home with their white wives. These immediately raised unbearable headaches for the Home Office, the Colonial Office and the local colonial governments respectively, with the governments in the colonies being especially nervous about the deleterious effect that the sight of white women living in impoverished conditions with their black husbands might have on white respectability. Every imaginable effort was exerted to prevent such women from travelling back with their husbands, with sometimes damaging implications for the health of both the Africans and their white wives.³⁴ It was only from the 1950s that a significant number of women began migrating from the Caribbean, Africa and Asia into Britain in general. Liverpool, and other colonial ports like it, then become significant portals through which we might examine various vectors of what constitutes Britishness as it has historically interacted with the colonial Other not just in the colonies, but within Britain itself. The residues of these dynamic processes and relations make themselves visible in the postcolonial writing that has taken shape in Europe, and they serve to show how the metropolitan centre itself *becomes* postcolonial (McLeod, Lennox, Thomas, *The Cambridge History*).

Decolonization and postcoloniality

As a general rule, when talking about decolonization, scholars in postcolonial studies conventionally refer to India, Africa and the various countries in the Caribbean that gained independence from their European overlords in the twentieth century. To view the matter from the perspective of Latin America, however, is to discover a completely different sociopolitical and cultural inflection to the processes of decolonization. A number of 'independences' had been unofficially declared from as early as the late sixteenth and early

seventeenth centuries, with attendant social processes that revealed the progressive weakening of links between Spain and its colonies. Despite Spain's best efforts, widespread smuggling and illicit trade persisted between ports; many banned works of Enlightenment thought reached the Americas and beyond; Hispanicizing and nativist indigenous, African and mixed-race peoples wrote about and expressed membership in a broader reinvented Catholic culture and history which not only accounted for them, but also put them in a new moral centre prefigured by Christ's message; while *criollos* who were filling the convents and monasteries chafed under the lack of high office and consequently composed histories that reimagined global visions, with themselves as crucial harbingers and reformers of the New World. Formal decolonization from Europe itself occurred at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when countries in the region broke decisively away from Spain and Portugal. With the overall process of decolonization too, the relations among European nations had a direct impact on what unfolded in their colonies. In the guise of strengthening the Franco-Spanish pact against Portugal, Napoleon invaded Spain in 1807 and replaced Charles IV with his younger brother Joseph as King José I. This marked the conclusion of the long process of Spain's enfeeblement at the hands of Britain and France, its main European rivals from the 1650s. The overthrow of the Spanish king led first to popular revolt in Spain itself, with the emergence of civil and military juntas in various provinces determinedly opposed to the French occupation. It also had a dramatic effect on the Spanish colonies in America, who themselves saw no reason to continue under the impress of Spain following the political disorder that was unfolding there. Sometimes with the affirmation of loyalty to the king, and at others with an explicitly stated desire to break away from what had long been perceived as an inequitable structure of relations with the metropolitan centre, several countries in the region declared their independence from Spain in rapid succession, such that between 1810 and 1925 it had lost all of the American mainland. Cuba was to remain under Spanish rule until 1898, with the Philippines in Southeast Asia experiencing unbroken colonization under Spain from 1521 to 1898, when it was lost to the Americans following the Spanish-American War that had begun in Cuba but had spread to the Philippines.³⁵

Even though the specific typology of decolonization in Latin America differed from place to place, certain cultural factors were shared across the region that are pertinent to reflecting upon a postcolonial literary history. The most important was the fact that the decolonization movement was spearheaded mainly by the *criollos* (American-born Europeans). Demography was firmly on their side. By 1800, out of an estimated total population of 16.9 million in the region,

3.2 million were whites, with only 150,000 of these being *peninsulares*, or people born in Europe.³⁶ However, the demographic dominance of the *criollos* was not reflected in the distribution of administrative and religious offices. As the eighteenth century progressed Bourbon reformers from Spain adopted the policy of assigning the most important political and religious positions in their colonies to Spanish-born whites as opposed to their *criollo* counterparts. What appeared as the domino effect of the declaration of independence by several states was actually born out of the pan-American orientation of many of its *criollo* intellectuals, with inspiration being drawn from the successful American breakaway from Britain in 1775–83 and, to a lesser degree, the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804. The emergence of political leaders such as Venezuelan Simón Bolívar and Argentinian José de San Martín, who inspired a pan-regional following in efforts to separate from Spain, was also telling. Much later, in 1959, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro were to attain iconic status within the region and well beyond as leaders of the Cuban Revolution.

Despite the fact that it was *criollos* that spearheaded formal decolonization from Spain, they were by no means alone in feeling restive under imperial arrangements. The *criollos* in their turn had been responsible for establishing and enforcing a racial hierarchy that worked to their advantage in relation to the non-white population. The racial mix in the region included the descendants of black slaves brought from Africa and the native Indians who frequently had their rightful claims to territory and farmland brutally repressed, along with the growing body of *mestizos* (mixed-race children) who complicated the racial classifications that were used to assign social and economic privilege. Many resistance movements arose that sought to challenge these hierarchies, the most famous and bloodiest of these being that of Tupac Amaru II from 1780 to 1782 in the Peruvian Andes. Tupac Amaru was a Christian who asserted his Inca lineage, spoke both Quechua and Spanish fluently, and drew on significant *criollo* as well as Indian and *mestizo* support until he was abandoned by the *criollos*. On his final defeat the bulk of his family was captured and killed, with he himself being decapitated and dismembered in the public square at Cuzco. He was subsequently to attain mythical status and was used as an inspirational figurehead for several subsequent rebellions across the region.³⁷

The fertile cultural and historical mix just described accounts for some of the most important literary tendencies to have emerged from Latin America. Whereas, as Ángel Rama instructs us, the bureaucratic processes of establishing a coherent administration in Latin America produced what he describes as the ‘Lettered City’ in the form of an army of scribes whose responsibility to render administrative and religious edicts from Spain engendered a vast array

of writings, the cultural and religious admixture accounts for what has come to be known as the genre of magical realism (Ortega, Natali, Siskind, *The Cambridge History*).³⁸ As Siskind points out, the impact that the work of Jorge Luis Borges, Miguel Ángel Asturias, Gabriel García Márquez, Isabel Allende, Laura Esquivel and other Latin American writers have had on postcolonial and world literature is difficult to overestimate, even if the precise definition of what constitutes magical realism remains a subject of intense debate.³⁹ Indeed, the question is worth posing as to why it is that despite certain telling demographic similarities between the United States and Canada, on the one hand, and Latin America, on the other, it is the latter that manages to produce the magical realism that is now taken to be one of the signature literary forms of the postcolonial world. The answer must lie in various sources, not the least of which is that unlike their northern neighbours, Latin America had sophisticated civilizations among the Mayans, the Incas and the Aztecs, to name the most well known that had to be accounted for at the Conquest and after. *Criollo* culture had to deal directly with these systems, both in terms of their imaginative semiotic orders and the bureaucratic apparatuses that had marked them as kingdoms and indeed empires well before the Conquest. Quite apart from providing templates for environmental consciousness and revolutionary action among the Indians, the Mayan *Popol Vuh* for example became a direct inspiration for Miguel Ángel Asturias's *Men of Maize*, originally published in 1949.⁴⁰ A reason for the emergence of magical realism must also be sought in the effects of the Catholic disposition towards infusing mundane objects with a sense of the sacred (bread, water, wine, fish, boat, staff, sheep), thus intensifying the practice of seeing uncanny correspondences along the reality/fantastical spectrum that was already common in Indian and African mythologies. Kenneth Mills gives credence to this proposition when he writes with respect to Andean Christianity:

The attraction of indigenous peoples in much of Andean Peru to the Christian cult of the saints was partly one of familiarity. Native Andeans had grown accustomed to the consultation of ancestral originators who asserted themselves across overlapping sacred landscapes . . . Andeans were familiar, too, with visible representations of the holy, and with ways of knowing, recalling and stirring their divinities through the performance of sacred narratives, offerings and visits to special places.⁴¹

Also pertinent in this regard was the widespread use of Catholic iconography. As various scholars have shown, innumerable images of the Virgin of Guadalupe circulated as a medium for the dissemination of a cult that was to become central to Spanish American identity.⁴² Thus the representational effervescence that marked both formal and informal aspects of Catholicism was culturally

reconfigured when its symbols came to be co-mingled with African religious practices brought over by the slaves, with the syncretic admixtures thus generated coming to define the popular cultures of Latin America in *santería*, *candomblé*, Eshu and Sango cults, and local carnivals, among others. The literatures of Latin America were to be infused by this hybrid sensibility and magical realism became its mature literary expression.

Colonial space-making

Even as the inaugural time of the postcolonial is directly related to that of the colonial, it is not to be mistaken for or indeed limited to the epochal rupture signified by the dates that have conventionally framed some of the most intense debates in postcolonial studies: 1492 (Columbus's arrival in America and the expulsion of Jews from Spain); 1603 (Lord Mountjoy's colonization of the northern counties of Ireland); 1798–1801 (Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign); 1791–1804 (the Haitian Revolution); 1810–25 (the independence of Spanish America and of Brazil); 1833 (the abolition of slavery); 1857 (the bloody Sepoy uprising in Cawnpore); 1884 (the Berlin Conference and the scramble for Africa); 1947 (the independence of India and its partition); 1954–62 (Algeria's War of Independence); 1955 (the Bandung Conference); 1994 (the end of apartheid). If postcolonialism (without the hyphen) is necessarily tied to the colonial due to the simultaneous temporal and discursive framing of the field, it is the entire domain of what we might describe as *colonial space-making* and its after-effects in the contemporary world that gives the term its significance today. Colonial space-making does not merely designate the formation, constitution and governance of a geographically demarcated area, though that is definitely also important. Rather, colonial space-making is first and foremost the projection of sociopolitical relations upon a geographical space. Colonial space-making is ultimately about the distribution of social and political goods along axes of power and hierarchical relations and is the result of a series of interconnected and highly complex procedures and instruments. It is undergirded by assumptions, metaphors and bureaucratic practices all of which interact with a given social environment to produce hegemonic relations of power. While the hegemonic relations of power and the ideas and assumptions undergirding them may be challenged, the platforms upon which the relations take shape are as much cultural and symbolic as they are political and spatial. Colonial space-making is thus defined by sets of relations that were structurally produced and contested across a series of interrelated vectors throughout the colonial encounter. Politically, colonial space-making sought to alter already existing relations

among well-constituted local groups (such as in the case of India between the Mughals and the Hindus or in Nigeria between the northern Muslims and the coastal Yoruba and Igbo), or to reconfigure the hierarchies between indigenous and diasporic populations (such as was exemplified in Southeast Asia or Latin America). And from its inception colonial space-making involved the conscription of material human bodies into the schemas of colonial relations of production and the differential constitution of citizens and subjects.⁴³

Everywhere colonial space-making put into play the intellectual appropriation and symbolic reconfiguration of the relationship between colonizer and colonized, and between the colonized and their natural environment. As Al-Musawi shows in relation to Egypt, for example, when Napoleon landed there in the expedition of 1798–1803 he immediately declared himself a Muslim. With the help of French scholars he took with him he helped put into circulation a highly charged and mutually reinforcing contradiction about Egypt and its relationship to France. On the one hand, the Egyptians' religion was thought to require reform so as to incorporate them into a greater modernity. This reform implicitly demanded a respect for certain secular ideals. On the other hand, Egyptian writers were also to see the Europeans as languid and effeminate, something that was transferred to European culture itself to make it extremely seductive. The heady mix of secular idealism with erotic conceptualism was later to be taken up by Arab writers themselves, from as early as Hasan al-'Attar's 1801 disquisition on the French, about which Muhammad Siddiq notes, 'the young effeminate French scholars who possess and flaunt their superior knowledge, as they do their physical charms and bewitching glances, are depicted as invitingly effeminate'.⁴⁴ The theme of French effeminateness coupled with the fraught modernity of Arab culture is taken up in different directions by Arab writers such as Yahya Haqqi (Haggi) in his *The Saint's Lamp*, Naguib Mahfouz in *Midaq Alley* and Tayeb Salih in *Season of Migration to the North* (al-Musawi, *The Cambridge History*).⁴⁵

As will readily be evident from several of the chapters in *The Cambridge History*, each stage of the production and maintenance of colonial space was met with contestation and complicated forms of subversive complicity by the colonized, with varying degrees of efficacy and success. The postcolonial nation state, the ex-colonial metropolitan centres and predatory multinational corporations are all taken to be inheritors and beneficiaries of colonial space-making in the modern world.

Bearing in mind the caveat that there were many configurations of colonial space, and that in various instances these were not mutually exclusive but were rather mixed and overlapped in specific local contexts, we can now set out a structural typology of the colonial from which to situate different kinds of postcolonial literary representations, critiques and inflections:

1. The context of formal colonialism. This involved the establishment of a bureaucratic colonial apparatus comprising legislative and administrative units, the police, censuses, and with attendant cultural instruments and institutions such as the colonial church, school, theatre, arts councils and radio stations among others. Most sub-Saharan African countries, India and Southeast Asia would fall under this rubric. Postcolonial literature was directly impacted upon by the colonial apparatus in theme, content and agonistic reference points. As Simon Gikandi notes with specific reference to Africa: 'From the eighteenth century onwards, the colonial situation shaped what it meant to be an African writer, shaped the language of African writing, and overdetermined the culture of letters in Africa.'⁴⁶

2. The context of plantation economies. The transformation of plantation slavery into colonialism proper differed from place to place. However, as a general rule plantation economies were marked not by the paucity or indeed small number of subsistence or small farms, but by the fact that plantations tended to occupy the most arable and productive areas and were geared predominantly towards export. The colonial machinery that evolved in locations as different as Sri Lanka (coffee), Brazil, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and much of the Caribbean (sugar), and Malaysia (rubber) was designed to ensure that products from such places were exported specifically to the 'mother' European country, and that their European rivals had limited access to them. Furthermore, all such contexts also involved the mixing of variant populations transferred from different parts of the world. The indentured labour policy we have already noted that was in place in East Africa was also turned towards transferring South Asian and Chinese labour into plantation economies elsewhere. Colonial space-making ensured various degrees of racialized social segregation such that the race relations that remained after the formal end of colonialism were often marked by animosity and ill-will. This has been evident most poignantly in places as distinct as Malaysia, Guyana, and the Dominican Republic, where the fraught nature of race relations to this day may be traced to the plantation economies and their transformations under colonialism.⁴⁷ The literature of former plantation economies refracts these interracial and political tensions, and we read about these variously in Naipaul, Walcott, Brathwaite, Lamming, Rhys, Kincaid and others (Savory, *The Cambridge History*).

3. The context of settler colonialism. As has already been noted, from the fifteenth century Europeans had set out to different parts of the world to create settler colonies. This process especially impacted upon southern Africa, Ireland,

Canada, Australia and Latin America. Three attitudes generally marked these settler colonies. At the extreme end was an enclave and segregationist mentality, with strenuous efforts at reproducing the class privileges of the metropolitan centres while keeping the indigenous populations in various forms of servitude. The second attitude of settler colonists veered between policies of compromise or assimilation and the utter destruction of indigenous populations. Canada, Australia, South Africa and to some degree Ireland fall under this rubric. In this instance the indigenous populations (designated as Aborigines, Natives and sometimes Indians) find that the settler communities represent a continuing and unbroken parcolonial order against which they have to struggle (Heath Justice, Brewster, *The Cambridge History*). Whereas in Australia, the penal settlers from 1788 constituted the early vanguard of what was to become a largely British-dominated colony, the settler colonialism of South Africa was constituted by different waves of Europeans attempting to establish bureaucratic and administrative structures in different parts of the country, starting with the Dutch in the 1650s and ending in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902, the fully fledged inter-European war of control (Warnes, *The Cambridge History*). Concomitantly, these different European settlers also engendered a new set of relations among the local indigenous populations, and subsequently between these populations and the large number of mixed-race children that were produced from the cohabitation of European men with local women. In all such settler colonies the descendants of European settlers developed an ambiguous love/hate relationship to the mother country. Australia, South Africa and Brazil more than Canada would come to show such strong ambivalence (especially in the field of sports), while the situation in Ireland is more complex given the waves of Anglo-Irish layerings over the Celtic indigenous populations from the seventeenth century onwards. The Anglo-Irish were in turn made the object of contradictory and often denigrating cultural and political policies by the British. Some of the most vociferous Irish nationalists came from this Anglo-Irish stock (Cleary, *The Cambridge History*).⁴⁸ As noted earlier, Britain acquired territories from the French in 1763, with settler colonialism in Canada being complicated by the fact that the French Quebecois came to consider themselves as a minority historically ‘oppressed’ by Anglo-Canada and sometimes insisted on claiming a colonized status (Siemerling, *The Cambridge History*).⁴⁹

4. The contexts of migration and diaspora. Apart from the European population dispersions that took place in the seventeenth century, in the period of formal colonialism diasporization and population movement were, if not deliberately intended policies of colonial governance (such as with the settling

of convicts in Australia, or the dispersal of indentured South Asian and Chinese labour, for example), then definitely an unforeseen consequence of colonial policy (such as with the 1947 Partition of India). With the rise of diaspora studies from the mid 1980s the concept of diaspora has undergone a number of conceptual changes, several of which may be related to postcolonial studies. Whereas the Jewish, Armenian, Greek and African American diasporas were taken to be the classic diasporas until the first half of the twentieth century, the term has come to be applied to various other constituencies in scholarly discourse and popular parlance.⁵⁰ Key among changes in the concept of diaspora is the idea that it has to be understood as much in terms of the causative factors that trigger mass population movement as in the different relations that are established over time between host land, homeland and diasporic communities. Depending on the causes of diasporization myths of homeland and return may either be radically reconfigured or become progressively attenuated within the diasporic imaginary. Furthermore, the idea of difference from the host land undergoes variations and changes, with certain diasporic groups better able to become integrated into the host hegemonic culture than others. Race and ethnic difference are critical in the constitution of diasporas as are the inter- and intra-ethnic modes of spatial identification and differentiation that have informed diasporas.⁵¹ Thus the postcolonial literatures of Britain, Germany and France may productively be understood as literatures of their postcolonial diasporas. With the infusion of new labour populations into the historically white settler colonies of Canada, South Africa and Australia starting in the mid 1960s and intensifying from the 1980s, there has also been the production of vibrant diasporic literary cultures in such historically white settler communities, with an attendant effort at providing space for the articulation of multiple cultural identities (Murphet, *The Cambridge History*).

Because colonial/postcolonial space did not emerge all at once but developed over a long period of time each chapter in *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature* will carefully historicize what it considers to be the colonial/postcolonial for a proper account of the relevant literary history to be provided.

Past, present and active histories

We have so far been deploying a singular description of postcolonial literary history – a postcolonial literary history – when all that has been described thus far suggests that it would be more accurate to speak of multiple postcolonial

literary histories. And yet the singular usage is not entirely without use. For it places firmly in the foreground the need to differentiate such a literary history from that organized under the rubric of another conventionally used singularity: the nation. As Linda Hutcheon and Mario J. Valdés remind us, literary history has traditionally been used as an instrument to demarcate and contest national cultural identity and heritage. Literary history then becomes the means by which to organize perceptions of the past and, more importantly, the way that past validates or interrogates present arrangements.⁵² The claims made about the past and the designs on the present implied by any literary historicizing, however, have to be completely rethought in the context of the large-scale enterprise embarked upon in *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*. For it is clear that the mapping of literary history for individual nations (Australia, South Africa, India) is significantly different from that of a continental or pan-regional, or hemispheric entity (Africa, the Arab world, Latin America, Southeast Asia) such as exemplified in the chapters by Esonwanne, al-Musawi, Ortega, Natali and Patke respectively. The scope, scale and salience of non-literary events that impact upon the literary field are quite different as are the internal relations of elements within the literary field itself. Even within specific nations the literary history that is produced may differ according to the predominant lens that is deployed. This is aptly shown in the case of India, where Prasad, Kabir, Ganguly and Gupta all provide different standpoints from which to rethink the literary history of that country. The understanding of what constitutes the precise definition of the postcolonial and how it is dated and related to the literary historical field also raises some implications. Thus in Murphet's account of the postcolonial literary history of Australia, he takes the innovative and counterintuitive view that even though the colonial actions of settlement took place in the eighteenth century, the full collective consciousness of postcolonialism has to be traced to the Vietnam War and how it brought hitherto disparate interests together in redefining a then fraught Australian identity. This perspective is a sharp contrast to that provided in the chapter by Brewster, where Australia's literary history from an Aboriginal perspective places quite a different inflection on what constitutes the postcolonial writing of the country. The adoption of a thematically oriented as opposed to a nationalist or hemispheric perspective also allows for different kinds of comparative relationships to emerge. Even in such chapters, the focus on islands as a thematic lens taken by DeLoughrey for example contrasts with the more conceptual and structural perspectives of Johannessen and Li. In each instance, then, the use to which literary history is put implies what Valdés, following Paul Ricoeur, describes as 'effective history':

Effective literary history begins with the recognition that history, and literary history in particular, is effective insofar as it is used and is of use to would-be readers; it is a concept deeply aligned with the idea that we are affected in the present by our sense of the past. Thus, whenever the conceptualization of the cultural past is rigidly exclusive of multiple sectors that for one reason or another have been found wanting, our participation and contribution to the cultural present will be uninformed . . . Our starting point is the recognition that effective literary history like all historical writing is a construct and it is not the past relived, but effective literary history is a construct based on the problematics of the writer. *There is implicit in these considerations a decisive shift from the truth-claim of knowledge to that of an invitation to continued inquiry.*⁵³

Postcolonial literary history must then be taken as an invitation to continued inquiry, partly because of the often variegated and sometimes unsettled nature of the national local contexts in which the literature is produced and consumed, and also because, in setting these against the literary history of canonical Western literature, it encourages us to rethink the key paradigms that have governed such literature. This does not mean a sceptical overthrow of concepts such as humanism, irony, or indeed genre, all of which have been central, along with others, to the constitution of the Western canon. Rather it is the rigorous interrogation of the sources and historical dispositions of the main assumptions of the writing of literary history that are raised both individually and collectively by these two volumes.

Given the range of perspectival modulations required for the detailing of a postcolonial literary history, the term 'literature' is used here in an expansive sense not limited exclusively to belles-lettres. While the traditional genres of poetry and prose have specific chapters dedicated to them (Prasad, Ramazani), with extensive discussions of drama in several individual chapters (e.g. Mukherjee, Murdoch, Esonwanne), all contributors pay attention to the full range of literary expression. However, given that other genres such as missionary writing, slave narratives, travel narratives, autobiography, film and popular literature have all had an impact on the constitution of postcolonial literary studies, chapters on these areas have been included as a reflection of the new tendencies in the field (Mudimbe-Boyi, Carpio, Griffiths, Holden, Dovey, Newell and Gupta). Several chapters explicitly address generic ambiguity as well as questions pertaining to the interface between local, indigenous writing traditions and the self-evidently European literary tradition, and one chapter deals exclusively with the character of postcolonial responses to the Western canon (Johannessen, Esonwanne, Mukherjee). With the existence of various non-europhone languages and literary traditions that inarguably provide a

viable creative resource matrix for postcolonial writing, other chapters acknowledge and contextualize the effect of local languages on such writing along with the effects of English as a global language (Ganguly and Peterson, Mazzon). Chapters such as those on 'Primitivism and postcolonial literature' (Li) and 'The narrative forms of postcolonial literature' (Fludernik) break new ground by exploring fresh themes that are not only historical but also make a direct appeal to the cognate narrative disciplines of history and anthropology. The chapters on literary prizes and on journals and institutions by Ponzanesi and Raja and Bahri provide direct links between literary history and literary sociology for understanding the institutional foundations of the field within academia.

Volume I is largely composed of national, hemispheric or geographically oriented chapters. The obvious exceptions to this general rule are the chapters on slave narratives, travel writing, missionary writing and auto/biography which between them cover genre-specific topics of overall significance to the field. The chapters at the end of Volume I on postcolonial writing in Britain, France and Germany serve to problematize any conception of postcolonial literary history that marries it exclusively to the context of ex-colonies. As has already been noted, it is evident that the literary production of metropolitan Europe has been thoroughly postcolonialized precisely because of the dialogical processes of colonial space-making and the direct impact these have had on the colonial metropolitan centres through the processes of diaspora and migration.

Volume II, on the other hand, comprises mainly thematically oriented as opposed to hemispheric or geographically inflected chapters, with the chapter on 'Religion and postcolonial writing' by Jamie Scott for example performing a wide-ranging and exemplary overview of how to generate a postcolonial literary history by focusing on a particular theme. However, the rationale of *The Cambridge History* is not to provide an encyclopedia of themes or geographical subjects, but rather to highlight the most productive ways in which literature in the field has been produced and may be discussed.

Postcolonial literary history: geographic coevalness or implicit hierarchy?

Even though it is ultimately literary history that unifies all the chapters, given the mixture between chapters with a decidedly more geographical focus (nation, continent, or hemisphere) and those with a thematic emphasis questions may arise about the implicit prioritization of certain geographical areas as opposed to others and how this is to be distinguished from previous anthologies in the field. Why Africa ahead of the Caribbean and Latin America?

Secondly, the thematic as opposed to exclusively chronological focus may be thought to generate a number of gaps if not outright confusion. Why a chapter on orality in African literature and not anglophone African literature in general? Why the transregional 'Postcolonialism and Arab literature', in contrast to the nationally oriented chapters on postcolonial literature in South Africa and India? A collection as wide-ranging as *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*, which is both global and multifaceted in scope, raises a particular set of issues that are quite different from those raised by collections that might be focused exclusively on the literature of a particular country, continent, or region. To this specific set of questions we turn in conclusion.

There are two contradictory principles that have underpinned anthologies or collections in the field of postcolonial literature and of the Commonwealth literature that came before it. The first is the principle of coevalness, and the other is that of an implicit hierarchy among the regions that provide the literature. The principle of coevalness could very easily be defended under the rubric of Commonwealth literature, since the term Commonwealth itself was inherently a convenient political as opposed to literary label. It was rare that any justification was sought in the early anthologies for bringing together literature from Africa, South Asia, the Caribbean, Australia and Canada between the covers of a single volume. And yet at the same time there was an unacknowledged genuflection towards the idea of a hierarchy among the regions. In this implicit hierarchy, Africa, South Asia and the Caribbean took priority over Canada and Australia. In such schemas Latin American literature did not appear at all, partly because it was not part of the Commonwealth and partly because it entered into the frame of postcolonial literary study in translation. The combination of coevalness and implicit hierarchy is to be seen in every literary anthology in the field we can identify. Take for example the 1996 *Arnold Anthology of Post-Colonial Literatures in English* edited by John Thieme.⁵⁴ The volume opens with literatures from the various regions of Africa, before turning to Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, New Zealand and the South Pacific, and South Asia in that order and ending finally on the subject of transcultural writing. Anthologies of a critical-theoretical orientation have a different and more comparative approach to the task of discussing postcolonial literature, but even these betray the two principles outlined. Thus in Dennis Walder's more literary historical offering *Post-Colonial Literatures in English: History, Language, Theory* (1998) there is no attempt to even devote any special sections to Canada and Australia, instead opening on West African texts and then going through texts from India, the Caribbean and South Africa in that order.⁵⁵ Are these earlier anthologies less useful because of the unresolved nature of the two principles of

organization? That does not appear to be so, the reason being that the contradiction between the two principles of coevalness and geographical hierarchy is inherently irresolvable once we move outside a specific country or geographical region to embrace a more global and comparative approach to the field.

In fact, behind the principle of implicit hierarchy in Commonwealth and postcolonial literary studies is the unexamined idea that, to put it formulaically, Kenyan literature is more postcolonial than say Irish or Canadian literature. This is centrally because of race and how this category is thought to cross-articulate with questions of historical oppression. Thus, sticking with our earlier examples, Kenyan literature is considered intrinsically more postcolonial than say Canadian literature, given that the first was produced as a response to a rabid and oppressive settler-cum-administrative colonialism and is from the Third World, while the second draws from the dynamics of settler colonialism and is obviously centred in a developed economy. Despite recognizing the value behind such thinking, it is important to point out that given what we noted earlier about the variegated forms of colonial space-making and the cross-illumination that a comparative approach provides, it would be a mistake to retain the implicit form of hierarchy in anthologizing the field without some further and robust justification. In fact, it might even be ventured from a historical and comparative perspective that Irish and Indian literature, on the one hand, are more postcolonial than Nigerian and Canadian literature, on the other, due to the much more complicated character of colonial space-making that affected the first two. This is by no means an uncontroversial proposition, and yet the opportunity to read about the literature from these places from a comparative and literary historical perspective is one that will help answer many questions that have remained silent or poorly articulated in postcolonial literary studies.

As each chapter has a clear chronological framing relevant to the specific topic (geographical or thematic) at hand, it is hoped that readers will finally be able to check facts on specific authors and literary tendencies, or to trace relevant details of stylistic and thematic developments and influences over a period of time, or to explore the often neglected relationships between specific authors and texts and other neglected features of their contexts while also getting a deeper grasp of what constitutes postcolonial literature and literary history. Our collective hope is that working out a system of concepts and ideas that are both historiographic *and* rhetorical in classrooms that have long been challenged to take true account of the fertile offerings that have come from the postcolonial world, *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature* will inspire a more informed and sophisticated engagement not just with its literature, but

with the very imaginative universe that informs our yearnings today. To misquote Shakespeare, to understand is prologue.

Notes

1. Alan L. McLeod, 'Introduction', in Alan L. McLeod (ed.), *The Commonwealth Pen: An Introduction to the Literature of the British Commonwealth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1961).
2. Edward Hartley Dewart, 'Introduction' to *Selections from Canadian Poets* (1864), and George Stewart, 'Canadian literature', *Stewart's Literary Quarterly Magazine* (January 1870), reprinted in Douglas M. Daymond and Leslie G. Monkman (eds.), *Towards a Canadian Literature: Essays, Editorials and Manifestoes*, vol. 1 (Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 1984), pp. 50–9 and 91–8 respectively.
3. Dewart, 'Introduction', 50.
4. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Literature and Authorship in India* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1943).
5. Albert Memmi, *Portrait du colonisé précédé du portrait du colonisateur* (Paris: Correa, Buchet/Chastel, 1957), published in English as *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (New York: Orion, 1965); Frantz Fanon 'Sur la culture nationale', in *Les Damnés de la terre* (Paris: Maspero, 1961), published in English as 'On national culture', in *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963).
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Postcolonial fictions of slavery

GLEND A R. CARPIO

Fictional representations of slavery begin with texts such as Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko; or, The Royal Slave*, a novella that was hugely popular in its time and widely adapted for the stage for over a century after its publication. The most recent adaptation, Biyi Bandele's 1991 play, is an adaptation of adaptations.¹ The Royal Shakespeare Company enlisted Nigerian-born Bandele to adapt a play based on both Restoration dramatist Thomas Southerne's 1695 *Oroonoko* and John Hawkesworth's 1759 play by the same name. These multiple layers of adaptation are no less rich than the sources Behn used for her novella. Depicting the tragedy of an African prince who, along with his beloved, is sold into New World slavery, Behn follows the slave trade back across the Atlantic to Africa, becoming the first English author to represent sub-Saharan African people in their own continent. To familiarize her readers with her characters and settings, Behn made use of the conventions of the New World travel story, the courtly romance and the heroic tragedy and, especially, the conventions of the Oriental romance, including the trope of the Noble Savage. Beyond familiarizing the foreign, Behn's strategies helped highlight the human tragedy of the slave trade. As a heroic tragedy, Behn's novella 'exaggerates precisely those emotional experiences that were often suppressed by historical description, debates, and documentary records' about the slave trade.² In its various adaptations, *Oroonoko* became part of the abolitionist movement in England, and was eventually considered a forerunner to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).

The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, is equally rich in its sources and powerful in its long-lasting legacy.³ The first full-length autobiography by an African who suffered the bonds of slavery, *The Interesting Narrative*, inaugurated the slave narrative tradition and eloquently agitated against the most significant change to have occurred since the publication of Behn's novella: the fact that New World slavery had gradually come to be justified on the basis of racial difference. Equiano, like Behn,

manipulated various literary traditions, including the spiritual autobiography, the picaresque novel, the travel or adventure book, the conversion and captivity narrative, and the sentimental novel, to heighten the intense loss and grief occasioned by slavery. Yet, unlike Behn's, Equiano's aim was to prove, by his own example, the humanity of the enslaved. Equiano deftly articulates a slave's transcendence of his abject condition and his ascendance to a position of literary, economic, political and social power, thereby challenging insidious correlations between blackness and savagery.

Behn was compelled to write *Oroonoko's* tragedy for rather different reasons. As the ardent supporter of James II, the Catholic king who was forced to abdicate the throne of England 1688, Behn projected her royalist sympathies onto the tragedy of the fallen prince. Emphatically identifying herself as the narrator of *Oroonoko*, Behn also makes explicit parallels between her and Oroonoko on the basis on her gender and her craft. The first professional woman author in England, Behn believed it was the fate of most women to be subjected to some form of commodification, whether through forced marriages, prostitution or, even in her own case, through the demands of her public. She sometimes compared middle-class women who were forced into unhappy marriages for money to slaves.

The stylistic and ethical differences between two of the founding texts in the history of fictional representations of slavery are thus significant. Their internal contradictions, as Behn's motives suggest, are no less complex. Equiano's narrative reveals its own contradictions since it makes clear the impossibility of transcending the enormous loss that Equiano suffered as he moves from captive and slave to subject and author. Indeed, because Equiano's text 'stylized the conversion from chattel to liberal subject, negotiated the voices of abolition and slave resistance, and mediated the logics of coloniality in which trade in people and goods connected Africa, plantation Virginia, the colonial West Indies, and metropolitan England', it has been taken to 'epitomize the most eloquent narration of individual redemption through modern liberal institutions'.⁴ Equiano's narrative is also one of the very few first-person accounts of the Middle Passage and includes moving accounts of the trials that he and others suffered as slaves.⁵ At the same time, his narrative includes evasions and interruptions that are not only intrinsic to autobiography but also suggestive of the challenges involved in representing the world-shattering violence of slavery.

The internal fissures and ethical dilemmas that Behn's novella and Equiano's narratives incorporate are at the centre of contemporary, postcolonial fictions of slavery. This chapter explores divergent approaches to such dilemmas and tensions by juxtaposing a set of seminal texts in this literary genre, including

not only Caryl Phillips's novel *Cambridge* as well as Derek Walcott's poetic works, *The Star-Apple Kingdom* and *Omeros*, but also Gayl Jones's 1975 novel *Corregidora*.⁶ While the emphasis is on anglophone engagements with the transatlantic slave trade and its vast archive, the chapter draws together a vast geography including Europe, the Americas, the Caribbean and Africa.

Phillips's *Cambridge* echoes many of the motives and genres shaping Behn's novella and Equiano's narrative. The novel's plot is deceptively simple: on a nameless West Indian plantation sometime in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century, a slave named Cambridge kills an overseer. The scene of the murder and the events leading up to it are provided in three distinct accounts: a white woman's travel journal, the slave's autobiographical account, and a brief article in a public newspaper. What differentiates these representations is not whether they designate Cambridge as culpable – for he confesses to the deed – but how the circumstances of his crime are rendered. In each case, the circumstances vary according to the ideological position of the narrator and the rhetorical conventions she or he employs.

Drawing upon the historiography of the British West Indies and the central texts of the slave narrative tradition, Phillips historically reconstructs the rhetoric, structure and content of slavery's textual archive as he underscores the complexities of its interpretation. Most of the novel details the experiences of Emily Cartwright, an Englishwoman who has been sent by her father to survey his West Indian sugar plantation. Her text constitutes a pastiche of facts, narrative strategies and actual passages from the travel journals and planter diaries of Victorian women, and it is organized to showcase the ideologies of a European mistress. Similarly, the novel reproduces whole sections of Equiano's narrative as well as those of his contemporaries, Ukawsaw Gronniosaw and Ottobah Cugoana, dispossessed Africans who also wrote about their experiences of captivity and enforced labour within the Black Atlantic. And, the novel's shortest section, the newspaper account, emphatically echoes the sensationalist and sentimental rhetoric of journalistic accounts of slavery.

In restaging the historical and literary nature of slavery's archive, Phillips calls attention to the hermeneutical challenges it proposes. Not only do the novel's narratives present competing claims about the crime and the nature of slavery in the New World, they also openly show the genre impurities and narrative incompleteness of the historical texts upon which they draw. Emily's and Cambridge's texts, like Behn's novella and Equiano's narrative, include the 'gaps, ambiguities, discreet omissions, self-protective explanations' that the performances as both narrators and protagonists of their tales necessitate.⁷ The bulk of Emily's narrative shows her manoeuvring physically and

rhetorically through an alien geographical environment and both constructing and protecting her identity as a lady traveller and planter diarist. While her text details her day-to-day life on her father's plantation, the reader must sift through the profound denials of her colonialist perspective and her thinly layered, sometimes openly naked racism, to compose the facts of the estate. Cambridge and the crime for which he is killed figure in her narrative only in so far as they disrupt her own experiences outside Europe and her father's house.

Because her narrative is juxtaposed to that of Cambridge, the reader is able to see the difference between what her representation permits and what it excludes. In his own narrative, Cambridge brackets his life story with two short allusions to the crime: his narrative focus is kept on his successful acculturation to European manners, his conversion to Christianity and his attainment of literacy in English. His own rendition of the facts of Emily's father's estate is coloured by his attempts to frame himself as a successful convert who has empowered himself despite his cultural dispossession. As his narrative details the trials and tribulations of his conversion, it minimizes the role of the crime and distorts the events that surround it. At the same time, it emphasizes the conventions that slave narrators used to forge forms of subaltern identity and agency.

The gaps within and between the texts are accounted for in the novel and are presented as part of the evasive 'truth' not only about Cambridge's crime but also about the crimes committed in the name of New World slavery. Unlike the two main narratives, the newspaper account emphatically dramatizes the murder at the same time that it obfuscates its circumstances through rhetorical flourishes and sensationalizing details. The brevity of the account and its omissions (it is less than four pages long and substitutes dashes for actual dates, names, places) provokes a shocking contrast to the starkly violent image with which the account closes, that of Cambridge, hung and gibbeted. The glaring omissions and distortions with which it represents the murder underscore the incompleteness of the record of the crime. Hence, each of the novel's narratives is a mixture of fact, fiction, convention and innovation; each one shows the limits of its own narrative scope as it contrasts with the others. The end result is a novel that highlights what it does not represent as much as what it includes.

Phillips's extensive borrowing and reappropriating of the historical record, what might be more properly called his lifting and pilfering of the archive of slavery, represents a key trend in postcolonial fiction about slavery. Mimicking the violence of its composition, Phillips beckons his readers to contend with the vast inequalities of that archive. Phillips's other novels, mainly, *Crossing the*

River,⁸ *The Nature of Blood* (1997), *Foreigners* (2007), all take an approach similar to that which he takes in *Cambridge*. In *Foreigners*, he details the story of Francis Barber, an ex-slave from Jamaica who was Samuel Johnson's servant and a beneficiary of Johnson's will. In *Crossing the River* Phillips tells the story of three black characters: Nash, who travels from America to Africa as a Christian missionary, Martha, an old woman who attempts to travel from Virginia to California to escape chattel slavery, and Travis, an African American army servant during World War II; all three are connected through the history of the African diaspora.

But Phillips's *Crossing the River* has been severely critiqued because unlike *Cambridge*, the novel reproduces sometimes verbatim the writings of the masters, specifically those of John Newton, the eighteenth-century slave trader turned abolitionist. Marcus Wood, for instance, argues quite powerfully that Phillips's fictionalization of acts of brutality (e.g. the rape of a pregnant female slave upon a slave ship) constitutes a problematic reappropriation of the anonymous victim of this crime. Woods's point – that contemporary writers and readers all too often feed off a slavery archive that is itself largely white, virulently racist and violently unstable – is an important one for it points to the limits of Phillips's strategy.⁹ Like Barry Unsworth in *Sacred Hunger* (1992) and Fred D'Aguiar, in the aptly named *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997), which is based on the 1782 Zong incident, Phillips depends on the records of slavery written largely by the master class. In taking the archive as a point of departure, Phillips, like other contemporary writers that engage with questions of historical representation in fictional renderings of slavery, also runs the risk of subsuming an engagement with the emotional lives of the enslaved in favour of what some deem to be dry, largely academic, attempts to read in between the lines of the historical record.

What did it feel like to live through the Middle Passage? What did it feel like to live under slavery? We will never fully know the answers to such questions even if we look at the records written by those who were enslaved since, as Toni Morrison has famously observed, slave narrators 'were silent about many things and they "forgot" many other things' given the many constraints within which they published.¹⁰ Can fiction allow us to imagine what those records left unsaid? The recuperative gesture of giving voice to those who could not represent themselves is suspect at best. It takes a talent as prodigious as Morrison's to venture, as she does in *Beloved* (1987), to transform pieces of the archive (in this case, the story of Margaret Garner) into a powerful text that isn't naïve about what fiction can do to fill in the gaps left by the historical record. In *Omeros* Derek Walcott suggests other risks involved in fictionalizing slavery: if factual fiction, the 'textbooks, pamphlets, brochures', the domain of

historians, has 'the affliction of impartiality', do fictions of slavery that depend on appropriating its archive risk flattening oceans of feeling into 'paper diagrams', 'skirting emotion' till literature is 'as guilty as History'? ¹¹

Cambridge is arguably Phillips's most successful postcolonial fiction of slavery because, rather than depend on texts written solely by white men of power, in that novel Phillips explores the tradition of elite subalterns, like Behn and Equiano, who sought precisely to engage readers emotionally with the discourse of slavery. Yet it is imperative to read fictions like *Cambridge* alongside texts that are less faithful to the archive and altogether more lyrical in their representation of slavery, the slave trade and enslavement since, as I have already suggested, even texts like Behn's and Equiano's contain gaps and omissions that obscure vast realms of loss and grief. Robert Hayden's poem 'Middle Passage' is an early and seminal example of this kind of lyrical literature.

'Middle Passage' is a collection of broken textual fragments taken from historical sources such as slave traders' logbooks, testimonies and reports. Hayden reinscribes these texts in order to highlight the internal sites of tension that characterize historical documentary and that challenge its authority as a truth-establishing discourse. Mixing allusions to Coleridge, Melville and Shakespeare with lines from hymns and spirituals, the poem underscores the connection between the religious, commercial and legal language of the slave trade. Through an allusion to *The Tempest's* sea-change passage, for instance, Hayden invokes but mocks the religious rhetoric that was used to rationalize the transformation of people into property:

Deep in the festering hold thy father lies,
Of his bones New England pews are made,
Those are altar lights that were his eyes.¹²

The focus of the poem, however, is not only on the language of the slave trade. Through its conspicuous spacing, interruptions, ellipses and pauses, the poem also evokes the absence of Middle Passage accounts by African captives and suggests the difficulties involved in representing the suffering caused by slavery. The poem culminates with an account of the *Amistad* uprising and focuses on the Middle Passage more generally. Connecting itself to the '*deep immortal wish/the timeless will*' that propelled the heroes of the *Amistad* towards revolt, the poem figures the Middle Passage as a 'Voyage through death / to life upon these shores', striking a delicate balance between elegy for the dead and ode to those who survived.¹³

This same balance is at the centre of Walcott's *Omeros*, arguably the most realized postcolonial poem to treat slavery and its legacy. A 325 page poem

with rolling hexameters in terza rima, abundant allusions not only to Homer but also to James Joyce and Aimé Césaire among others, *Omeros* ranges historically from the present to precolonial Africa and geographically from the Caribbean to Europe and North America. Interwoven throughout are the stories of Ma Kilman, a powerful obeah woman, of a Caribbean Achilles and Hector battling for a beautiful Helen, and of a composite poet named Seven Seas, part Walcott, part blind pensioner. They are peoples of African descent who live in St Lucia along with the Plunketts, an English/Irish couple who have made the island their home. Linguistically, the poem merges formal English with local patois, creole French and snippets of other languages such as Arawak and Spanish. Within its dazzling complexity, however, the poem makes palpable how slavery's past manifests itself in the diurnal lives of simple people. Appropriating and expanding the tradition of the Homeric epic, Walcott represents the amnesia, obsessive repetition, and despair that haunt those living in what Saidiya Hartman has called the 'after life of slavery'.¹⁴

Significantly, the sexual subjection of black women under slavery is a topic that both *Cambridge* and *Omeros* fail to fully explore. By contrast, in *Corregidora*, Gayl Jones tackles the topic head on. Jones intertwines the seemingly disparate experiences of slavery in South and North America (colonial Brazil and post-segregation America) thus questioning the strict temporal and geographical categories through which we define postcoloniality. She also interrogates how much we depend on the textual aspect of the archive, building her novel out of fictionalized oral accounts of the past. At the same time, Jones refuses to romanticize oral history and to focus only on the limits of the archive. Thus, she experiments with the form of the novel, incorporating the aesthetic power of the blues to express the feelings of anger, loss, and grief that besiege the women in the matrilineal line out of which Ursa, her main character, emerges. Jones thus makes vivid how the presence of slavery's history in the lives of the women she represents threatens to usurp their sexual desire in the now.

In many ways, Jones follows in the footsteps of Harriet Jacobs who is now rightly recognized for the bravery and sophistication with which, in her *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, she addressed a topic that other slave narrators and abolitionists only allude to in veiled or symbolic terms: the sanctioned and routine raping of black women.¹⁵ Jacobs had to develop rich rhetorical strategies to expose this topic to her mainly white, middle-class female readership, a group bound to the nineteenth century's cult of True Womanhood (which stressed piety, domesticity and purity), without alienating it. At the same time, she both enacted and portrayed forms of resistance and solidarity among black women and suggested the possibility of cross-racial alliances along gender lines.

Phillips does attempt to address these issues in *Cambridge*. His novel frames the subjectivity of enslaved black women, particularly that of a character named Christiania, as a sexualized subaltern. She is a bothersome and unruly ‘wench’ in Emily’s journal, a troublesome wife in Cambridge’s narrative and the overseer’s paramour in the newspaper account.¹⁶ Though she does not have her own narrative, she exerts power over the content and structure of each one of the novel’s accounts. But who she is and what her power consists of remain mysterious because she is ambiguously presented as silent. In lieu of her speech, what each of the narratives offers is her sexuality, either as aberrant and savage, or as the effect of rape and madness. Phillips thus suggests that in the literary traditions of elite subalterns (wealthy white women, acculturated black men), no less than that of white men of power, black women are relegated to silence or framed only in terms of sexuality. However, Phillips’s dependence on the very texts he criticizes leads him to *reproduce* rather than transcend limited representations of black women in the history of slavery. Let us now closely examine the promise and problems of Phillips’s novel.

The inaccessible object of interpretation: black women in Phillips’s *Cambridge*

Given the virulent racism that characterizes many colonial travellers’ accounts, what can a twentieth-century novelist gain in re-creating them?¹⁷ For one thing, Phillips makes crucial aspects of the archive available to an audience wider than that which reads the archive for scholarly pursuits. As Evelyn O’Callaghan has shown, Phillips reconstructs Emily’s travel journal through a ‘deliberate, even ostentatious borrowing and echoing’ of the journals of Lady Maria Nugent and Mrs Carmichael, women of polite English society. He not only replicates the phraseology, diction and scenes of his sources, but lifts ‘specific incidents, phrases, even whole passages’ from them.¹⁸ The result is a diary rendered in formal, sculptured language that would seem to present a historical and detailed view of a West Indian plantation but that, instead, renders plain the narcissism and prejudices of a colonial perspective.

Emily’s lengthy narrative reflects her status as an elite subaltern and is shaped by the conventions that bind her to speak as such. As the daughter of a London-based plantation owner, Emily’s journal presents a West Indian estate and its inhabitants according to an imperialist discourse yet her place within this discourse is clearly established as marginal. Her text emerges out of a set of strategies for speaking from such an ambiguous authority, strategies that Phillips presents as historical. Emily’s journal includes many forms that

stabilize her authority: it is a mixture of genres (missionary, romance, adventure tales), of narrative modes (lyric rhapsody, poetic and objective perspectives), and of informative propositions (botanical information, recipes). As Eve Marie Kroller has shown, these are the most common rhetorical features used by Victorian women travellers in forging authoritative voices. Emily's simultaneous acknowledgement and dissimulation of the partial nature of her account, for example, is a strategy that Kroller identifies as central in such travel writing. Hence, her use of set-pieces of natural description to familiarize her new and exotic environment and her use of servants' explanations to translate 'a foreign epistemology', are part of the pastiche Phillips creates out of these strategies to emphasize the embattled nature of Emily's enunciative authority as well as that of the historical record from which he draws.¹⁹

Yet Emily's limitations as a narrator produce the irony of the colonial text, which, as Paul Sharrad argues, 'obscures and silences Empire by covering it over with inscription, by offering the impression of total description, papering over gaps, containing dialogue and denying intercourse'.²⁰ And Phillips allows us to see the process of this papering over. Emily's limitations are bound, ironically, to the limits she claims for those who are enslaved. The women she first encounters on the estate, for example, represent for her a mock, sad version of herself: a woman, a mistress and a speaking subject. Stella, who welcomes her to the Great House, 'holds herself as though the mistress', but she is betrayed by her 'jet' skin and the 'immodest proportions' of her large body.²¹ These, Emily notes, make a mockery of the lady-like gestures with which Stella welcomes her. Stella's 'comical jargon' and her 'curious thick utterance', moreover, make it clear to Emily that the enslaved cannot speak, they can only mock and imitate speech or gesture hopelessly through their bodies.²² But it is Christiania's presence that most dramatically emphasizes Emily's ambiguous power. For Emily, Christiania is the wildness that opposes civility, the incarnation of libido and a questionable, even dangerous emblem of freedom. Being outside marriage and Christianity makes her repulsive because she is without status and order. At the same time, she is attractive, because she is free of the constraints which civility imposes upon women like Emily.

Hayden White has suggested that 'wild savagery' is a conceptual archetype for understanding difference, one that has a long and complex history of use.²³ In Emily's particular deployment of it, however, the archetype of the wild savage has a definitively gendered nature as it imbricates the presence of an enslaved woman with an aberrant sexuality, this sexuality with insurgency, and insurgency with silence. Christiania enters Emily's journal *only* as a sexual entity whose sexuality, or as Emily terms it, 'insubordination', stands in the

place of her utterance.²⁴ The first time Christiania enters Emily's cognitive field, she enters the Great House's dining room, walks directly to the table, takes a seat and whispers something into the overseer's ear – *something we cannot hear*. In place of her words, we have Emily's: her entrance is a 'sudden intrusion', her whispering an act of 'insubordination', and Christiania herself a 'black wench' whose manners and motives can only be read within the realm of a vulgar, excessive sexuality.²⁵ In subsequent and similar dining room scenes, Christiania emerges in Emily's text as the 'insolent' and 'intrusive' 'slattern' whose 'presence' must be explained.²⁶ But this never happens. Brown, the overseer, merely denies any allegation of a sexual liaison between him and the 'wench' and remains silent. For her part, Christiania only flashes Emily a broad smile and slides 'out noiselessly'.²⁷

In Cambridge's own narrative, which Phillips constructs by replicating the structure and rhetoric of slave and criminal narratives, Cambridge provides possible names for and traces of Christiania.²⁸ She is born out of rape and raped herself, she is a victim and, as such, a life bound by violence. But she is also powerful in part because she is an obeah woman. When she enters his text, she is the 'exceedingly strange, yet spiritually powerful young girl', who brings him 'food and water' in the 'isolation' of the hut where he is to be '*seasoned* a slave'.²⁹ And she is also silent. Despite the fact that Cambridge notes her taciturn nature, her power and spirit, he inscribes her as transparently simple, melancholy, and perhaps mad. Such is the result of a narrative that seeks to represent Cambridge as the exceptional captive with almost messianic powers. Though by his own admission, 'her undeniably spiritual nature' is 'absorbed in an entirely different direction' than his Christian words, Cambridge develops a 'powerful sympathetic affection' for her and wishes to make her his wife. What is the nature of this desire? Desire for what and for whom? Of Christiania herself we hear but silence. 'Without uttering a word, she willingly agreed [to be my wife] . . . And so we began to share our lives . . .'³⁰

The mystery of Christiania's power and identity – she is enslaved and yet free, sexual object and subject, named Christiania (to echo a Christian baptism?) and the obeah woman, defined and undefined – draws Emily towards her own mysteries. The novel's opening pages render Emily, like a character out of a work by Aphra Behn, silently voicing her 'buried feelings' as her father declares he will marry her for money.³¹ She listens 'as her voice unspool[s] in silence. Feelings locked deep inside . . . hopes that demand' not to be abandoned 'for years of cold fleshiness . . .' in a marriage to a widower many years her elder.³² Her stifled self-realization attains possibility when she meets Christiania because it is then that she faces the terror of her buried feelings.

In Cambridge's narrative, Christiania seems far less powerful; she is the victim of the routine and sanctioned raping of black women under slavery. And yet she is also the person who mocks Cambridge's Christian faith and his fervent belief that literacy equals freedom. If we know anything nearly concrete about Christiania, it is that 'she mistrusts words'; that she prefers the incantations of obeah to Emily's endless description and Cambridge's muted eloquence. In fact, she mocks their neat attempts, respectively, to paper over silences and to master the chaos of homelessness with words.³³ Arguably, Cambridge kills Brown because, within the sexual economy of slavery, Brown mocks Cambridge's efforts to perform the office of protector-husband and denies him the 'right' to subjugate Christiania's enigmatic power.

In the actual sound and spelling of her name Christiania signifies the closeness her power bears to Cambridge's Christianity and, at same time, it spells out its difference and obeah nature. As transported to the New World by African captives, voodoo (of which obeah is an expression) incorporated Christian iconography and beliefs and transformed and relocated their meanings. Voodoo practitioners were thus able to continue their practices covertly even as they seemed to participate in Christianizing conversions. While the closeness of Christiania's name to Christianity linguistically suggests the act of conversion, her resistance to Cambridge's Christian proselytizing dramatizes the voodoo practitioner's refusal to relinquish her own beliefs and practices despite the possibilities of self-empowerment offered by Christianity. Christiania openly 'mocks' Cambridge's 'Christian beliefs' and yields power through her own system of belief.³⁴ Moreover, to say Christiania's name is in a sense to echo the word Christianity. Like Phillips's echoing of the archival within the literary then, the sound and spelling of Christiania's name designates a repetition with a displacement.

As a figure of silence in the novel, Christiania is circumscribed by an interpretable set of texts; the blank space of her identity and agency exists between the lines of what it is said about her. In Emily's text, she is the elaboration of a savage insurgency while in Cambridge's and the newspaper's account, she is an innocuous and transparent object. Each of these statements attempts to frame her presence and fails. What they inscribe instead is the form, the shape of silence surrounding Christiania, the person, the human being. In inscribing their desire for and of Christiania, both Emily and Cambridge project images of their respective subject positions. Hence, the novel's elite subalterns gain something like an identity as they frame the presence of silence. But they do so at a great expense: Christiania is ultimately the inaccessible object of interpretation in *Cambridge*. A great deal of the power of Phillips's novel lies precisely in its

efforts to dramatize the effect that Christiania's presence has on the production of the texts that represent her obliquely. But in replicating the rhetorical processes by which Christiania becomes the ultimate sign of silence in the archive, Phillips also replicates the violence that rendered black women voiceless.

In Walcott's *Omeros*, as in *Cambridge*, black women are bound within identities characterized by either excessive or absent sexuality and by silence. But if Walcott does not transcend the limitations that Phillips's *Cambridge* makes evident in its critique of how black women figure in the archive of slavery, he is better able to represent the pathos that is muted in the section of Phillips's novel devoted to the enslaved man we come to know as Cambridge (like Equiano, this man must live under several names imposed upon him by his masters). To some extent, this section of the novel functions as a 'footnote' to Emily's narrative, one that turns her colonialist assertions 'upside down'.³⁵ At the same time, Phillips highlights Cambridge's own distorted perspective and the omissions and contradictions that characterize it. One of the most glaring omissions is the full extent of the grief that Cambridge experiences as a captive who is wrenched from his homeland and thrust into the Middle Passage and slavery. In Walcott's *Omeros* that grief takes centre stage.

The sea as an archive: Derek Walcott, modern elegy, and New World slavery

Helen, one of the main black female figures in *Omeros*, is seen from the outside as sexualized and desirable on various levels. Men compete for her 'sexual attentions'; the two writer figures in the poem, Major Plunkett and Walcott (as persona), construct and deconstruct her respectively as muse for St Lucia's historiography and poetry; Plunkett presents history as a British and French competition for St Lucia (originally named Helen) to possess the 'Helen of the West Indies', and finally, she is seen by Maud Plunkett and other women as an 'arrogant ebony' woman of questionable moral standards.³⁶ From these outside perspectives, she is often figured as a preying animal (a 'padding panther') or a 'whore'.³⁷ Despite the fact that she lives in modern times, Walcott's Helen, like Phillips's Christiania, figures as a powerful character known to others only through the signs of her sex.

Besides Helen, the only other significant black woman figure in *Omeros* is Ma Kilman. Like Helen, Ma Kilman exercises definite power within the text; she is a mother-healer-conductor of tradition. Yet she is also boxed in an asexual role, and like Helen, she never transcends the limitations imposed

upon her by her position in the epic poem. Neither of them experiences the physical and discursive mobility Walcott bestows upon characters like Achilles, a central black male character, and Plunkett. While Walcott does question his own representation of these women, and of Helen in particular, he does not develop strategies to surmount the dilemmas he acknowledges. In fact, he only suggests the challenges of representing the perspective of the black female subaltern and leaves unanswered a series of questions that, as we will see, Gayl Jones addresses in *Corregidora*. Why do these challenges revolve around sexuality? How were they produced by the economic conditions of slavery? How are they maintained, challenged or transformed in the current historiographic and fictional discourse of slavery?

In *Omeros* and in his earlier set of poems, *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (1979), Walcott focuses instead on the painful particularities of captivity and enslavement by creating Shabine and Achille, epic personae who imaginatively revisit and excavate sites of memory: the floor of the Atlantic and precolonial Africa. In both works, Walcott appropriates and reinvigorates the epic form and figures nature, specifically the sea, in ways that revise its use in both traditional and modern modes of elegy. For instance, he pointedly refuses to find consolation in nature, a common characteristic of elegy, in part because he mourns events of such tragic magnitude that any attempt to find consolation would be obscene. He also refuses to draw correspondences between human experience and nature, another characteristic of elegy. Rather nature, specifically the sea, becomes the site of seemingly contradictory images and a site which is also significantly textual: it is at once a metaphorical blank page upon which the poet writes a history of trauma and one that the poet interprets through his lyrical power.

Early in his career Walcott sees nature as a force that consumes or erases historical evidence. In early poems such as 'The Gulf', and 'Air', nature is, as Ross Leckie observes, both 'an anti-cultural figure that absorbs the nightmare of history [and] ... a balm that removes the pain of historical horror'.³⁸ By contrast, in 'The Sea is History', a pivotal poem in *The Star-Apple Kingdom*, the sea becomes a 'grey vault' that Walcott opens in order to elucidate a history of dispossession, including not only that of slavery, but also of indentured servitude and colonialism. Contesting the notion that the Caribbean is a history-less landscape, natural and empty of culture, the poem presents the sea as a fictive depository of history, one to which we gain access through metaphor. Walcott calls attention to the conceit through the beauty of the poem's language and develops it through the voice of the narrator who guides us 'through colonnades of coral ... past the gothic windows of sea fans ...' to

the sea floor where we figuratively encounter the 'drowned women' and men, those 'who sank without tombs'.³⁹

Like Hayden's 'Middle Passage' the poem honours the victims of the slave trade. Walcott imagines the bodies of the millions who died in the crossing resting in the 'plucked wires / of sunlight on the sea floor'. But he also challenges traditional elegy by not transforming them into figures of nature. Indeed, the dead remain at rest and their demise – the 'packed cries', the 'shit and moaning' of the Middle Passage – is what the poem recognizes as an irrevocable and tragic loss.⁴⁰ The poem thus rejects the colonialist ideology of history as achievement and development, presenting history as the passion of the victims of the Middle Passage, slavery and colonialism.

If nature can serve the poet as a metaphoric archive of a history of dispossession, it can just as easily figure as an indifferent witness. From another perspective, the poem suggests, the ocean could simply 'keep[] turning [its] blank pages // Looking for History' because it would not recognize the deaths of those 'who sank without tombs' as historical.⁴¹ In the poem, this perspective is associated with that of the master/colonialist and contrasted to that of the narrator who deliberately presents nature in metaphoric terms in order to highlight the disruption of culture enforced by the slave trade. The blank pages to which the narrator alludes suggest a lack produced not only by the colonialist's limited perspective but also by the violence of the slave trade, which denied its victims the right to testimony.

The poem metaphorically substitutes, for the lost history implied by the 'blank pages', the image of the sea as a fictional archive but it also highlights the fact that such a substitution is always already a conceit. In 'The Schooner *Flight*', another central poem of *The Star-Apple Kingdom*, Walcott introduces us to a poet/sailor nicknamed Shabine who penetrates this archive and becomes temporarily overwhelmed by a vision of those who perished in the Middle Passage. Walcott gives Shabine's experiences an explicitly psychological focus, casting him in the role of the Freudian mourner who must revisit sites of trauma in order to free himself and, metonymically, the Caribbean from the potentially debilitating effects of a repressed history. While diving into the sea, Shabine is forced out of the confines of his individuality until his soul can see beyond the world he inhabits:

... this Caribbean so choke with the dead
that when I would melt in emerald water,
whose ceiling rippled like a silk tent,
I saw them corals: brain, fire, sea fans,
dead-men's-fingers, and then, the dead men.

I saw that the powdery sand was their bones
ground white from Senegal to San Salvador,
so, I panic . . . and surface.⁴²

The poem elucidates both the necessity of and the risks involved in claiming a painful past as Shabine almost becomes consumed by what he witnesses. In fact, when he surfaces he must spend a month at a madhouse being nourished by '[f]ish broth and sermons'. Shabine calls his vision of the dead a 'rapture', suggesting the hallucinations that deep-sea divers can experience as a result of nitrogen narcosis. But the word also suggests a mystical experience, a state of being spiritually possessed by something overwhelming. Walcott figures Shabine as a questing hero who must withstand and explore the power of such raptures without being undone by them. That is, in Shabine Walcott combines two figures: that of the Freudian mourner and that of the epic hero.

Making explicit use of Homer's Odysseus, Walcott presents Shabine as a journeying exile who is transformed through his travels and whose experiences allow him to 'give voice to [his] people's grief'.⁴³ In this sense, Shabine is like the traditional protagonist of the epic who is usually a heroic figure on whose actions depend the fate of a tribe, a nation. But Walcott reconfigures the heroic, which in the panegyric mode of the epic consists of physical contests, giving Shabine's feats a decidedly psychological and spiritual character.

The convergence of the psychology of trauma and Walcott's use of epic tropes might, at first sight, seem surprising. After all, we are accustomed to think of the epic form as one used to praise heroes of battles and not to mourn the plight of victims. But Walcott, who in *Omeros* refers to himself as Homer's 'freshest reader', uses the form of the epic in ways that remain faithful to its original purposes. As Thomas Greene reminds us, poems such as the Old Babylonian *Gilgamesh* and the Homeric epic do not focus on 'heroic achievement in itself', as is commonly believed, but rather on 'the affective cost of achievement'. What they lead towards, what they leave us with, Greene adds, 'is that acute personal recognition of pain, often the restorative sharing of pain, which [they] present . . . as the inescapable burden of action'.⁴⁴

In *Omeros*, Achille, like Shabine, encounters a startling vision of the Middle Passage. But unlike Shabine, Achille is not only a witness but also a vehicle through which the past and the present merge. While suffering from sunstroke, the fisherman encounters the dead who perished in the Middle Passage and then travels back in time to pre-colonial Africa. Among the dead, he sees 'the ghost / of his father's face' and is left to stare 'in pious horror'.⁴⁵ Walcott evokes the ancestor spirit of Achille's father and figures him as an embodied

being named Afolabe. Meanwhile Achille, a character of the poem's narrative present, is transported into the past. But Achille cannot make full contact with the world into which he is conjured. He knows that his father and tribe will suffer capture, the Middle Passage and enslavement; he knows it as his own memory and history and yet he cannot reveal or change anything. By positioning him in this predicament, Walcott allows Achille to understand history in the first person – to experience the actuality of the past as lived experience – but also to see it as a vision from which he is distanced.

Walcott stages Achille's encounters with Afolabe and Africa as intense moments of union *and* separation. He both projects Achille's experiences as an intoxicating ritual of memory and stresses their fictive nature by slipping in references to his own craft. The muscles that bulge from Achille's back as he experiences his sunstroke are depicted with a telling simile. They are likened to 'porpoises leaping out of *this* line / from the gorge of our memory'; they leap, as it were, out of Walcott's own poetry.⁴⁶ Similarly, Achille likens what he first sees of the 'other world', the world of his ancestors, to 'the African movies / he yelped at in childhood. . .'.⁴⁷ The reference to the movies suggests the image of a fiction within a fiction, thus stressing the craft through which Walcott renders his protagonist's trip. When Achille's screen images eventually flicker into 'real mirages', he begins to 'mov[e] with the dead' but only when he loses his own substantiality. To his horror, Achille realizes that his body casts no shadow.⁴⁸ Thus, as Achille comes into the depths of his history ('into his own beginning and his end'), he himself becomes a fiction of a fiction.⁴⁹ The sense Walcott evokes is surreal: a 'light inside him wakes, skipping centuries, ocean and river and Time itself' and he comes to face 'himself' in the image of his 'father' conjured to life.⁵⁰ Memory thus becomes the 'real mirage' of the past and the present in simultaneous correspondence.

Through this dialogic notion of time, Walcott makes the reader privy to the intense but astonished feelings between father and son; he makes tangible the gap between the two and suggests the sense of loss and longing between them. We are told that when they meet, they swirl 'in the estuary of a bewildered love'.⁵¹ But, within the motion of this love, Achille in fact begins to realize that, although the experience he is gaining through his racial memory is his birth-right, Africa is no longer home. Afolabe, on the other hand, does not recognize the values personified by his son.

Staging a dialogue between father and son and, by implication, between the New (Caribbean) and Old (Africa) world, Walcott shows the inescapable fact of their severance and evokes the grief involved in accepting their loss. While Achille is ineluctably estranged from his forebears in his knowledge of the

future, Afolabe struggles to know essential qualities about Achille including the nature of his name:

AFOLABE

Achille. What does the name mean? I have forgotten the one
that I gave you. But it was, it seems, many years ago.
What does it mean?

ACHILLE

Well, I too have forgotten.
Everything was forgotten. You also. I do not know.
The deaf sea has changed around every name that you gave
us; trees, men, we yearn for a sound that is missing.

AFOLABE

A name means something. The qualities desired in a son,
and even a girl-child; so even the shadows who called
you expected one virtue, since every name is a blessing,

since I am remembering the hope I had for you as a child.
Unless the sound means nothing. Then you would be nothing.
Did they think you were nothing in that other kingdom?⁵²

Afolabe's question speaks to a history of dispossession inscribed in Achille's name. In fact, as Rei Terada notes, when father and son speak 'we become conscious of the nearly incomprehensible sequence of events by which Achille came to be a St Lucian fisherman named, of all things, Achille'.⁵³ The tribe's response to the dialogue suggests the pathos produced by the meeting: we are told that while listening, the tribe senses the threat 'of amnesia [and] oblivion', and that it begins to sway with fear and grief.⁵⁴

Through a vision within the ongoing sunstroke 'trip' to Africa, Achille journeys undersea across the three centuries back to 'the life he had left behind'.⁵⁵ But, though we follow him until he emerges from the surf in the Caribbean, Achille awakens from his truncated dream back in Africa. As we shall see, Walcott keeps him in the ancestral site of dispossession because, though it is no longer home, it is the place from where he must re-experience the traumatic severance between himself and the tribe in order to heal himself and his island. Indeed, Walcott re-stages the moment of capture and allows us to witness it both from Achille's individual perspective and from a moving panoramic angle. Thus, when Achille awakens from his submarine trip to the Caribbean, he is caught in the open as a band of slave traders raid his tribe's village, killing and capturing all around him as though he were not present. In relegating Achille to the role of a helpless observer, Walcott stresses his inability to rectify historical injustice.⁵⁶

Though the raid is so 'swift' that it is over before Achille knows it, he is left to witness its painful aftermath and it is here that Walcott allows us to bear witness and mourn with Achille. After the raid, he climbs a ridge and there counts the captives, now chained 'by their wrists with vines', moving in the distance like a 'line of ants'.⁵⁷ Helpless, Achille moans 'as the last ant disappear[s]'.⁵⁸ Then, walking around the 'barren village', he grieves the sight of its 'doors like open graves', giving way into a vast silence that signifies absence and loss.⁵⁹ 'Achille turned away // down another street. Then another, to more and more silence'.⁶⁰

Walcott weaves the perspectives of the captives who are sold on the coast and transported across the ocean with Achille's mourning voice and that of the poem's narrator through a 'song / of sorrow' Achille hears in the wake of the raid. This song projects a series of images through which we see the captives' passion. Some of them die in the crossing, floating in the wake of slave ships, yet others survive carrying within them the seeds of their disrupted culture. 'The chained wrists couldn't forget', Walcott sings, their arts and their tools. Carvers, potters, painters, 'each carried the nameless freight of himself to the new world'.⁶¹ Within them, was the 'itching instinct' to make, to create with their palms, with their signs.⁶² 'There is the epical splendour', the narrator states simply.⁶³ Walcott celebrates the survivors' perseverance in the face of so much loss without recourse to facile sentimentalism.

Walcott's emphasis on craft and creativity as the 'nameless freight' brought across the Middle Passage by the survivors of the slave trade subtly suggests his own sensibility as he fictionalizes slavery from a postcolonial perspective. Rather than depend on the archive, as Phillips does, Walcott reinvigorates the epic form to mourn the many who were erased or distorted in the pages of that archive. Through his craft and creativity, he highlights its gaps. At the same time, he does not naïvely position himself as one who can correct them.

Gayl Jones's *Corregidora*, through its title alone, might suggest the corrective impulse that Walcott refuses. And to some extent it does. Unlike Phillips and Walcott, Jones challenges the primacy of the textual in historical fictionalizations of slavery and, in so doing, reveals the phallocentrism of the archive. Yet Jones, like Walcott, stresses the importance of the creative impulse in the effort to transcend the limits of the historical record that Phillips's *Cambridge* so eloquently delineates.

'I'll sing it as you talked it': *Corregidora* and the limits of the archive

As John Cullen Gruesser argues in *Confluences: Postcolonialism, African American Literary Studies and the Black Atlantic* (2005), given the 'formidable similarities

between postcolonial and African American literary criticism, exemplified but by no means limited to [the works of Edward Said and Toni Morrison], it is both surprising and regrettable that only a handful of postcolonial theorists have sufficiently accounted for black American literature and that African Americans have in general been resistant to postcolonial theoretical concepts'.⁶⁴ Gruesser rightly grants that the 'experiences of people of African descent in the United States differ markedly and profoundly from those of persons from colonized and formerly colonized lands'. Yet, as exemplified perhaps most dramatically by Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993), the intersection of African American literary and postcolonial studies can yield tremendous insights.⁶⁵ Fiction writers have certainly explored the intersection. African American novelist Gayl Jones, for instance, has usefully contrasted the historiography of slavery in colonial Brazil to that of American chattel slavery, while highlighting the similarities between the sexual subjection of black women in two slave societies in the Americas.

When Jones's novel opens, it is 1968, but Ursa Corregidora, its protagonist and narrator, is remembering herself in 1947, singing the blues in Happy's Café while her jealous husband, 'looking drunk and evil', tries to peek in from the outside through a window.⁶⁶ While singing helps Ursa keep her composure, it does not shield her from her husband's jealousy and possessiveness. Ursa's tale begins with him pushing her down a set of stairs, causing her not only to have a miscarriage but also to lose the capacity to bear children. What the singing as well as the remembering of her story allows her to do, however, is to explore the myths, ambiguities, contradictions, and continuities of a familial and historical drama through the prism of her particular and intimate predicament of loss, love, anger and desire. Ursa was born into a legacy of dispossession and abuse that originates in pre-emancipation Brazil, where a slave owner known as Corregidora raped and prostituted Ursa's great-grandmother and incestuously fathered both her grandmother and mother. Forbidding them any sexual relations with black men, Corregidora also denied Ursa's mothers the choice to have children and oppressed them with such violence that Ursa, the first not to be fathered by Corregidora, feels its effects a century later in post-segregation Kentucky.⁶⁷

Compounding the oppression Ursa's mothers suffered at the hands of their master is the fact that in 1891 a provisional government of Brazil ordered the archives of slavery burned. As a result, the mothers do not have textual evidence for the abuse endured. Determined to invert Corregidora's oppression and to resist the subalternity to which official history relegates them, but unwilling to trust written forms of recollection, Ursa's mothers insist that

their daughters keep giving birth to children that can safeguard and relay their oral testimony across generations. 'I am leaving evidence', Ursa's grandmother tells her, 'And you got to leave evidence too. And your children got to leave evidence.'⁶⁸ 'They can burn the papers but they can't burn conscious, Ursa. And that's what makes the evidence.'⁶⁹

When Ursa becomes sterile, she is faced with the impossibility of maintaining her mothers' legacy and forced to contend with its contradictions and limitations. Ursa comes to realize that the oral narrative her forebears pass on claims for itself the power of absolute truth and that it narrows the scope of remembrance to Corregidora, to his desire, his crimes and the hatred he inspired. Insisting not only on the truth of their testimony but also on specific forms of response (namely anger and hatred), the mothers repeat their story so often that the telling itself becomes automatic; in Ursa's words, it becomes 'a substitute for memory'.⁷⁰ As Bruce Simon puts it, by the time she and her mother are forced into the project of bearing witness, that project 'has become' one 'merely of bearing witnesses' so alienated are they from the feelings provoked by the history to which the mothers were subjected.⁷¹

Through an innovative narrative style that incorporates the aesthetic power of the blues, Ursa invents a way of maintaining while transcending her mothers' legacy. She inscribes the aesthetics of the blues into her own narrative, exploring the relationship between bearing witness to cultural trauma and perpetuating injury and revealing, specifically, how her mothers' memories of sexual oppression imprison their desire and her own. Offering her narrative as the means to testify to that imprisonment, Ursa also presents it as the form through which she gives voice to the outlawed erotic power of her and her mothers' captive sexuality.

As an expressive mode that can contain contradictions in a state of unresolved suspension, the blues allows Ursa to express the paralyzing fear, anger and pain occasioned by her own loss and to move beyond, freeing herself and her desire from the obligation her mothers impose upon her. Using the story of her physical and emotional recovery, she expresses a paradigmatic blues condition (which is, to rephrase Ralph Ellison): the impulse to 'keep the painful details and episodes of [her mothers'] brutal experience alive in [her] aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it, not by the consolation of philosophy but by squeezing from it' lyrical expression.⁷² Ursa sings about loss and desire but, rather than doing so through a rigidly personalized form, she offers a meditation of experiences encompassing the lives of her ancestors and of those coming in contact with her in the now.

Significantly, Ursa learns to sing the blues by listening to the sound of her mothers' testimony. She generates or, rather, is forced to invent a new form of testifying to the past, a form that mines her ancestors' legacy as a source or matrix for her art. In the process, she produces a memory of slavery that is at once fiercely individualistic and communal. 'I am Ursa Corregidora,' she declares, 'I have tears for eyes. I was made to touch my past at an early age. I found it on my mother's tiddies. In her milk. Let no one pollute my music. I will dig out their temples. I will pluck out their eyes.'⁷³

Ralph Ellison argues that the blues 'imply far more than they state outright' and that they 'make us constantly aware of the meanings which shimmer just beyond the limits of the lyrics'.⁷⁴ Ursa listens against the grain for the moments in which feeling slips through the mothers' stories, the moments that suggest, as Ursa puts it, the 'somewhere behind the words' of their evidence.⁷⁵ She incorporates the stories she hears from the mothers, the critical listening she does as she hears them and the signifying she effects to change them from disembodied tales to the written re-collection she reproduces as her living testimony. Reconstructing the scenes of her listening, Ursa states:

Great Gram sat in the rocker. I was on her lap. She told the same story over and over again. She had her hands around my waist, and I had my back to her. While she talked, I'd stare down at her hands. She would fold them and then unfold them. She didn't need her hands around me to keep me in her lap, and sometimes I'd see the sweat in her palms . . . Once when she was talking, she started rubbing my thighs with her hands, and I could feel the sweat on my legs. Then she caught herself, and stopped⁷⁶

It is through listening to the feelings that slip through Great Gram's constant repetition, that Ursa learns how to sing. Circumscribed by their vigilant insistence on disembodied repetition, Great Gram's and Grandmama's desire slips across a 'rocking' and a 'talking' that expresses a 'genealogy of [rhythms], a blood-line of [beats] and [notes] that are transmitted' to Ursa 'in the body, in oral discourse'.⁷⁷ Like Ellison, Madhu Dubey reminds us that the 'blues voice does not name but only intimates, through breath and rhythm and intonation, what slips through language'.⁷⁸ As Ursa remembers:

My mother would work while my grandmother told me, then she'd come home and tell me. I'd go to school and come back and be told. When I was real little, Great Gram rocking me and talking.⁷⁹

Listening behind the constant repetition, Ursa surmises not only the desire of the older women but that of her mother whose eroticism is so suppressed that it seems to be on the verge of explosion:

I never saw my mamma with a man . . . But she wasn't a virgin because of me. And still was heavy with virginity. Her swollen belly with no child inside . . . And still, it was as if my mother's whole body shook with that first birth . . . Loneliness. I could feel it, like she was breathing it, like it was all in the air. Desire, too . . . Desire and loneliness.⁸⁰

The mother's stubborn desire makes itself evident to Ursa who can feel it 'like it was all in the air'. 'I'll sing it as you talked it,' Ursa later tells her mother, 'your voice humming . . .'⁸¹ However, Ursa does not sing exactly as the mothers talk; rather she signifies and improvises upon the blues she hears shimmering beyond their narrative and upon the blues tradition more generally.

Ursa builds a textual matrix, a web through which she weaves the stories she inherits with those she experiences personally, articulating how the legacy of Corregidora's sexual oppression intertwines with the cultural memories of slavery borne by the African American men and women with whom she lives in Kentucky. Ursa's textual matrix becomes the juncture wherein all the different voices of the novel and temporalities intersect (1891, the year that the archives are burnt in Brazil, 1947 Kentucky, or segregation era America, and 1968, the year that Martin Luther King is shot). This is most clearly evident as Ursa articulates how the legacy of slavery affects the relationships that she and her mother have with the men they marry. In the middle of relating the story of her quest to redefine the terms of her identity and sexuality, Ursa pauses to include what she calls her mother's 'private memory'.⁸² At this point, she bequeaths her role of principal narrator to 'Mama', who relates the intimate aspects of her life in the United States, aspects that have been buried by the great-mothers' unrelenting narrative of hatred. Mama reveals the extent to which the memories of Corregidora have bound her desire and kept her locked in a legacy of abuse. She tells of meeting Martin (Ursa's father) and not letting herself 'feel anything' in their sexual relations.⁸³ Trapped as she is by her mothers' reproductive injunction, she does not want Martin, 'the man himself', 'his fussy body'.⁸⁴ As Amy Gottfried puts it, she only wants 'a tool for vengeance', a means to conceive a witness and to fulfill the mothers' requirement.⁸⁵ But Mama also reveals how this aggravates the cultural scar that Martin, as an African American man, inherits. As various critics have commented, Mama makes Martin feel trapped in a stereotype that painfully recalls the sexual violence committed against captive men during slavery, that of a male breeder.⁸⁶

Ursa does not hear her mother's 'private memory' until well into her adulthood because her mother is compelled to subject her to the Corregidora narrative rather than share her own life with her. When she finally does, she realizes that her marriages (first to Mutt, the man who pushes her down a set

of stairs, and then to Tadpole, the man she marries immediately after) fail in part because, like her mother, she has incorporated the Corregidora legacy into the very core of her being. The depth of her mother's psychic attachment to the past is most clear when she witnesses how, in the middle of speaking out her 'private memory', Mama abruptly begins to relate the most explicit and detailed account of Corregidora's sexual oppression. Significantly, Ursa notices that, to tell the tale, Mama wholly adopts Great Gram's identity and voice. 'Mama kept talking until it wasn't her that was talking, but Great Gram. I stared at her because she wasn't Mama now, she was Great Gram.'⁸⁷ The tale involves a young man who is lynched after he is seen talking to Great Gram. Threatened by the sight, Corregidora rapes Great Gram and brutally kills the young man.⁸⁸

Ursa incorporates both the explicit and violent details of the tale, showing, at the same time, how the past interrupts the narrative of her mother's desire. In fact, argues Bruce Simon, as 'a medium' for 'Great Gram's testimony and traumatic experience', Mama becomes a vehicle (a body) for someone else's experience and submerges her own feelings and voice.⁸⁹ While witnessing Mama, Ursa realizes the extent to which her own narrative of desire has been penetrated by the past. She, too, has buried her feelings in the mothers' memories, making it impossible for her to make love to her husbands and promoting an atmosphere of thwarted desire and anger that eventually provokes Mutt to physical violence.

Because Ursa's narrative is structured as a web of interconnected stories, the reader is able to see that Mutt is also motivated by his own unprocessed attachment to the legacy of slavery. He is obsessed with controlling his wife, arguing against her singing in public because he believes it exposes her sexually to other men. He pushes her while trying to force her off stage, propelled by his own fear that the fate of his ancestors, who were repeatedly dispossessed of their roles as husbands within the system of slavery, will also befall him. As Mutt tells Ursa, his great-grandfather lost his own wife after 'buying' her from slavery because 'he got into debt . . . and so they come and took his wife. The courts judged that it was legal because even if she fulfilled the duties of wife, he had bought her, and so she was also property.'⁹⁰ Though Mutt demands that Ursa stop retelling the stories of slavery and warns her against eliding their lives with those of their ancestors ('[w]hichever ways you look at it, we ain't them'), he cannot act on his own words.⁹¹ Mutt wants to control Ursa because, as Stelamaris Coser argues, he has internalized 'the sexist morality established in the Americas by the colonial system: he wants to possess a woman, to control her and brand her as his property'.⁹²

Tadpole, too, wants to possess and control Ursa. During her marriage to him, Ursa discovers clitoral sexuality as a form of pleasure outside the reproductive injunction that binds her mothers' desire but is unable to explore it partly because Tadpole, like Mutt, also re-enacts forms of patriarchal domination that are implicitly connected to the history of slavery (Tadpole's and Mutt's names invoke the brutality of that history, in which black men were animalized). 'I was struggling against him,' Ursa states, 'trying to feel what I wasn't feeling. Then he reached down and fingered my clitoris, which made me feel more.'⁹³ Yet Ursa is unable to admit to the pleasure that she discovers, stating simply that what she 'felt didn't have words'.⁹⁴ In part, her silence and reticence are a result of Tadpole's inability to understand that Ursa has needs beyond his own. In fact, their marriage collapses because he interprets Ursa's desire to explore her sexuality outside the realms of possession and reproduction as her inability to be a 'real' woman that can satisfy his needs.⁹⁵

If the web of intersecting stories Ursa constructs emphasizes the limitations placed upon descendants of New World slavery, her imagined dialogues, reveries and blues songs express her desire to remember and transcend the history that produced those limitations in her own life. 'I wanted a song that would touch me, touch my life *and* theirs' she states, a 'Portuguese song, but not a Portuguese song. A new world song. A song branded with the new world'.⁹⁶ Ursa's songs, which I am unable to explicate within the confines of this chapter, simultaneously suggest the intermingling of freedom with captivity, witnessing with incrimination, sexuality, desire, and pain. Most importantly perhaps, they attest to the need for formal experimentation in order to avoid depending on archives, whether textual or oral, in representing slavery in the now.

Not everyone has appreciated the achievement that is Jones's *Corregidora* or, for that matter that of its predecessor, Jacobs's *Incidents*. The authenticity of Jacobs's narrative was questioned until 1987, when Jean Fagan Yellin republished the narrative with a well-documented introduction. Jones's novel, published during the height of Black Power (with its 'black is beautiful' motto) was criticized for rendering a negative portrait of black sexuality. Now, over a quarter of a century since the publication of Jones's novel and decades after the authentication of Jacobs's narrative, the impact of both texts is undeniable. The aforementioned *Beloved* as well as Sherley Anne Williams's *Dessa Rose* (1986) powerfully attest to this impact, as does Marlon James's more recent *The Book of Night Women* (2009).

James's novel takes place on a Jamaican sugar plantation at the beginning of the nineteenth century and centres on slave women who, after struggling to retain their humanity in the face of constant rape, torture and murder, lead a

bloody if ultimately unsuccessful revolt. Told in a narrative voice that matches the women's fierceness, the novel gives full voice to figures like Phillips's Christiania and Walcott's Helen, women of indefatigable power. James thus extends a tradition in anglophone West Indian literature that treats the history of black women under slavery and colonialism, including Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) and extending through Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* (1983), *Autobiography of My Mother* (1996), Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* (1985) and Erna Brodber's *Myal* (1988), among others.⁹⁷ Like more recent American publications, especially Edward P. Jones's tour de force, *The Known World* (2003), this fiction depends less on archival sources and uses a more lyrical approach to the complicated and violent history of slavery.⁹⁸ In this way it expands the resonance of something that threatens to exhaust the understanding and makes room for further representations of a historic horror that might be considered unrepresentable.

Notes

1. Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko; or The Royal Slave* (1688), ed. Catherine Gallagher and Simon Stern (Boston and New York: Bedford/St Martin's, 2000); Biyi Bandele, *Aphra Behn's Oroonoko* (London: Amber Lane Press, 1999).
2. Catherine Gallagher and Simon Stern, 'Introduction', *Oroonoko; or The Royal Slave*, ed. Gallagher and Stern, pp. 13–16, 7, 24.
3. Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789), ed. Werner Sollors (New York: Norton, 2001).
4. Lisa Lowe, 'Autobiography out of empire', *Small Axe*, 28.13 (March 2009), 100, 103.
5. Vincent Carretta questions the authenticity of Equiano's account of Africa and the Middle Passage in *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005).
6. Caryl Phillips, *Cambridge* (New York: Vintage International, 1991); Derek Walcott, *Omeros* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990), *The Star-Apple Kingdom* in *Collected Poems: 1948–1984* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990); Gayl Jones, *Corregidora* (1975; Boston: Beacon Press, 1986). All subsequent references will be made to the editions cited here.
7. Evelyn O'Callaghan, 'Historical fiction and fictional history: Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge*', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 28 (1993), 43.
8. Caryl Phillips, *Crossing the River* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993).
9. Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 53–64.
10. Toni Morrison, 'Site of Memory', in William Zinsser (ed.), *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), pp. 109–10.
11. Walcott, *Omeros*, pp. ii, xviii, 271.
12. Robert Hayden, 'Middle Passage' (1945), in *Collected Poems*, ed. Frederick Graysher (New York: Liveright, 1985), p. 48.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

14. Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), p. 6.
15. Harriet Jacobs [pseudo. Linda Brent], *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl Written by Herself* (1861), ed. and introduction Jean Fagan Yellin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).
16. Phillips, *Cambridge*, p. 31.
17. Zia Jaffrey, 'Colonial fiction', *The Nation*, 22 March 1992, p. 387.
18. O'Callaghan, 'Historical fiction and fictional history', p. 43.
19. Eve Marie Kroller, 'First impressions: rhetorical strategies in travel writing by Victorian women', *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, 21.4 (October 1990), 87–99; see also O'Callaghan, 'Historical fiction and fictional history', p. 42.
20. Paul Sharrad, 'Speaking the unspeakable', in Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (eds.), *De-Scribing Empire* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 214.
21. Phillips, *Cambridge*, p. 6.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
23. Hayden White, 'The forms of wildness: archaeology of an idea,' in *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 150–80.
24. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the subaltern speak?', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988), p. 287.
25. Phillips, *Cambridge*, p. 31.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 58, 73.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
28. See Daniel E. Williams, *Pillars of Salt: An Anthology of Early American Criminal Narratives* (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1993).
29. Phillips, *Cambridge*, p. 158.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
35. Jaffrey, 'Colonial fiction', p. 388.
36. Walcott, *Omeros*, pp. 16–17, 123–4.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 36, 115.
38. Ross Leckie, 'Empire and amnesia: the poetry of Derek Walcott', *Verso*, 11.2 (1994), 167.
39. Walcott, *Collected Poems: 1948–1984*, pp. 364–5. All references to *The Star-Apple Kingdom* will be made as it appears in this edition of Walcott's collected poetry.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 364.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 364.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 219.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 360.
44. Greene argues, in fact, that the narrative telos of most European poems commonly described as epics is the release of pathos in the form of tears and that this release is a communal experience shared in the performance of poetry by characters, audience and poet. Thomas M. Greene, 'The natural tears of epic', in Margaret Beissinger, Jane Tylus and Susanne Wofford (eds.), *Epic and Traditions in the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 192–93.
45. Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 130.

46. Ibid., p. 29, my emphasis.
47. Ibid., p. 133.
48. Ibid., pp. 133, 136.
49. Ibid., p. 134.
50. Ibid., p. 136.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., pp. 137–8.
53. Rei Terada, *Derek Walcott: American Mimicry* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), p. 28.
54. Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 138.
55. Ibid., p. 142.
56. Walcott suggests that the raid is conducted by Africans involved in the slave trade, signalling thus to a painful node in the history of slavery.
57. Walcott, *Omeros*, p. 145.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. John Cullen Gruesser, *Postcolonialism, African American Literary Studies and the Black Atlantic* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), p. 2.
65. Ibid.
66. Jones, *Corregidora*, p. 3.
67. Since the importation of slaves from Africa to Brazil did not end until years after the illegalization of importation into the United States, Brazilian slave owners did not have to breed their captives to increase their numbers.
68. Jones, *Corregidora*, p. 14.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Bruce Simon, 'Traumatic repetition: Gayl Jones' *Corregidora*', in Judith Fossett Jackson (ed.), *Race Consciousness: African American Studies for the New Century* (New York: University Press, 1997), p. 98.
72. Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York: Vintage, 1972), pp. 78–9.
73. Jones, *Corregidora*, p. 77.
74. Ellison, *Shadow*, p. 246.
75. Jones, *Corregidora*, p. 68.
76. Ibid., p. 11.
77. As quoted in Michael Andrew Bucknor, 'Body-vibes: (s) pacing the performance in Lillian Allen's dub poetry', *Thamyris*, 5.2 (Autumn 1998), p. 305.
78. Madhu Dubey, *Black Women Novelists and the Nationalist Aesthetic* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 85.
79. Jones, *Corregidora*, p. 101.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid., p. 53.
82. Ibid., p. 104.
83. Ibid., p. 101.
84. Ibid.
85. Amy Gottfried, 'Angry arts: silence, speech, and song in Gayl Jones's *Corregidora*', *African American Review*, 28.4 (Winter 1994), 565.

86. See Melvyn Dixon, 'Sing a deep song: language as evidence in the novels of Gayl Jones', in Mari Evans (ed.), *Black Women Writers: A Critical Evaluation* (Garden City, NY: Anchor-Doubleday, 1984), p. 242.
87. Jones, *Corregidora*, p. 124.
88. Ibid., pp. 127–8.
89. Ibid., p. 99.
90. Ibid., p. 151.
91. Ibid.
92. Stelamaris Coser, *Bridging the Americas: The Literature of Paule Marshall, Toni Morrison and Gayl Jones* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), p. 126.
93. Jones, *Corregidora*, p. 75.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid., pp. 88–9.
96. Ibid., p. 59.
97. For some of the most prominent texts in the anglophone Caribbean context to fictionalize slavery (in addition to the works discussed or mentioned in this chapter), see Caryl Phillips's *Higher Ground* (New York: Viking, 1989), Kamau Brathwaite's three-part epic *The Arrivants* (Oxford University Press, 1973). For a full bibliography of texts in the West African literary tradition, see Laura T. Murphy's PhD dissertation, 'Enduring memory: metaphors of the slave trade in West African literature', Harvard University, 2008.
98. Other texts in this tradition include but are not limited to Alex Haley's *Roots* (1976), Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (1979), Charles Johnson's *Oxherding Tale* (1982) and *Middle Passage* (1990), J. California Cooper's *Family* (1991) and *In Search of Satisfaction* (1994), Barbara Chase-Riboud's *The President's Daughter* (1994). They are popularly known as 'neo-slave narratives', a term coined by Bernard Bell in *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), p. 289. See Ashraf Rushdy, *Neo-Slave Narratives: Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Postcolonialism and travel writing

GARETH GRIFFITHS

Travel and colonialism

Travel and travel narratives shaped the way we understand the colonial and postcolonial world, and their importance to postcolonial studies has generated several book-length accounts in recent years.¹ Colonialism encompasses the stories of many kinds of travellers with many motives, European merchant venturers, colonial officials, explorers, missionaries, settlers and others become bound together with people of the colonized spaces, who themselves, as we will see, engaged in travel between their homelands and the world beyond.

Colonization may have begun, as was once remarked of the acquisition of the British Empire, 'in a fit of absent-mindedness', but it rapidly evolved into a way of consolidating these encounters in an emerging structure of conscious power and dominance. In the same way the early, random stories of encounter, which emerged as Europeans moved out to new lands, rapidly evolved into accounts that sought to impose European patterns and ideas on the experience of their expanding physical world. A full account of colonial travel literature might best begin by analysing some of the early ways the world was represented by these first random travellers beyond the then known world and how their narratives both shaped the imaginations of those who followed and inspired their curiosity and their cupidity. It might also consider how travel narratives began to shift the perspectives of Europeans as they began to embrace the wider horizons the travellers and their accounts brought home.

The opening phase: medieval and Renaissance travel

If we follow briefly and sketchily the pattern of European outward expansion we need to think of how Europe engaged first with the East and the southern Mediterranean littoral, its oldest and most intimate Other, then with sub-Saharan Africa, as Europeans explored the coastlines of the regions beyond

the straits of Gibraltar, and finally with the regions to the west, which had lain wholly beyond the knowledge or even the imagination of the mediaeval world of Europe, Asia and Africa, a world which ended where the Atlantic faded into the western horizon. In the medieval period traveller's tales were a mixture of conjecture, confused retelling of classical accounts and pure, often nightmarish, fantasy. Tales of spaces of unimagined wealth or splendour contested with tales of awesome terror and unimaginable barbarity. This daunting, entangled mixture of 'fact' and 'fiction' continued to haunt the earliest 'first-hand' accounts. The most famous of early Renaissance travellers, Marco Polo, and his account, commonly known in English as the *Travels of Marco Polo*, is still the subject of debate as to whether his journey is a mixture of fact and fiction, whether Polo wrote it, or even whether Polo travelled at all.² Many versions of the travel account exist and what we have today is inevitably a compilation of many conflicting versions in different languages. Similarly, Columbus's own account of the discovery of the Americas in the late fifteenth century is recorded in a journal that survives only as a copied abstract of the original, which is lost.³ But what matters is less whether these were authentic, factual and true accounts than the undoubted effect they had on a world whose ignorance of what lay beyond its boundaries was only matched by its eagerness to engage with and to exploit its resources. This ignorance extended to Europe's neglect of the knowledge about that wider world produced by people beyond their own shores. Little or no attention was paid to the evidence in the narratives and texts of the peoples of those worlds themselves, their own accounts or histories, even when they were known. Even now most reasonably well-informed readers would recognize the names of Marco Polo or Christopher Columbus, whilst failing to recognize the name of Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Battuta, the medieval Arab whose travels in the fourteenth century lasted for thirty years and extended east as far as India and China and south into what is now modern Tanzania, journeys that far surpassed in variety and duration that of his supposed near contemporary Marco Polo. Abu ibn Battuta's journal, which he wrote at the command of the Moroccan sultan, is commonly known simply as the *Rihla* or Journey.⁴ Like Polo's account doubt has been voiced as to the veracity of parts of ibn Battuta's account, but the details of both suggest that much of these early accounts is based on experience, though frequently extended by the incorporation of story and hearsay evidence.

For most travellers of the period, whether Christian or Muslim, pilgrimage was a key element in their motives, though as ibn Battuta shows, visits to holy places and merchant venturing, or indeed even something resembling the

restlessness, curiosity and escapism which characterize modern tourism, could not be excluded from the mix of motives. Pilgrimage to Jerusalem was the ostensible reason for the journey of the fictional protagonist of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (c. 1371), the source of some of the most influential fantastic narratives of the late medieval period. This completely fictional text haunted the imagination of Shakespeare, who echoes it when he speaks of the ‘anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow below their shoulders’,⁵ and it directly influenced Christopher Columbus when he planned his voyages.⁶

What we know of the world is still too frequently bounded by such inherited narratives and their images. Our cultural horizons continue to be shaped by their assumptions. For this reason the discourse of travel has been of central concern to a number of contemporary postcolonial scholars, beginning with the work of Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978). In that foundational work Said examined the crucial role played by nineteenth century French travel writing in shaping the Orient as a supposedly inferior Other space, giving support to the attitudes that justified the conquest of many of the world’s oldest civilizations by an aggressive, imperialist Europe. But the texts to which Said draws attention, for example French authors such as Flaubert and Nerval and English writers such as the explorer and translator Richard Burton, are part of a much larger and older body of works, which constructed the world outside Europe as a domain whose practices justified, even provoked, the imperial mission. For example in the late sixteenth century, when English merchant venturers began to reach out to the coast of the Americas and elsewhere, Richard Hakluyt, published several books that collected maps and accounts of the world beyond Europe. Hakluyt was a clergyman, who himself never travelled beyond Paris. As the title of one of his many works indicates, his motive was to justify the new expansionism of the English by explorers such as Raleigh, who probably commissioned this particular work.⁷ Hakluyt was himself a successful investor in many such enterprises, and as personal chaplain to Sir Robert Cecil, Elizabeth I’s Secretary of State, he was close to the centre of expansionist power.

Fiction, the novel and eighteenth-century travel writing

Even in the late seventeenth century, when the idea of an objective, evidential scientific truth had led to the institution of the Royal Society, travel accounts, which purported to offer reliable and factual ‘eye-witness’ accounts of the world beyond Europe, often slid imperceptibly into fictional narratives. The

novel, whose origin is itself a tribute to the porous boundaries of the realms of fact and fiction, found a fruitful source of inspiration in the spate of traveller's tales, which accompanied the outward expansion of Europe in the period. In England journalist and writer Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* became the archetype for a whole series of colonialist narratives of voyaging, settlement and the encounter of the so-called 'civilized' and 'savage' worlds: so much so that the term 'Robinsonade' has been coined specifically to describe this genre. What was new in Defoe's work was not the attempt to represent a world beyond the known, that had been a part of European fantasy literature from its inception, but rather its insistence on its truthfulness and so its validity as a justification for the responses of its readers in the real world. When, at almost the same time, Swift had sent Gulliver voyaging to the far corners of an imagined world, his account had openly embraced the satirical idea that in representing the world of the Other the text was really constructing a commentary on its own world and its values; though many readers of the time nevertheless assumed it was a true account of a real traveller.⁸ But texts like Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* occlude this practice, and replace satire with a narrative which consciously flatters and reinforces the prejudices and the expansionist interests of its readership.⁹ This new and literally novel genre is aimed at the growing class of bourgeois merchants and their families, whose money draws upon and fuels the expansion of trade and the establishment of colonies in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. A screen of authenticity and falsified 'true narrative' effectively hides its ideological biases. From the tattered fabric of Alexander Selkirk's narrative of marooning and rescue Defoe weaves a garment which clothes the naked aggression of the merchants and their colonist brethren in layers of justification: making the barren land fruitful; working to make all nature serviceable and useful; 'rescuing' the native from savagery and barbarism and bringing to him the benefits of civilization; and, not least, justifying the ways of man to a God whose providential force is assumed to be identical with the self-interests of his adherents and whose worldly prosperity and success is the visible mark of his favour. Travel writing of this kind then made a crucial contribution to the representation of the world, which underpinned and justified colonial expansion.

What allowed Defoe's novel and its successors to flourish was their symbiotic relationship with the many popular accounts of exploration, which flourished in the eighteenth century. Just as Africa was the great undiscovered space which haunted the imagination of the Victorians, so in the eighteenth century the unknown areas of the Pacific and beyond created a zone of exotic fascination fuelled by speculation of the existence of a Great Southern Continent (Terra

Australis Incognito). This inspired journal accounts of exploratory voyages, such as Captain Cook's *Endeavour* voyage (1768–71) and that of the French explorer La Pérouse (1788), who was actually at anchor in Botany Bay when the British soldiers and convicts of the First Fleet arrived there in that year. Fictionalized accounts, such as the reputed last journals of La Pérouse, published in Paris in 1797 as *Fragments from the Last Voyage of La Pérouse*, which mimic these authentic journals emerged after La Pérouse failed to return from his voyage.¹⁰ After all, who amongst their readers could tell the one from the other?¹¹ Before the first actual exploratory voyages and long after the nature of the actual spaces of Australasia had been established, fantasies of the order which had preceded these explorations continued to fill this imaginary Southern Continent with fictional worlds, utopian and dystopian societies, and fantastic beings or living animals that had never graced its shores.¹² Even after settlement the impenetrable interior and the remaining extensive unexplored coastlines of the north and west, remained spaces in which the colonial imagination could roam freely, imagining great inland seas and fertile plains, where in reality only harsh desert existed. Even more tellingly, such European fantasies of a potential settlement in the interior continued to fuel the European settlers' inability or unwillingness to perceive the rich and complex indigenous peoples as anything beyond what William Dampier, one of Australia's first visitors, had denigrated in his *A New Voyage Round the World* (1697) as the 'miserablest People in the world. . .'.¹³

Nineteenth-century exploration and travel writing

Building on these early complex forces of fascination and repulsion, travel writing set in the many regions which colonial powers had drawn into their sphere of influence and control, became a staple of fiction publishing as the nineteenth century unfolded. Yet, as suggested earlier, by the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century a literature of supposedly objective scientific discourse of exploration was also emerging, under the auspices of the scientific community, and in conscious opposition to the 'fictional' narratives which had dominated the early part of the eighteenth century. This may be exemplified in the Scots explorer Mungo Park's *Journal of a Mission to Central Africa* (1805).¹⁴ Park charts with a disarming lack of overt cultural bias the differences of the people he encounters as he makes his way down the Niger. But such supposedly objective scientific travel discourse is always saturated with the alternative discourses which informed earlier fantastic literary voyaging and mythmaking, and with the hidden biases of the Euro-colonizer. Such biases are indelibly inscribed in the tropes and images of travel encounter,

which these so-called objective discourses of scientific observation and exploration continue to employ. The fate which rapidly overtook these early attempts at an objective, scientific discourse of travel as imperial power consolidated its hold over the physical and representational space of the Other can be illustrated when we recall that Park is the first European to use the phrase 'mumbo-jumbo', which he records simply as the name of a local deity he encounters in a village on the upper Niger. For Park the name is recorded without overt rancour or denigration, yet within less than fifty years the term has become the common term for the superstition, idolatry and barbaric religious practices that have to be set aside in the name of the imperial, civilizing missions of Europe and America in Africa and elsewhere.

Travel and the age of high imperialism

Travel narrative in the high colonial period from the mid nineteenth century onwards had many and varied motivations and colonial-period travellers were of many kinds. Yet, arguably, travel itself rapidly became absorbed into a discourse in which encounter implied an always already present hierarchy, and an implacably unequal relationship between the cultural presuppositions of colonizer and colonized. This discourse, in its turn, literally shaped how that Other world was seen and how colonial policy was shaped towards it. Explorers, missionaries and traders, whose roles were sometimes interchangeable, all published journals and memoirs of their travels, which were enthusiastically received by a reading public, whose numbers increased as literacy became more widespread as the century unfolded and schooling became more available to classes of people for whom in the past reading had been literally a closed book. There is no better example of this crucial overlap than the most famous of mid-Victorian travellers, David Livingstone. The portrait of this young Scot working long hours at the looms of his native Lanarkshire with an open book propped up on the frame of his machine became an iconic image of the self-help ideal of the period. Having successfully trained as a doctor, Livingstone arrived in South Africa in the 1840s as a missionary for the London Missionary Society. It is a significant feature of missions, of course, that they often existed on the borders of the imperial world, at its defining edges as it were. Livingstone began his journeys into the then unknown areas of Africa to the north with the idea that by travelling, meeting and influencing local chiefs as yet unmet he might increase his effectiveness as an evangelist. This process had had some success elsewhere, notably in the South Pacific.¹⁵ Later journeys saw Livingstone cross the continent from east to west and seek

to open a route into the interior of Africa along the Zambezi. Livingstone's 1853–6 journal published as *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857) brought him instant fame as well as the financial means to continue his explorations.¹⁶ For Livingstone there was no clash of roles between his evangelical work and his exploration. Exploration, he asserted, would open up the interior of Africa to the benefits of 'Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation', ends that were mutually supportive and interrelated. Travel was for Livingstone the key which allowed these linked benefits to flow. Exploration literally pioneered the way for the forces of change which would sweep away the evils of slaving and provide Africans with alternative livelihoods in agriculture, mining and trade. Unfortunately, not all exploration in this period was conceived with Livingstone's high, if perhaps, with hindsight, politically naïve and paternalistic ideals. During his last journeys into Central Africa from Zanzibar, Livingstone received funding and support from the Royal Geographical Society. The Society, which had been the main supporter of exploratory voyages from its inception in the late seventeenth century, was now supplemented as a patron by public subscriptions taken up by an English public for whom the exploration of Africa, especially the discovery of the legendary sources of the Nile, had become an obsession unmatched until the race in the twentieth century to be the first nation to put a man on the moon. Henry Morton Stanley, Livingstone's self-proclaimed 'finder' (though there is little evidence Livingstone ever considered himself lost), ironically represented an almost diametrically opposed vision of imperial travel. By the time Stanley set out to find Livingstone, which he recorded in the bestseller *How I Found Livingstone* (1872), this patronage had been extended to the new popular newspapers of the period, which recognized that dramatic, first-hand accounts of imperial travellers sold extremely well.¹⁷

The age of armchair travel, and the interpellation of the world outside Europe and America as the exotic Other in a binary construction of 'them and us' had now been irrevocably sealed. Stanley's famous phrase 'Dr Livingstone, I presume' was as renowned in its day as Neil Armstrong's famous 'one small step for man, one giant step for mankind' was for a later age. Stanley bullied and shot his way through most of Central Africa in what were some of the most remarkable, successful and ruthless journeys of the high imperial period. First, for his own glory and financial gain as a journalist (his accounts were amongst the most successful bestsellers of his day) and later, for the benefit of his royal patron Leopold, King of the Belgians, the founder of possibly the most repressive colonial regime even in Africa's sad history of exploitation. In their different ways Livingstone (the high-minded

working-class moralizer) and Stanley (the blustering, violent, self-promoting working-class parvenu) both exemplify how in the late nineteenth century travel and exploration could become the road to renown and fortune.

Travel and imperial popular fiction

By the end of the nineteenth century the explorer as hero had become one of the dominant images of the late imperial imagination. Empire was a space into which all the pent-up imaginings of a Europe whose reality was increasingly that of the cribbed and confined post-industrial cities could be poured. For young men, and increasingly for women, too the empire was a welcome field of travel, adventure and opportunity. This was literally the case for those who became its administrators and traders, most of whom belonged to the new middle classes the Industrial Revolution had nurtured. But for those who stayed at home the accounts and memoirs of the adventurous few became the stuff of imperial dreams. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the stories of imperial adventure and travel became the staple of a new body of popular fiction, often referred to as “‘boy’s own’ adventure’ fiction, after the name of a popular magazine, which specialized in these stories – the *Boy’s Own Magazine*. Writers such as R. L. Stevenson, G. A. Henty, R. M. Ballantyne, H. Rider Haggard and a host of others churned out endless versions of a tale in which intrepid young men travelled into the far-flung corners of empire to overcome natural dangers and tangle with native insurrectionists and evil-doers. Haggard’s experience as an administrative aide in South Africa informed a series of romance novels in which a fantastic world of lost kingdoms, white queens ruling adoring native populations, and heroic adventurers were best-sellers of his day and continue to influence the popular imagination to this day, in remakes of movies based on the most-famous of his novels *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885),¹⁸ look-alike modern texts such as Michael Crichton’s *Congo*¹⁹ and the astonishing present-day Sun City resort-complex, northwest of Johannesburg. Penetrating the virginal interior, Haggard’s heroes journey through a landscape with mountains shaped like breasts and enter treasure chambers through womb-like tunnels. Thus late nineteenth-century travel narrative becomes also a trope of a journey through the disturbed realm of the imperial sexual psyche. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries travel accounts of explorers, missionaries and others represented a large portion of the popular reading material of the day in both the secular and the mission publishing fields. Accounts of the adventures of explorers leaked into those of the missionary hero.²⁰ These narratives created the new mass

readership of armchair travellers, whose subscriptions supported the secular and religious missions, and whose votes sustained the political parties that spoke for empire. In an age when images can be transmitted instantaneously from one side of the globe to the other it is difficult to appreciate how few sources there were for knowledge of the world beyond the shores of the metropolis even well into the twentieth century. These immensely popular narratives of imperial exploration and adventure literally shaped the ways people perceived their world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and underpinned the ideology of imperialism.

Women and travel writing in the imperial age

For women, whose role as travellers has been the subject of several excellent studies in recent times, the space of empire could have different fascinations.²¹ For settler women, travel to distant places and the struggles there to sustain domesticity in areas of 'wilderness' form the basis of many narratives, for example those of the two sisters Catherine Parr Traill (*The Backwoods of Canada*, 1836,²² and *Canadian Crusoes*, 1852)²³ and Susanna Moodie (*Roughing It in the Bush*, 1852,²⁴ and *Life in the Clearings*, 1853)²⁵ recounting their lives in and frequent dislike of conditions in the backblocks of Ontario, Canada. For other women, especially those whose class status at home allowed them access to financial means, travel could become a way of escaping the restrictions a patriarchal society imposed on the female of the species. Women such as Isabella Bird and Mary Kingsley literally travelled beyond their assigned gender roles by escaping into areas where women could act as fully independent agents. Isabella Bird, in particular, earned the title of woman adventurer. Her first journey to the American Rockies, chronicled in *The Englishwoman in America* (1856), was undertaken because of health reasons.²⁶ The journey was as successful in restoring her health as was the book itself, which was an overnight bestseller. In 1877 she travelled to Japan, Hong Kong, China and Malaya. After marrying, on her return, her travels ceased until her husband died in 1886, when she travelled again, this time to Tibet. In 1890 she travelled to Persia, as part of a military expedition. She had trained as a nurse after her marriage. Her last journeys were in 1897 to China and Korea, and in 1904 to Africa, when she was seventy-three years of age. It would be hard to find a masculine match for this extraordinary set of journeys.

Outside Europe, and especially perhaps in the delimiting space of empire, as some critics have argued, women travellers achieved a status of honorary masculinity by virtue of their whiteness. Yet they combined this with what

may sometimes seem to be incongruous assertions of their femininity, for example in Mary Kingsley's famous maintenance of the full and voluminous Victorian female dress code in the depths of the West African hinterland. But even this may be seen as evidence of their desire not to deny their gender but to transform, liberate and empower themselves as women through the act of travel itself.²⁷

A number of Victorian women engaged in travel as actual exploration; for instance, Florence Baker, the explorer Samuel Baker's wife, who accompanied her husband on his explorations in search of the sources of the Nile. Though her name was not on any of the published accounts of these journeys, and her diary did not appear until a female descendant prepared an edition in 1972.²⁸ Other women undertook solitary journeys, such as Gertrude Bell, who travelled extensively in Persia and in the Arabian Peninsula in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and recorded her experiences in letters, and in memoirs e.g. *Persian Pictures: A Book of Travel*, which she published anonymously in 1894.²⁹ Bell also served as an advisor to a number of senior colonial officials in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and played a major role in creating the kingdom of Iraq in the 1920s. Several studies of these 'intrepid' Victorian women travellers have been written in recent decades as part of the general feminist project to recover Victorian women's writings.³⁰ However, in her 1991 study of women's travel writing Sara Mills has argued that the focus on these as examples of 'strong, exceptional women who somehow managed to escape the structures of patriarchy'³¹ may exclude other women who travelled within the defined 'feminine' roles of the period, such as Nina Mazuchelli (*The Indian Alps and How We Crossed Them*, 1876)³² or Emily Eden (*Up the Country*, 1866).³³ Despite this caveat, women's texts often challenged the prevailing idea that exploration was predominantly a masculine activity, and feminist scholarship has rightly stressed this.

The travels of the colonized

Like so much else in the postcolonial experience, the dominant travel narrative was subject to leakage and appropriation, and travel narratives also emerged by those of the colonized who had for various reasons made the journey to the imperial homelands. Of course, people from the world beyond Europe had always been present in Europe, and from the eighteenth century onwards Africans who had been enslaved had published accounts of their enforced travels and their treatment by their captors and owners through the patronage of the slavery abolition movements. Amongst the best known and most

controversial of these is the *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa the African, Written by Himself* (1789), which became an instant bestseller.³⁴ The tag ‘written by himself’ is characteristic, as such memoirs become entangled in the issues of authenticity. The recent dispute over the authenticity of Equiano’s story and his provenance exemplifies the idea that the legitimization of such accounts must involve their truthful record of direct experience.³⁵ Philip Curtin has also shown how generally difficult it is to tell ‘true accounts’ from those written by liberal white supporters in the numerous slave narratives of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.³⁶

What is again not in dispute is the huge effect such narratives had on an audience that had been largely able to ignore the many figures from other lands who had long lived in their midst. Naturally the degree to which these texts were able to present their perspective was limited by the expectation of their patrons and the audiences at whom their narratives were aimed. For this reason, such accounts differ greatly in the degree to which they succeed in voicing openly the attitudes of their authors towards the societies through which they travelled.

As the century unfolded, policies such as indirect rule, initiated by the British in India, then in African colonies such as Uganda and Nigeria, led to the emergence of a local ruling elite whose circumstances made it possible and desirable for them to be brought back to the colonial metropolitan ‘home-lands’. The display of this elite in visits to the metropolitan centres was meant to show how colonialism could improve and yet preserve the differences of cultures which made up the imperial mosaic. The parades of Indian princes and others at the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in London in 1897 formed such a display. When her successor Edward VII was crowned in 1904, a further display of invited visiting colonial dignitaries was planned. Amongst them was the Katakiri (prime minister) of Buganda Sir Apolo Kagwa, who was accompanied by a Bugandan nobleman, Ham Mukasa. Mukasa wrote a detailed account of their journey in his own language (Luganda), which an accompanying missionary translated into English with omissions of ‘unsuitable material’ in 1904.³⁷ The text raises the issue of patronage and appropriation in ways that characterize how travel narratives are part of the process of capturing and recapturing the powers of representation for colonized places and peoples. For colonial officials, who arranged the English translation, the text represented a vindication for the colonial process and for the benefits that ‘civilization’ can bestow. For Kagwa and Mukasa, on the other hand, the text asserted their own political aim, which was to encourage Bugandans to embrace modernity and change whilst remaining true to their own people’s basic traditions. Thus they

admire the technological skill of the British, whilst also asserting their own dignity and pride in Bugandan ways. Nor is it without subtle criticism of the British, notably in the section which records Mukasa's astonishment at the drunkenness of councillors during their visit to Glasgow, which he contrasts very unfavourably with the dignity expected of their Bugandan equivalents, and their account of a visit to the Tower of London where they are shown the torture and execution instruments the English used in the past, which subtly hints at the fact that the barbaric practices for which Buganda had been criticized in the recent past had its parallels in English history too.

Education of the traditional leaders in colonized countries was an early technique of imperial control, as witness the many sons of Indian Maharajahs who spent their time at Eton or Harrow. By the late nineteenth century many figures in the emerging class of nationalist leaders, such as M. K. Ghandi, J. Nehru, J. E. Caseley-Hayford, had also been educated in England. The important role of Christian missions schools in many colonies meant that their students also received their education abroad, either in the colonial centres or in the USA, as American missions were active in many English-speaking colonies. In the early twentieth century Nzamdi Azikwe and Kwame Nkrumah both studied in the USA; some, like Pixley Seme, studied in both the USA and England. Many of these early nationalists wrote autobiographies, which included their observations on their travel to and reception in the colonial homelands, for example Ghandi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1927),³⁸ Nehru's *An Autobiography* (1936)³⁹ and Nkrumah's *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (1957).⁴⁰ Philip Holden in his chapter in this volume on 'Postcolonial auto/biography' has covered some of these texts in more detail. Travel, memoir and autobiography intersect throughout the history of postcolonial travel writing, illustrating how greatly travel to other cultures helped define personal and public attitudes by both ruler and ruled throughout the colonial period. In time these colonial genres imposed on the colonized were employed to articulate forms of resistance. As organized opposition to colonial rule developed more critical accounts emerged. The autobiography of the Malawian-born South African trade unionist Clements Kadalie includes an account of a six-month journey he took to Europe in 1927, attending trade union conferences in Geneva and Paris, and visiting Holland, Germany and Austria as well as Britain.⁴¹ This shows an openly critical perspective, which contrasts with the generally admiring, if occasionally critical tone of earlier colonial visitors such as Kagwa and Mukasa. Kadalie's account registers the rampant class inequalities he observed in England, which colonial ideology had dissolved into an

overarching discourse of white racial superiority, which occluded issues of class and gender distinctions.

No bigger contrast could be imagined than the contrast between the squalid streets of the East End and the scene in Hyde Park, no more than a couple of miles away. Here one realised Hyde Park as nothing more than a bad joke, a sort of by-product of civilisation and knew that these poverty-stricken streets, stunted and pathetic human beings . . . were the bedrock and reality on which Western civilisation was built. Western civilisation has accomplished things of great magnitude. It has built great bridges and machines and spanned the world with steamships and railroads . . . But still it has not learned that while great masses of children go hungry and barefoot . . . it carries its own failure inherent within itself.⁴²

Kadalie also drew attention to the similarities of the East End slums and those of colonial Johannesburg, so that 'Kadalie turns back on Europe the intellectual and cultural magnifying glass with which Europeans had so recently examined Africa, and (from their perspective) found it wanting.'⁴³

Early twentieth-century travel writing: the emergence of the professional travel text

Despite such nineteenth-century popular successes as the works of H. M. Stanley, already mentioned, it is the twentieth century which sees travel writing emerge as a major genre with distinctive features, markets and writers who are principally if not always exclusively perceived as travel writers rather than novelists, explorers, historians etc. Several fuller accounts of this phenomenon exist and a separate Cambridge Companion volume is dedicated exclusively to this genre.⁴⁴ Even limiting oneself to writing directly about the colonies or by writers from ex-colonies would be beyond the scope of this brief overview. I have to be content, then, with identifying some travel writers in both these categories whose work might be seen as especially significant in the context of postcolonial literatures; though it is clearly important to recognize that these writers, and indeed the genre of travel writing as a whole, are still deeply inflected with imperialist nostalgia as several critics have suggested.⁴⁵ Even in an era of broader global politics the neo-colonial inflection of much travel literature is constructed in a binary trope of 'them and us' in which hierarchies and prejudices lurk, even where they do not openly surface in the text. This may extend even to examples of the genre authored by those born in the colonies themselves, to seemingly anti-colonially inflected accounts, and even to broader discourses of the global in areas such as

development theory.⁴⁶ What this demonstrates is that if colonial discourse can be appropriated to acts of resistance it can also continue to exercise hidden control over even overt attempts to write back against its prejudices.

Early and mid twentieth-century travel writing draws continually on the tropes established by imperial texts. For example, in the significantly named *Journey without Maps* (1936) Grahame Greene describes a journey of several weeks in 1935 through the interior of Sierra Leone, French Guinea and Liberia. He chose the region because it was marked on a US government map as a blank white space inscribed with the single word ‘cannibals’. Even Greene, that most sardonic of observers of colonial decay, at least in his later fiction, draws heavily on imperial tropes such as the ‘heart of darkness’ and the ‘witch-doctor’. Thus, encountering an initiation elder of the Poro, the male initiation cult, Greene represents him in classic colonialist discourse fashion as a Bush-Devil (the term used in nineteenth-century mission and colonial records to denigrate and suppress these core educational and governmental institutions of the indigenous cultures of the region).

By the 1950s writers such as Eric Newby and Wilfred Thesiger are actively and even self-consciously reviving the trope of the classic imperial explorer in their travel accounts. For writers such as Newby, the role of adventurer is deliberately inflected with nostalgia and he is engaged in an almost parodic act of self-construction as an amateur British explorer of earlier times. To what extent he believes in this ‘persona’ is hard to judge, as the tone of the writing veers between self-congratulation and a wry undercutting of his status as adventurer in a world where the dangerous and the exotic are the goal of the journey rather than a by-product of an exploration of the literally unknown. Travel writing like all genres quickly becomes self-reflexive, consuming and feeding upon itself, so that by the late 1950s when Newby published *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush* (1958) the existential act of travel is mediated through multiple references to the classic texts of imperial travel and fiction.⁴⁷

In *Arabian Sands* (1959)⁴⁸ and *The Marsh Arabs* (1964)⁴⁹ Thesiger seeks to establish the idea that the writer is a person who has a unique insight into and sympathy for the life of the people he travels with and among. In this respect he is the direct heir of the insider/outsider heroes of imperial fiction, figures such as Kipling’s Kim and Strickland Sahib, who are either born in the countries they rule or establish deep connections with its peoples, connections that border on the ultimate colonial danger of ‘going native’ entirely. Like many of these fictional figures Thesiger was brought up outside England, in his case in Ethiopia, where his father was a British diplomat. The experience of these native-born figures supposedly enables them to see into the life of the

colonized peoples while remaining outside and beyond them. They have a supposed respect for them as people who have not yet been corrupted by the blight of 'civilization'. That this trope turns on its head the other idea – that it is the primary role of colonialism to promote the 'civilization' of those subject to imperial rule – is only one of the many paradoxes that the imperial enterprise as described in such texts embodies and simultaneously seeks to occlude. Thesiger and others like him represent the paradox at the heart of the imperial adventure that the imperial hero can only discover his true self when he travels into the space of the remote and distant Other. Metonymically, they also stand for the fact that, as Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993)⁵⁰ and Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994)⁵¹ have argued, metropolitan imperial cultures themselves come into being through the creation of an enabling signifier of Otherness. This trope of the insider/outsider and the identity problems it involves had played itself out in the lives of late imperial heroes and their travel/adventure memoirs, notably T.E. Lawrence and his highly fictionalized account of his heroic actions in World War I in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926).⁵² Such figures also expose the contradictions of personal and public gender identity which haunt Victorian 'masculinity' stereotypes, stereotypes which the Victorian female travel writers also unsettle, as I suggested earlier. There is an interesting overlay of gender-identity concerns and the act of travel amongst distant and different races in many of the twentieth-century travel writers such as Lawrence, and less overtly Thesiger, the life-long bachelor and frank admirer of young native men. It is not overtly present in Newby's more heterosexual, masculinist accounts, even though different disturbances of masculine confidence may be seen to be acted out there, such as his self-conscious flouting of danger. But in the work of Bruce Chatwin unsettled gender identity again emerges as an overt trope, which reinforces the colonialist idea that travel to the remote places of the world may be in part a means of entering spaces where acts of violence or of sexuality deemed transgressive within the dominant culture may be more openly pursued. Chatwin's work frequently elides fact and fiction, brazenly embracing the practice common to much travel writing of inventing characters and scenes that the themes require and passing them off as real.⁵³ Disarming though this admission may be, it does little more than to expose what is true of all travel narration, that it always involves a fictionalizing element. The problem for Chatwin is that the embattled cultures he describes, and claims to celebrate, such as indigenous Australian cultures in *The Songlines* (1987),⁵⁴ are recruited to serve a romanticized, exoticized vision of culture as commodity. The issue that broad recent accounts of the genre of travel writing have addressed is whether this is an

inescapable and deeply disabling part of the discourse of travel narrative itself, whoever practises it.

Postcolonial travel literature: resistance and the appropriation of a genre?

By the late 1950s the genre of travel writing had attracted several practitioners from postcolonial societies. Not all were antipathetic to the culture of the colonizer, despite the politics of the independence struggles. A classic example of such an ambivalent account of a colonial traveller in England is that of Nirad C. Chaudhuri, author of the earlier controversial *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951).⁵⁵ His travel memoir, *A Passage to England* (1958),⁵⁶ is followed by his bitter account of contemporary India, *The Continent of Circe* (1965),⁵⁷ a precursor of the equally controversial Indian travelogues of the Trinidadian born V.S. Naipaul. Chaudhuri's account of England and the English, while not uncritical, is interesting precisely for its open announcement of its own bias and the causes for this. As he says, when he visits England he carries with him a mind 'burdened with an enormous load of book-derived notions . . . from literature, history and geography'.⁵⁸ Chaudhuri is also insistent on the idea that despite the changes in England and in India in recent times the essential England and India remain unchanged and, by implication, unchangeable. It is hardly surprising that this idea caused so much distress in post-independence India, but what is perhaps even more interesting is the degree to which Chaudhuri is here simply openly acknowledging the colonialist bias, which arguably now burdens all travel writing. Even in the post-independence era, travel narrative may be indelibly inflected with the tropes and discursive formations of imperialism. Thus the traveller travels to find a world that he or she has already encountered and naturalized, a world whose lineaments are defined not by the experience of travel but by the colonial cultural formations which precede it.⁵⁹ In this respect Chaudhuri's title (*A Passage to England*), which echoes the title of Forster's classic novel, is particularly apt, suggesting that the liberal intentions of an author cannot overcome forces which control the limitations of the discourse in which his experience is inevitably framed.

Diametrically opposed in intention to Chaudhuri's admiring and some might suggest sycophantic stance is the work of the Barbadian novelist George Lamming. In his collection of essays *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960)⁶⁰ Lamming uses the narratives of West Indian emigration to deconstruct the colonial myth of English superiority. His emigrants are astonished when they

arrive at the quayside in Southampton to see white stevedores handling the ropes, and to realize that the English have poor workers, and are not all the natural masters that the colonial myth had depicted. Similar reactions occur when colonial subjects travel to the United States and record their experiences. In the twentieth century West Indians, South Asians and Africans have often found travel to the 'land of the free' a disconcerting and alienating experience. For example, the Nigerian John Pepper Clark's savage indictment of American values in his *America, Their America* (1964)⁶¹ mirrors the anger of Lamming at the duplicity of colonial myth-making and its role in masking power and racism. Even the work of a white settler born in what was then Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) such as Doris Lessing, in her memoir *In Pursuit of the English* (1961),⁶² shows how for the descendants of settler colonizers England has become a place where myths of class and race superiority are displaced, and where a sense of the settlers own alienation may be engendered by acute differences from those who inhabit what they have been taught to think of as 'home' but which they now perceive to be unsettlingly different and Other, and where the accumulated cultural biases through which one's views of others are formed resist and conflict with their lived experience.

Caribbean people had an especially complex and active role in the narratives of travel. The descendants of the slaves and indentured labourers who had been brought to the islands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had always had a further outward bound passage, as seafarers. During and after World War II they had been recruited (as had been West Africans and Indians) to serve in the armed forces, though usually in a service rather than a combatant role, reflecting their colonized status. In the postwar period large numbers of West Indians (as British Caribbean peoples were called at the time) emigrated, usually to Britain, though there had also been for a long while a steady, if smaller, flow of people northward from the islands to Canada and the US. Although not strictly travel narratives, the fictional stories that emerged from these emigrants, such as the Brackley stories of Sam Selvon in *The Lonely Londoners* (1956),⁶³ offered a startlingly new insider view of English life, as Caribbean migrants engaged with and altered the patterns of life amongst working-class Londoners. Other writers, such as the Jamaican Andrew Salkey, re-engaged with the Caribbean itself in a series of journeys recorded in *Havana Journal* (1971),⁶⁴ the record of his visit as a guest of the Castro regime, and *Georgetown Journal* (1972),⁶⁵ his record of a visit to Trinidad and Guyana. These are early examples of the fact that postcolonial travellers re-engaged with their own and other postcolonies after they had relocated to the so-called homelands. Salkey's radical, anti-colonial tone contrasts sharply with

his better-known contemporary V. S. Naipaul, also resident in Britain from the late 1960s onwards. Probably the most controversial of the Caribbean emigrant novelists, Naipaul from the beginning was as active in producing travel narratives as novels and short stories. As well as accounts of journeys back to the Caribbean in *The Middle Passage* (1962)⁶⁶ and *The Loss of El Dorado* (1969),⁶⁷ over the next twenty or more years he produced travel narratives of journeys to numerous postcolonies and to spaces beyond, including Mauritius, the Southern United States, the Middle East and Pakistan, Central Africa and elsewhere. He also produced two powerful accounts of his return to India, from which his ancestors had been shipped as indentured labourers to Trinidad, *An Area of Darkness* (1964)⁶⁸ and *India: A Wounded Civilisation* (1977).⁶⁹ Naipaul, through these texts, established a reputation as one of the most prolific and controversial of the travel writers whose provenance was the postcolonial world. Whereas for most European travel writers the spaces of the exoticized Other are spaces of adventure, if often tinged with a licence which adds a frisson of danger and transgression to their experience, for Naipaul the overwhelming emotion is of horror, even disgust, at what he presents as the meaningless squalor of the postcolonial space. Unlike earlier accounts such as Salkey, who sees the politics of neo-colonialism, including the role of the United States and the global economy it has promoted, as playing an ongoing role in the dislocated societies and economies of the Caribbean region, Naipaul seems to assign the causes of this postcolonial disorder to a postcolonial disablement which is ineradicable and irreversible. If not causeless, then it is seemingly without address in that the cause has been so internalized that the very social psyche of the ex-colonized has been irretrievably damaged. For the modern European travel writer the space of the postcolony is often a space where the colonial exotic can be nostalgically reconstituted, evincing a desire which expresses both a longing for the past and a distaste for the post-imperial present of the 'colourless' and increasingly uniform metropolitan spaces. For Naipaul all places, whether the originary Caribbean islands, the England in which he has lived for most of his adult life, or the spaces across the world to which he has been such a reluctant, if persistent, traveller are all tainted with an inadequacy from which no space is free. Naipaul does not foreground the globalizing forces, which may be the both cause and the result of this globalizing pressure. But other postcolonial travel narratives take up this theme, though not necessarily with a deeper or more penetrating analysis of its politics. Pico Iyer's several texts, such as *Video Night in Kathmandu* (1989),⁷⁰ focus on the ways in which global economic trends and their cultural effects are erasing the cultural differences which promoted the idea of travel in earlier generations.

For writers such as Iyer travel has become an increasingly urgent attempt to escape the places which international tourism have rendered essentially similar. Yet, with a wry self-consciousness, he is forced to acknowledge that video, film and music icons, such as Rambo, have arrived at even the most remote locations and that the exotic, like the cannibal of Columbus's journals, is always the condition of the people over the next hill or beyond the nearest boundary, a required signifier of otherness that is both absolutely necessary to the would-be traveller's self-identity and totally undiscoverable.

Such accounts from the postcolony continue to show a persistent nostalgia for the idea of a journey in search of difference or of psychic freedom. But some of the best of these do seek to address the effects of recent political and economic factors on the construction of the societies affected by colonialism. A notable example is Vikram Seth's *From Heaven Lake: Travels Through Sinkiang and Tibet* (1983).⁷¹ Seth, a student in China, decides to return to India overland through Tibet. A fluent Mandarin speaker, he is able to interact with the Chinese he encounters, but in the end he remains an 'Outlander' (the term the Chinese apply to him), dissecting China and Chinese attitudes from the position of the visiting 'traveller'. The centre of the text, as in classic travel literature, remains not the space travelled but the effect on the traveller, the ultimate subject of the text being the traveller's own psyche and attitudes. Seth is preoccupied with the ambivalent position he holds both as a non-Chinese and as a citizen of a country, India, which itself has been endlessly defined and redefined through the psychic demands of 'Outlanders', including Naipaul, whose travel accounts of India he analyses with great perspicacity and surprising generosity. Despite Seth's attempt to analyse the social realities of the China he travels, he is finally unable to overcome the classic impulse in traditional travel writing to construct the event as a journey beyond the ordinary into the space of the exotic and the remote – in his case the 'impenetrable' state of Tibet and into his own personal psyche.

Other recent texts address the idea of the state of the erstwhile colonizing metropolises, such as Idries Shah's *Adventures, Facts and Fantasies in Darkest England* (1987),⁷² which turns on its head some of the oldest tropes of the classic colonial travel narratives we examined earlier such as Stanley's African journeys, satirically reversing the dominant prejudiced gaze. Caryl Phillips in *The European Tribe* (1987)⁷³ critiques the postwar liberal politics of the diverse countries of a Europe which competed in the conquest of and colonization of the rest of the world, to expose their ongoing shared assumptions of white racist superiority. He convincingly shows how this has been exacerbated rather than dismantled by the collapse of their colonial empires and by the domestic

reactions to the in-flood of people from the ex-colonies to the erstwhile colonial homelands.

These recent essays into a dismantling of the classic genre of travel writing, with its exoticizing and eventually disabling rendition of the world of the colony and postcolony, contain much to be applauded and have gone a good way to allowing us to see the limitations of earlier examples of the genre more clearly than before. But travel writing itself may now have become so deeply imbricated with the idea of the colonial that even the most oppositional texts from either the old colonial metropolises, or even from the postcolonies themselves, are inextricably entangled in a discursive and ideological frame, making any and all examples of the genre of travel writing deeply problematic. In this sense postcolonial travel writing raises the same kinds of issues about agency and resistance which we have seen come to mark many aspects of the investigation of the postcolonial experience in recent times.

Notes

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58. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
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Missionary writing and postcolonialism

ELISABETH MUDIMBE-BOYI

This chapter will emphasize the relation between evangelization and culture by arguing that official missionary discourse was one of necessary ambiguity, and that the missionary intervention in society and culture legitimized a counter-discourse in postcolonial writing.

Coming in waves

The spread of Christianity on the African continent did not occur exclusively with European expansion outside the Western hemisphere from the fifteenth century onwards. Rather it came in several waves. Early Christianity in North Africa during the first and second centuries gave birth to a dynamic and vibrant Christian church, and produced eminent Fathers of the Church such as Saint Augustine, Bishop Cyprian and the theologian and writer Tertullian. The Islamic conquest of Africa soon overshadowed and almost completely erased Christianity in the region, and yet the church survived in different Coptic denominations in Egypt and Ethiopia.

A second wave of new evangelization took place during the fifteenth century, concomitant with the great discoveries spearheaded by European expansion outside the West. Portugal's political power was coupled with the exertions of Portuguese explorers to conquer new territories with the seal and the approval of the Holy See, the highest Christian authority. Through papal bulls (*Dum Diversas* (January 1452) and *Romanus Pontifex* (January 1455) by Nicolas V, *Inter Cetera* (March 1456) by Callixte III, *Aeterni Regis Clementia* (June 1481) by Sixte IV, *Dum Fide Constantium* (1514) and *Dumduum Pro Parte* (1516) by Leon X), the popes granted to the kings of Portugal the full right to conquer territories, and at the same time to bring the Christian faith into these newly conquered spaces.¹ Territorial conquest thus functioned simultaneously as a political and religious enterprise, aimed at the conversion of 'barbaric nations' and the 'propagation of the Christian name', as Pope Callixte III states

in his bull *Inter Cetera* of March 1456. The coalescence of the terms ‘nations’ and ‘Christian’ in the discourse of the papacy already points to the imbrication of politics and religion, and also blurs the frontiers between the political/secular and the religious/spiritual.

Christianization accompanied territorial conquest. We are reminded, for instance, of the Portuguese explorer Diego Cão’s expeditions. Mandated in his mission of discovery by the Catholic king of Portugal Dom Enrique, Cão brought with him missionaries and technicians during his second travel to Central Africa, which he ‘discovered’ in 1482. Together, they worked to build the kingdom of the Kongo as a Christian monarchy shaped according to the Portuguese model. They installed Christian missions and introduced new political, economic and social structures. By the end of the sixteenth century the Portuguese had established other missions in West and Central Africa that were themselves followed by Italian Capuchin missions.

The seventeenth century marks a decline, almost a disappearance, of Christianization and Christian missions in Africa, until a revival took place during the nineteenth century during the colonial expansion that inaugurated a new era of modern Christianization. Missionaries in Africa belonged to the colonizing nations: France, Portugal, Spain, Britain and Germany, all of which would introduce their respective brand of religion into their colonies. The major Western religions of Catholicism, Anglicanism and different Protestant denominations entered the African continent with the colonizers, thus consolidating their position similarly to the process of colonial expansion itself.

The twentieth century represents a further phase of the consolidation of Christianity in most evangelized African countries, as shown by the creation and increase of a local clergy, and from the middle of the twentieth century to present times, in the promotion of indigenous clergy to high church positions as bishops and cardinals. One also sees on the continent new orientations of Christianity manifest in the rise of independent African churches. While the work of missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic, was based on wider canonical teachings, the early 1970s saw the emergence in Africa of charismatic movements with a new trend, namely, a focus on the Holy Spirit and its perceived attributes of miracles, glossolalia and prophecy. The late twentieth century was distinctive for the multiplication of Christian ‘sects’. Unlike the charismatic movements, which operated within the traditional churches, the new sects operated independently, outside, and mostly in competition with the mainstream traditional Christian churches.

As a final point to this survey, one could mention the impact of the work of non-traditional contemporary missionary figures such as Mother Theresa in

India and Sister Emmanuelle in Egypt. They both represent a new brand of missionary whose goal is not so much the conversion of populations to Christianity, but rather a commitment and a dedication to the improvement of the populations' physical and material wellbeing in the name of Christ and of the fundamental Christian message of love and social justice.

Mission in practice and resistance

In his introduction to this volume, Ato Quayson raises the question of 'hierarchy' in the selection and organization of material in postcolonial literary studies. One might revisit here his interrogation regarding the geographical representation of the mission. Focusing in this chapter on missionaries in Africa rather than in the world at large does not preclude some references to other regions of the world: present-day Africa does not provide us with an entirely unique case since conversion to Christianity was not limited exclusively to the African continent. Christian missionaries conquered the New World, proselytized in Central and South America in the footsteps of the conquistadors and the Portuguese explorers, and converted the indigenous people and the slaves brought from Africa. European settlers and immigrants to North America carried with them their faith, followed soon by missionaries who would engage in the conversion of the native people to Christianity and impose their faith credo on the slaves in the plantations. As for Asia, if Marco Polo was mostly interested in trading with Asian nations, European missionaries who came later to the region were motivated by the religious ideal of introducing the Christian faith. The Jesuit Matteo Ricci arrived in Macao in August 1582 and founded the Catholic mission in China, followed later by Franciscans and Dominicans. François Xavier, another Jesuit, went as a missionary to Japan at the end of sixteenth century, while Joseph Mullens in India represents one of the major missionary figures of modern Christianization that goes hand in hand with colonial and imperial expansion. As in Africa, evangelization followed the path of the empire. Scholars coming from diverse disciplines have studied the relation between mission and empire in a comparative perspective that allows us to highlight various philosophies and missionary methodologies in different countries and continents. These scholars point out the commonalities linking the presence of colonial powers to that of ordinary missionaries who shared similar secular cultural worldviews, alongside a common Christianity.²

The following pages are essentially concerned with missionaries within the African continent. Far from providing a comprehensive view of missionaries in

Africa, the focus will be on a few representative cases that illuminate the relation between evangelization, culture, empire and writing. Missionary discourse is thus located in the colonial space, and legitimizes therefore a post-colonial response conveyed as both politico-religious resistance and literary counter-discourse. As noted earlier, history shows that from the early spread of Christianity outside Europe, there was a conjunction of political (conquest), spiritual (religious), and cultural (social) practices and procedures. In analysing sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian Capuchin missionary writings on Central Africa, I have emphasized their ambiguities, showing the ways in which the missionary enterprise and the discourse it generated were inextricably entangled with cultural questions, despite the fact that in the minds of the authors their writings embodied only a spiritual project. The Capuchins' constant use of biblical metaphors and images is a religious reference for sure, but one which, unconsciously, reproduces the ethnocentric gaze and the major binaries of the colonial discourse.

Johannes Fabian links colonization and evangelization in a different manner, encapsulating their relationship in the tropes of space and time. He writes:

When examining sources and documents which formulate missionary projects in the second half of the nineteenth century, one is struck by an all-pervasive proclivity to express the proclamation of the message in spatial categories and metaphors. To be sure, some spatial notions are logically implied if a religious institution wants to bring its message to the world. But it is another matter when expressed in terms of military conquest and penetration. Do not such images necessarily flow from the tenets of Christian doctrine? Is the well-known concretization of missionary calling in spatial terms that is already found in the Gospel (e.g. Mark 16, 15) a sufficient explanation? ... Territorial thinking helped to cast religious thought into categories of 'geographic space' ...

...

Deep convictions about time – about the things time was thought to accomplish through progress and evolution, about the time needed to carry on the work of civilization, about the right time for Africans to be civilized and, above all, about the 'ages' that separate childlike Africans and adult Europeans – were inextricably bound with these spatial notions.³

What Fabian underlines here is the way in which the missionary enterprise, like the colonizer's, is framed in the discourse of evolution, progress (with reference to primitiveness and the lack of development) and personal growth (with reference to paternalism), which are part of the colonial discourse representing Africans. The reference to the categories of time and space by both the missionary and the colonizer pinpoints some proximity, if not

similarity, between, on the one hand, the ‘civilizing’ mission and, on the other, the evangelizing mission. Both missionary and colonizer asserted their authority on the conquest of space and the control of the temporal framework that would facilitate conversion: that is to say, the transition from primitive to ‘civilized’, and from infancy to adulthood. Framing Africans as ‘children’ is a stereotype recurrent in both colonial and missionary discourse, as summarized, in all good faith, by the Swiss missionary Henri-Alexandre Junod when he states:

ayant acquis une connaissance plus intelligente de cet enfant, de ce frère cadet, du Noir, nous saurons mieux le prendre par la main et le guider dans la voie du progrès, où le poussent les circonstances nouvelles.

...

Frère noir, qui demeure dans les ténèbres de tes superstitions et de perdition, nous t’avons compris et nous t’aiderons à t’élever sur le chemin de la lumière, de la vérité et la liberté.⁴

having acquired a higher knowledge of this child, of this younger brother, of the Black, we will know better how to take his hand and guide him on the road of progress where new circumstances are leading him.

...

Black brother, who remains in the darkness of your superstitions and perdition, we understand you, and we will help you to rise up onto the road of light, of truth and of freedom. (My translation)

And yet, the probably sincere sympathy and benevolence of the missionary only reaffirms his paternalism and authority, and reaffirms well-known dichotomies, legitimizing evangelization and colonization as processes of human evolution that, visualized through requisite biblical images, lead the African subject from darkness to light, from superstitions to truth, and from ‘perdition’ to salvation.

In his turn, Achille Mbembe concludes that:

La pénétration chrétienne des sociétés noires s’inscrit donc bel et bien dans une logique de conquête. Elle prenait appui sur une ‘anthropologie de l’indigène’ qui faisait de ce dernier un objet de malédiction susceptible de n’advenir au statut de sujet que par la médiation conjuguée de sa conversion au Christianisme et de son autosoumission à la technologie coloniale du pouvoir.⁵

The penetration of Christianity in black societies is well inscribed in the logic of conquest. It drew support from an ‘anthropology of the native’, making of him an object of malediction, able to reach the status of a subject only through the mediation of Christianity, combined with his self-submission to the colonial technology of power. (My translation)

In Mbembe's view, it is clear that the functioning and structure of colonial and missionary discourse deny any agency to the colonized or the evangelized. There is, perhaps, an implicit reference to the Belgian missionary Placide Tempels, especially in his affirmation that somehow the Bantu people had always been waiting for Christianity, and that Christian mediation is the ultimately secure path to civilization:

It is in Christianity alone that the Bantu will find relief for their secular yearning and a complete satisfaction of their deepest aspirations. And this has been admitted to me by I do not know how many pagan Bantu. Christianity – and especially Christianity in its highest and most spiritual form – is the only possible consummation of the Bantu ideal . . . If the Bantu cannot be raised by a Christian civilization, they will not be any other.⁶

Within the colonial space established by European nations, racial, ethnic and national solidarity contributed to maintain a form of harmony and collaboration between missionaries and the colonial administrations. There were occasional tensions between them though, and the churches sometimes competed among themselves for the conquest of new adherents. Although they often belonged to different denominations, missionaries shared Christianity and Western cultural values. These were translated by the missionaries' work in the field via practices and methodologies based on the assumptions of commonly shared cultural and religious backgrounds. In Africa, Asia and the Americas, the basic missionary methodologies were similar. In general terms the missionary practice comprised a *pastorale* approach, combining pedagogy and action as the means by which to convey the teachings of the Catholic Church according to the relevant religious value system. It also involved a *catéchèse* that implied a particular content for the teaching and transmission of religious ideology and doctrine through the Gospels, as well as through prescriptions, liturgical rituals, symbols, prayers, songs etc.

In terms of *pastorale*, Catholic as well as Protestant missionaries had some common concerns in their work of evangelization: the eradication of local practices and beliefs, and the struggle against polygamy, fetishes, idols and ancestral worship.⁷ Missionaries were generally judging the local practices they fought against, extracted from the larger social and cultural chain in which they were incorporated and from which derived their significance and coherence. In his seminal work *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques*, Marcel Mauss has shown for example, that religion in primitive societies was inclusive and constituted what he calls a '*fait social total*', in which all domains of societal life were expressed and represented. Thus, in fighting

against polygamy or ancestor worship as isolated practices, missionaries were somehow disturbing the social chain and the general context in which those practices were inscribed and functioning. Even if the motives for conversion were not always clearly and exclusively religious or spiritual, in most cases the indigenous populations had accepted the arrival of missionaries and Christianity.⁸ The problem however, was that missionaries, consciously or not, were viewing and judging local practices and beliefs through the lens of their own religion and culture. As a consequence, they had to constantly contest polygamy, which they considered as 'immoral' and as the manifestation of the natives' 'libidinous tendencies' and 'uncontrolled libido', whereas the indigenous people regarded it to be an institution with political, social and economic impact. Pastors' and priests' fierce iconoclasm regarding local cult objects, combined with their intolerance and antagonism towards local practices and beliefs, soon stirred up the local population's hostility and unfriendliness towards them. This culminated, in some cases, in resistance against colonial power and, eventually, in secession from mainstream churches, since Christianity was sometimes perceived as the religion of the white man, who was most often the colonizer.

In different matters, the representation of Christianization by missionaries themselves gave ground to the perception of a convergence between the cultural and the spiritual. As an example of this convergence, we may consider the statement of a nineteenth-century Protestant missionary to a local king that they had come 'to make your country stand the same way as the white man's country'.⁹ This echoes perfectly the words of Giovanni Francesco Romano, a Capuchin missionary in the kingdom of Kongo during the seventeenth century, who wrote in his *Relazione* that civilized life started with the arrival of the Portuguese:

Anticamente avanti, che vi entrassero i Portoghesi, come erano tutti gentili, non si vedeva tra essi civiltà veruna, ... ma dopo l'arrivo de' Portoghesi si sono riformati assai, e vivono con qualche civiltà.¹⁰

In the past, before the arrival of the Portuguese, since they were all pagans, one could not see any civilization among them ... But after the arrival of the Portuguese, they were reformed to some extent, and now live in a fairly civilized manner. (My translation)

In some instances, resistance has been translated as a demand for an autonomous and independent local African Christian church. Such was the case, for example, in eighteenth-century Central Africa in the ancient kingdom of Kongo, with the rise of the prophetess Béatrice Kimpa Vita. During the civil

war in which the kingdom was entrenched, Béatrice arose, according to her own proclamation, as a religious and political leader sent by God. In preaching that Jesus was black, and that the time had come for the installation of a black Catholicism, she was also calling for the restoration of the kingdom's ancient capital and its indigenous name of Mbanza Kongo instead of San Salvador, the name bestowed by the Portuguese. An additional implication was the demand for the overthrow of Pedro IV, the current king, whom she considered an impostor brought to power through the support and complicity of the Portuguese colonizers along with the missionaries. Béatrice's followers were persecuted, while she was finally arrested by the king and condemned to death in 1706. She was burned on a pyre as 'heretic'.¹¹ The political and secular gesture of arresting her seemed to be well in accordance with the religious and spiritual nature of the sanction (declared heretic, condemned to the pyre). Béatrice's death had indeed been advised and approved by the missionaries. The prophetess's religious and political resistance along with the role of the missionaries in her death illustrates another aspect of the overlapping of the political and secular, the religious and the spiritual.

In delineating other forms of resistance, one of which we might term 'reversed resistance', brings us to nineteenth-century Uganda. Here, resistance is exemplified by the life and death of Ugandan martyrs. Persuaded by his entourage and the local sorcerers that the Christians were plotting to overthrow him, King Mwanga of the Buganda started persecuting converted Catholics and Anglicans, and then decided to put to death a group of twenty-two young men between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four who had converted to Catholicism. They died in June 1886 having been condemned to burn on a pyre. It is ironic that the one who wields political power resists the missionaries by condemning the converted to death, but in doing so, he uses the same technology of death employed by the Catholic Church to put heretics to death, as in the case of Béatrice in the Kongo. The persecution of Catholics and their condemnation was in actuality an act of revenge by the king, who disagreed with the missionaries and opposed them because of their criticism and reproach of his 'immorality'. Beatified in 1920 and canonized in October 1964 by Paul VI, the Ugandan martyrs represent the first black Africans canonized as saints by Rome in modern times.

Early in the twentieth century, once again in Central Africa, the prophet Simon Kimbangu, a former Baptist catechist, separated from his church to reclaim and create an independent African Christian church. Labelled as a troublemaker, he was arrested by the Belgian colonial authorities in 1921 and condemned to death. His sentence would later be commuted to life in prison.

He died in jail after thirty years of imprisonment. Unlike Béatrice, though, Kimbangu did succeed in establishing an independent African Christian church, the Church of Jesus-Christ, which still maintains followers today. Moreover, in the Democratic Republic of Congo where it counts the largest community, Kimbanguism¹² is added to the list of religions officially recognized in the country, including Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

One last example of resistance is represented by the emergence of independent indigenous churches founded by Africans in several African countries. South Africa represents perhaps the place where independent African churches would develop the most. If, as noted earlier, religion and empire were closely interconnected, the racial and political context of South Africa might have aggravated the discontent towards mainstream churches, which were often organized along racial or ethnic lines, and, as elsewhere in Africa, mostly controlled by a white clergy. South African independent churches would promote 'contextual theology', a brand of liberation theology. These churches would become instrumental in the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission after the end of apartheid.¹³

The creation of independent African churches is perhaps an echo of earlier pleas within the Catholic Church for the establishment and promotion of an indigenous clergy within it. This clergy, it was thought, because of both its roots in local culture and its training in Christianity, would be able to work for a better implantation of the Catholic faith among the locals. This issue contained other implications related to the place of African identity within Christianity in Africa. These concerns would become more explicit in the course of the twentieth century as Africans began questioning a foreign religion introduced in Africa, and the fact that it was clothed and embedded in the expressions and symbols of Western culture and language. Most, if not all, African independent churches derive from Protestant churches. The Catholic Church, because of its hierarchical structure and high centralization, instead of having to face resistance and secession, initiated a deep reflection from within, with regards mainly to the character of Catholicism as it confronted local cultures in Africa and elsewhere. This reflection upon what would later be called 'inculturation' had already started with a group of black priests, who collected their ideas and interrogations in a collection of writings significantly entitled *Des Prêtres noirs s'interrogent* (Black Priests Questioning).¹⁴

Within churches and sects since the early missions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries changes and developments have occurred with regard to the conception of the mission and its practices as well as the relationship between political and the religious authority, and between Christianity and

'other' cultures. These modifications certainly reveal a transformation in mentality and signal the rise of new sensitivities expressed through a claim and a search for an African identity. At the political level this claim would culminate in decolonization and the establishment of independent African nations. As for the Catholic Church, one could not ignore the aftermath of the *aggiornamento*, when the question of 'inculturation' would constitute one of the major debates during the second Vatican Council, or Vatican II.

It is important to keep in mind that the questioning of a hegemonic Christian church and of missionary discourse, as well as the reflexion among the black clergy, started during the nineteenth century, long before political independence in Africa. Against the grain of the field of francophone studies in the academy, the persistent view of the postcolonial only in terms of periodization completely ignores early resistance against missionaries, like the 'symbolic resistance' found in African literary discourse, which validates the 'postcolonial' as a non-chronological concept.

The missions and African knowledge

As already noted, missionary discourse functions as a reproduction of colonial discourse. Yet, despite (a) the missionaries' ethnocentric gaze marked by their status as whites, Europeans and Christians, (b) the fact that studying the locals was not meant primarily for the sake of pure knowledge, and (c) the fact that, except in a few cases, they were amateurs rather than trained professional anthropologists or linguists, missionaries have nevertheless produced a wide body of writings concerning the countries in which they worked. Their writings did, and still do, constitute an important source of knowledge about the indigenous cultures and societies of Africa, Asia and the Americas. Since the early age of evangelization, missionaries were required to send to their headquarters in Europe accounts of their work in the field. Well-known examples are the Jesuits' *Relations* or the *Relazioni* of the Italian Capuchins. These accounts were shaped sometimes as travel reports and at other times as ethnographic descriptions. In some cases they functioned as both simultaneously. The authors reported on the state of the mission, the conditions under which they were working, and the problems encountered in their apostolate. Many of these reports often contained detailed descriptions of local history and geography, indigenous mores and traditions, rituals, practices and beliefs, social organizations, techniques, etc. It is possible that their intellectual curiosity and interest in other cultures were overshadowed by pragmatic considerations. In the view of some missionaries, a good understanding and knowledge of local

cultures was a necessary element of the *pastorale*: to better know the people and their culture would contribute to developing a better methodology of Christianization and more efficient means of conversion. Learning local languages was a crucial component, since it allowed direct communication with the people who were to be evangelized, and thus avoided the mediation of an interpreter. Moreover, writing in the local languages would allow transmission of the *catéchèse*. This pragmatic concern would lead to considerable efforts by Christian missionaries around the world, as they worked to make available Christian teachings in local languages. The result was the development of writing and spelling along with the classification and standardization of oral languages, the establishment of grammars and dictionaries as well as translations of the Bible, catechisms, prayers and hymn books. These tools, alongside penetration of the educational system, constituted the vehicles through which Christianity gained a stronghold in the colonies. The appropriation of local languages has been a common practice among both Protestant and Catholic missionaries. In South Africa, since the nineteenth century missionaries even promoted African literature in local languages. With the new tools in local languages and their own knowledge of these languages, missionaries could dismiss their interpreters and establish direct communication with the people they intended to evangelize.

Discussing the ‘language question’, Johannes Fabian finds a ‘common ground’ between colonial and missionaries procedures of control. He rightly chooses to read the appropriation of language as a means by which the colonialists instituted their authority, in much the same way that missionaries exerted control.¹⁵

No wonder, then, that missionaries encountering African languages should approach them as strange regions to be explored, as bounded systems to be monographically described, as the possession of territorially defined groups (so that linguistic, ethnic and geographic labels could become interchangeable). From the same source came a fascination with movement in space – with migration and diffusion – and more subtle preconception.¹⁶

Christian evangelization and the development of modern linguistics and anthropology have not been merely coincidental. Each of these movements – economic, religious, scientific (and half of them political) – needed a global perspective and a global field of action for ideological legitimization and for practical implementation.¹⁷

What Fabian is referring to at the linguistic level is, in fact, a repercussion of the political level, which is equivalent to processes of nomination,¹⁸ surveys and registration of lands, and new cartographies: all well-known procedures for

taking possession of a territory. Similar to the way colonial powers renamed locations and mapped territories, missionaries would replace African names with Christian ones, reconfigure the land, and, in the new landscape, trace new roads, and reorganize the local space, locating the mission station as the centre, as exemplified in the Cameroonian writer Mongo Beti's novel *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* (*The Poor Christ of Bomba*), summarized by Eboussi Boulaga,¹⁹ and V. Y. Mudimbe²⁰ when he writes:

the center of life and hope shifts from the *grand place* of the village or the Chief's court to the church and its appendages, which now correspond to an axis of modernization. All traditional socializing events, such as the assembly in the evening around a central fire or a weekly social ritual of exchanges of goods in the market, where they exist, lose their absolute pertinence.²¹

To make it understandable to the addressee, the spiritual discourse was couched in forms and expressions that were borrowed from the secular mission of colonization. When, for example, the Swiss missionary Junod, addressing his African 'little brother', states, 'nous t'avons compris' (we understood you), he implies in fact that the ethnographic description has made the Other a transparent object. Junod, a trained professional anthropologist, spent a good number of years in Southern Africa as a Protestant missionary and as an anthropologist. He translated the Bible into Tsonga, and also wrote a grammar of the Tsonga language. He was considered as open minded and dedicated to the preservation of local traditions.²² Yet, in the little sentence quoted here, Junod, unconsciously for sure, displays the colonial attitude of appropriating the native's body and mind, thus denying him any opacity, only to make of him a pure transparency.

Through ethnographic descriptions, missionaries recorded their knowledge of indigenous cultures and societies which they aimed to share with the West. It is undeniable that the linguistic and ethnographic work by missionaries has been an invaluable contribution to the constitution of a 'colonial library'. Yet there seems to be a fundamental paradox in the missionaries' appropriation of local cultures. In their writing they work to record and preserve the very things they seek to eradicate. Missionary reports, accounts and ethnographic descriptions represent the indigenous as seen through the external, European gaze. These representations in the European language naturally use Western-inflected voice and imagery. In other words, in descriptions of Africa and other evangelized regions, local voices are completely missing. Thus the process of appropriation is accompanied by dominance and affirmation of authority. In a different way, postcolonial writings would appropriate the languages

of the West but as a means of self-assertion and auto-representation rather than domination, in order to make present their missing voices and grant agency to the local colonized people who had been subalternized in the discourse of the West. Although they were the first to become implicated in evangelical conversion, as summarized by Edmund Leach, blacks were only observers, and not actors.²³

Some missionaries, both native and foreign, have produced writings that, controversial or not, have left deep imprints and an unquestionable legacy in the representation of non-Western cultures. One might briefly recall missionaries such as Bishop Ajayi Crowther and Reverend Samuel Johnson in Nigeria, both well-known converts, and Carl Christian Reindorf in what was then the Gold Coast. As native figures of authority within the church in their respective countries, they were caught between their religious functions and their relationship to the local culture. Their involvement in prevalent missionary practices such as the struggle against some local customs and rituals, combined with the study as well as the valorization of local languages and translation between these languages and European languages, is to be seen as an expression of their dual position as missionaries and natives. Their apostolate thus remained consistent with the practices of ethnographic and linguistic work at the service of evangelization. However, one might surmise a difference of intentionality: unlike the Western missionaries, there is, in addition, the play of nativist motives and perhaps a form of cultural nationalism aimed at recovering an African past and reappropriating African knowledge through ethnographic and linguistic investigation. In this manner, these native missionaries found ways to validate the indigenous cultures to which they belonged.

Among these native missionaries the Anglican bishop Ajayi Crowther became the first black bishop (ordained in 1864) in modern Christianity and is today recognized as a major figure in the history of Christianity in Africa.²⁴ While Crowther committed himself to the knowledge of African traditions and languages, as a representative and defender of Christianity, he was at the same time firmly opposed to certain local practices and beliefs such as the wearing of so-called amulets, human sacrifices, killing of twins, idolatry and polygamy. What seems to be a contradictory viewpoint, in fact, conveys the ambiguity and the difficulty of being in a liminal position, which caused him to be perceived as 'too black' by some, and 'too English' by others. His work and writings bear witness to his commitment to the conservation and the valorization of African culture. Besides his religious work such as the translation of the Bible and prayer book into Yoruba, Crowther also wrote a *Yoruba Grammar and Vocabulary*,²⁵ and collected Yoruba proverbs. Another Anglican black minister,

the Reverend Samuel Johnson (1846–1901) of Nigeria, wrote *The History of the Yoruba from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*.²⁶ Considering Johnson's relevance and the impact of his historical work, Falola Toyin counts him among the 'Yoruba Gurus', while Ato Quayson has shown the tremendous impact that Reverend Johnson's work had on the conceptualization and evolution of a pan-Yoruba identity.²⁷ As for Carl Reindorf, a mixed-race missionary from the Gold Coast, he is well known for his book written first in the Ga language, and then translated into English as *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante. Based on Traditions and Historical Facts. Comprising a Period of More Than Three Centuries from about 1500 to 1860*.²⁸

Among Catholic missionaries of the twentieth century, one must mention the Belgian Father Placide Tempels, the author of *Bantu Philosophy*.²⁹ A controversial book for many years, it became the object of lasting debates. It generated in its time opposing reactions from both Europeans and Africans, highly praised by some and strongly criticized by others. Tempels's goal was a pastoral one: he was caught in the missionary assumption that knowing the locals would contribute to a better apostolic work of conversion. *Bantu Philosophy* went under the scrutiny of different disciplinary readings and has been subjected to the critical lenses of each of these disciplines: anthropology, philosophy and theology.³⁰ For my part, I situate my reflection at the level of discourse analysis, which appears to unearth an apparent contradiction that, in actuality, translates the ambivalent position in which the missionary was trapped: his sympathy and openness to the local culture on the one hand, and, on the other, his desire to convert the people whose culture he appreciated. In effect, Tempels addresses his book to 'the colonials of goodwill'.³¹ He invites them to an 'amende honorable' (full apology) for labelling the Bantu Other as 'non-civilized'. He seems thus to debunk and repudiate Western stereotyping of the Bantu as 'children', as well as the European perception of the Bantu culture as a *tabula rasa*.³² Tempels finally calls upon his fellow citizens 'to correct our attitude in respect of them'.³³ However, at the same time, Tempels keeps stressing Christianization as a 'work of civilization' with phrases such as 'our mission to civilize',³⁴ 'our civilizing power'.³⁵ Tempels's discourse of openness and generosity towards what he calls the 'Bantu' seems to be contradicted by other statements that clearly reproduce the paternalistic stance of the colonial discourse and its appropriation of the colonized's mind, appointing the white or the missionary as the teacher and the master who knows, and who, like Junod quoted earlier, not only makes the subaltern transparent, but also speaks for him and depicts him as having internalized his position as pupil:

We do not claim, of course, that the Bantu are capable of formulating a philosophical treatise, complete with adequate vocabulary. It is our job to proceed to such systematic development. It is *we* who will be able to tell *them* [my emphasis], in precise terms, what their inmost concept of being is. They will recognize themselves in our words and will acquiesce, saying, 'You understand us: you now know us completely: you "know" in the way we "know".'³⁶

The Belgian missionary then concludes by stating that 'If the Bantu cannot be raised by a Christian civilization, they will not be any other.'³⁷

The ambiguity of Tempels's discourse as it appears might be mitigated when placing the book in the frame of the author's intentionality, namely, within the sense of the *pastorale*, as it appears in his questions:

Has Christianity failed in its civilizing mission to the Bantu? Is this inadequacy inherent to Christianity itself? Or does it lie in the method of evangelization? Or should we lay the blame on the Bantu?³⁸

Tempels's answer to these questions is to use the Bantu's belief in 'vital force' as a tool or medium for conversion. Having reached – rightly or wrongly – the conclusion of the centrality of the notion of 'vital force' in the Bantu worldview, Tempels concludes that it could be used for their conversion. It is worth quoting him:

Let us observe that the Bantu have considered us whites, from our first contact with them, from the only point of view possible to them, that of their Bantu philosophy. They have included us within their order of forces, at an exalted level. They think we must be powerful forces. Do we not seem to be masters of natural forces that they have never mastered? . . . The natural aspiration of the Bantu soul was therefore to be able to take some part in our superior force.³⁹

. . .

But it is essential to set out this perennial doctrine in terms of Bantu thought and to present the Christian life that we offer them as a vital strengthening and a vital uplifting.⁴⁰

One might wonder if presenting Christianity to the Bantu as a 'vital strengthening and a vital uplifting' does not undermine the religious and spiritual dimension in conversion, thus making suspicious the motives for conversion, as pointed out by Balandier, Peel and Yeadan, and Beti.⁴¹ This questioning finds an echo in the novels such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Mongo Beti's *The Poor Christ of Bomba*, as we shall see later.

The creation back in the 1960s of the *Centre des Religions Africaines* (CERA, Centre for African Religions) within the Department of Catholic Theology at Lovanium University in Kinshasa, led by the theologian Vincent Mulago,

clearly ushers in a new vision and altered attitude of the Christian churches toward local practices and beliefs. Since the 1970s an ongoing debate has taken place among African Christian philosophers and theologians of both Catholic and Protestants persuasion such as John Mbiti, Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, Vincent Mulago and Alexis Kagame, among others. At the centre of these debates is the reflection on the relevance of traditional beliefs and how to use them as *pierres d'attente* (stepping stones) for the evangelization of African people and their 'inculturation'. Interestingly enough, these same philosophers and African Christian theologians, as illustrated in their works, would go on to become advocates for the valorization of traditional African religions and cultures, in coexistence with Christianity.⁴²

A postcolonial literary response

In a different way modern African literature provides insights into the relation of culture and evangelization, and functions as a new site of enunciation, parallel to, or in relation to, the colonial and missionary discourse. Besides its aesthetic component, African literature embodies the historical, social and political contexts of a particular period or society. It thus constitutes a cultural discourse as well as a space for reflecting a multiplicity of knowledges. In most parts of sub-Saharan Africa education and schools have been in the hands of missionaries. In countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Catholic Church had the monopoly on education until 1955 when in Belgium a socialist was appointed as Minister of Colonies and decided to create *laïc* schools. After the African independences, although education was the governments' responsibility through the Ministry of Education, confessional schools maintained their presence, and, as Ato Quayson reminds us, in most of the African countries, Catholic schools are still the ones to provide the best education. As known throughout colonial history, the modern formal education from these schools constitutes the foundations of a new social stratification in Africa. African writers, who are part of a larger African elite, were educated in those schools and were thus exposed to and influenced by the missionary discourse. As Althusser has shown, educational systems are part and parcel of the Ideological State Apparatus, and in colonial Africa these systems were instrumental in constituting forms of consciousness.⁴³

Novels of modern African literature such as *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, *The Poor Christ of Bomba* by Mongo Beti, or *Entre les eaux* (*Between Tides*) by V. Y. Mudimbe posit a postcolonial reading of missionary writings and develop a counter-discourse that operates as a 'symbolic resistance' to the

colonial and missionary discourse of evangelization.⁴⁴ As a counter-discourse, African novels pinpoint the ambiguity of colonial discourse as well as the missionary discourses of evangelization, unveiling the latter's cultural dimension, which is ultimately embedded in the culture of the West. The counter-discourse takes the form of an inversion in which the indigenous gaze and voice become the sites of enunciation. Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha have pointed to the limits of inversion as a strategy that perpetuates representations in binaries.⁴⁵ This critique is certainly valid. If one recalls Foucault's association of language and power, one could say that inversion carries a subversion, and, as such, is a productive strategy insofar as it represents a *prise de parole* that grants agency and power to the former subaltern. When the subaltern can speak, to quote Spivak (one should add, and be heard and listened to), he has the opportunity of destabilizing the master's position of power. Aimé Césaire provides a good example in his play *Une Tempête* (*A Tempest*) in which Prospero and Caliban are staged as the paradigmatic characters of the colonizer and the colonized. Césaire shows how Prospero loses all self-confidence from the moment when, for the first time, Caliban vehemently expresses his rebellion in a long all-in-one speech, literally taking the power of words in a passage that significantly occupies an entire page of the book.⁴⁶ The postcolonial response to missionary discourse is also to be found in African novels such as Beti's *The Poor Christ of Bomba*, in which, like Caliban, characters seek to display a discourse of auto-representation that disrupts the established order. In Beti's novel, for instance, Father Drumont's self-doubt and self-examination are generated as an outcome of the evangelized speaking out and questioning his actions.⁴⁷ The different geographical settings of the novels considered (Nigeria, Cameroon and Belgian Congo) have a common discussion of the Christianization of Africa and the representation of African resistance or reaction. These elements are absent from most missionaries' writings, in which the missionary is the only site of enunciation.

Chinua Achebe's first three novels, *Things Fall Apart*, *Arrow of God* and *No Longer at Ease*, are, perhaps, the first major fictional narratives in modern African literature that display a critical portrayal of Christianization in Africa, and how it impacted on Ibo culture and society. If some practices inherent to the local traditional society predisposed the people of Umuofia in *Things Fall Apart* to convert to Christianity, there is, nevertheless, a critical evaluation regarding the missionaries' methodology for conversion. Missionaries like Reverend Smith represent the radical and intolerant type of evangelizer, for whom local practices have to be eradicated. The converted Christians in *Things*

Fall Apart prefigure the character of Sarzan in Birago Diop's short story *Sarzan*.⁴⁸ Having become Christians, they adhere to the new functions conferred upon traditional sacred sites which were desacralized by the colonizer, and they lose respect for indigenous rituals, objects and places. Rejecting the traditional gods and devalorizing traditional symbols lead the people of Umuofia to emptiness, like Sarzan, who, in totally rejecting his own traditions for the colonizer's 'civilization', ended up in madness. As Simon Gikandi summarizes it:

But when these spaces of exclusion are appropriated by the colonizing structure, and their meanings are reversed, a semantic crisis develops.⁴⁹

There are several underlying levels of criticism and questioning in *Things Fall Apart*. The resistance of some, the adherence of others to Christianity, as well as the acts of violence that erupt in the village, together show how the introduction of the new religion has disrupted the community as Achebe describes it:

Okonkwo's return to his native land was not as memorable as he had wished . . . The clan had undergone such profound change during his exile that it was barely recognizable. The new religion and government and the trading stores were very much in the people minds . . .

Okonkwo was deeply grieved. And it was not just a personal grief. He mourned for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart.⁵⁰

Surrounding the *osu*'s conversion, the motivation for conversion to Christianity is questioned. These motives seem to have more to do with the social and the political rather than the spiritual. For Nwoye, and also for the *osu*, who are excluded and ostracized from their community, the Christian church represents a haven and a safe social space. It appears that in actuality, conversion was a way to acquire and appropriate some of the white man's powers and technology.⁵¹ That is why referring to the Kongo king's conversion, Balandier calls it a 'malentendu' (a misunderstanding).⁵² At various moments of the novel the narrator exposes the destruction of traditional beliefs; he presents descriptions of these traditional practices, as though wishing to have them recorded. In addition, numerous biblical references scattered in the novel lead us to believe that by bringing together knowledge of traditional and biblical practices, Achebe is contributing to the syncretic expression of an African knowledge. While this might be comparable to the missionary ethnographic project carried out in missionary reports, *Relazioni*, *Relations* and other writings, here there is a different intentionality, for the focus in the novel is predominantly on the valorization of African Ibo local culture in its encounter with colonialism.

The novel's ironic ending, with the allusion to the colonial ethnography encapsulated in the book the Commissioner is planning to write, speaks also to the more positive cultural curiosity that had earlier been expressed by Mr Brown:

As he walked back to the court he thought about the book. Every day brought him new material. The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribe of the Lower Niger*.⁵³

If the concept and the practice of what will be called 'inculturation' are not explicit in Achebe's counter-discourse, his novel offers an African perspective on evangelization, one that seeks to be an affirmation of African culture and offers the possibility of its coexistence with Christianity.

Mongo Beti's novel *The Poor Christ of Bomba* on the other hand, illustrates a mode of subversion by inversion in the narration of the life of Reverend Father Drumont through his houseboy Denis's diary.⁵⁴ Like Mr Smith in *Things Fall Apart*, Father Drumont is usually domineering, arrogant and paternalistic. The violent diatribe of the local chief, Sanga Boto, and his rage against the missionary restrained for a long time before, and finally exploding, are reminiscent of Caliban's revolt in Aimé Césaire's play *A Tempest*. In Beti's novel, the revolt is not against Christianity per se, but rather against the disruption brought by the priest into the village, and against what the chief considers as a provocation and a cultural spoliation by the missionary: taking wives from their husbands, prohibiting people from enjoying their dance and music, destroying their instruments.⁵⁵ These prohibitions imposed by missionaries in order to institute a Christian mode of life were seen by the indigenous populations as discriminatory practices aimed at controlling them:

Je voudrais te poser une question: suppose que des Blancs aient dansé ce soir à notre place; suppose que tu aies été près de leur fête, est-ce que tu serais aller briser leurs trompettes et leurs guitares? Parle-moi en toute sincérité, Père.⁵⁶

I just want to ask you one question: suppose the whites were dancing here tonight instead of us and you were passing by, would you rush in and break their trumpets and their guitars? Answer me sincerely, Father.⁵⁷

Like Caliban towards Prospero, the use of *tu* (the familiar form of address) in the original French version reflects the new attitude of the subaltern towards the priest's authority. Thus, resistance against religious control overlaps with

the secular and becomes at the same time a political act and a reaction in defence of one's culture. Since the day Father Drumont started asking questions and listening to the locals' points of view, he has begun to feel insecure and doubtful about his apostolic actions. By speaking out, Beti's characters bear witness to the methodologies used by missionaries and unveil the cultural dimension of evangelization. Criticism is conveyed through dialogues between blacks themselves, or between the missionary and Vidal, the colonial administrator, who, with some ironic provocation, challenges the priest regarding Christianity in an indigenous context:

Pourquoi ne serait-ce pas nous qui avons transformé le christianisme à l'usage de notre estomac, mon Père? Hein, pourquoi pas? Dans la pensée du Christ, ce devait être une religion universelle, non? Et ce n'était pas un imbécile le Jésus-Christ: il devait bien se douter qu'il y avait de par le monde des gens qui avaient des moeurs à eux. Tenez, c'est comme la viande: nous mangeons tous de la viande, Blancs, Noirs; pourtant, nous ne la mangeons pas à la même sauce, les uns et les autres. Vous comprenez ce que je veux dire? Pourquoi ne pas faire un christianisme à l'usage des Noirs? Un christianisme ... Je ne sais pas, moi ... où la polygamie serait autorisée ... où la pureté sexuelle ne figurerait pas en tête du cortège des vertus?⁵⁸

Might it not be that we merely adapted Christianity to suit our own stomachs, Father? Why not, eh? In Christ's conception, it was to be a universal religion, wasn't it? And Christ was no fool. He must have known that everyone in the world doesn't have the same morality. It's like food: we all eat food, black and white alike, but we don't eat it with the same sauce. Do you see what I'm driving at? Why not present a Christianity that is suited to the blacks? A Christianity ... well, perhaps, in which polygamy is permitted ... And where sexual chastity is not regarded as the chief of all virtues?⁵⁹

Vidal's trivial analogy and ironic suggestion are deeper than his irony. His reference to a 'Christianity to suit our stomachs' and his call for 'a Christianity that is suited to the blacks', even if they are meant to be a provocation, contain nevertheless an allusion to the incorporation of Christianity in Western culture and the necessity to dispossess it of Western cultural signs and signifiers. Beti's novel, published for the first time in 1956, came as a shock to the Catholic hierarchy, which banned the book in Cameroon and forbade its circulation for many years. Vidal's suggestion in fact rephrases in banal terms the major questions raised by the African black clergy in their collective book *Des Prêtres noirs s'interrogent* (*Black Priests Questioning*, 1956) regarding the relationship between evangelization and culture. If the word 'inculturation' was not yet part of their lexicon, the idea was already sown in the book.

Entre les eaux (*Between Tides*) by V. Y. Mudimbe features another form of resistance.⁶⁰ Like the female character Mère Marie-Gertrude, a Catholic nun in his other novel *Shaba Deux* (*Shaba Two*), in *Between the Tides* Pierre Landu, a black Catholic priest is struggling with himself in a quest to find a way to live ‘authentically’ as an African priest, given that Christianity represents a foreign belief and way of life for Africans. For Landu, the struggle becomes a spiritual crisis and a deep questioning of his faith and of his church. He soon abandons the church to join a group of Marxist–Leninist guerrillas who are rebelling against the central government. Landu’s letter to his bishop expresses his inner division and summarizes his internal turmoil, as well as the painful itinerary that leads him to become a ‘Marxist rebel’. While it conveys Landu’s ambiguity and ambivalence, the letter is at the same time a form of self-critique and a criticism and indictment of his church:

Ma lettre n’est que l’explication d’un cheminement douloureux, d’une division asservissante, d’une pensée attaquée de tous côtés dont la participation à l’action directe demeurerait le seul refuge honorable. . .

Aujourd’hui mon grand remords est ma longue adhésion à un christianisme qui n’était en fait qu’une caricature du message évangélique, un grand ensemble humain. . .

Père, pardonnez-moi si je suis dur. Le coupable, c’est partiellement moi. J’ai embrassé fidèlement, sans esprit critique, les thèses de ma nouvelle caste; thèses qui étaient aussi celles d’une puissance coloniale, et d’une oligarchie financière.⁶¹

My letter is only the explanation of a painful progress, of a split in myself slowly brought under control, of a personal belief attacked from all sides so that there remained only one honorable expression of it: direct action. . .

My great regret today is my long adherence to a Christianity which only caricatured the evangelical message, a grand human whole. . .

Forgive me, Father, if I am blunt, the culprit is to some extent myself. Faithfully and in no critical spirit, I embraced the principles of my new caste – principles also of the colonial powers and a financial oligarchy.⁶²

Landu’s ambiguity suggests that his rebellion is directed not so much at Christianity per se, but rather against the forms and ways in which Catholicism plays out in the mission field. Catholicism in the colony has betrayed the message of the Gospels, has given in to class differentiation, and has worked in tandem with the colonizer and with capitalism:

Je crois en Dieu, mais le Catholicisme, c’est une religion de Blancs.

... En vertu de quoi lui fallait-il donner sa foi à une religion étrangère? Catholique, universelle, tout ce qu’on veut, le problème demeure: le Catholicisme est une religion marquée par l’Occident. Jusque dans la compréhension du message.

Porté, soutenu par des structures européennes, il n'est guère possible de l'aimer sans s'inscrire dans l'histoire d'un monde . . .

Non, je ne vois aucun argument convaincant qui pousserait un Africain à opter pour le Catholicisme autrement que par la force conditionnante.⁶³

I believe in God, but Catholicism is a religion for white people. . . .

What obliged her to put her faith in a foreign religion? Catholic, universal, what you will, the problem remains: Catholicism springs from the Western world. Even to understand it is European. It is supported by Europe's institutions, and one can love it only by enrolling oneself in the history of a civilization . . .

So: I see no convincing way to persuade an African to opt for Catholicism, other than conditioned reflexes.⁶⁴

Conclusion

Christianization in Africa was inscribed within the colonial space and produced a missionary discourse parallel to colonial discourse. History, as well as writings by missionaries and Africans themselves, all pinpoints the ambiguity and ambivalence inherent to these discourses. For missionaries, these are embedded in the conflation of Christianity and Occidentalism, whereas for the Africans they are woven into their situation of acculturation brought about by contact with the West through colonization and evangelization.

If the debate around evangelization and culture became more visible during the twentieth century, it could be traced back to as early as the mid nineteenth century, as testified by a meeting of the African clergy at the Freetown Debate of 1888. For much of the Christian African clergy today, 'inculturation' represents the Africa-Europe cross-cultural encounter, and the ways in which it becomes possible to believe and live as both Christians and Africans. The literary counter-discourse finds its actualization and validation in the debate on 'inculturation' and the new *pastorales* for its implementation.

Achebe's, Beti's and Mudimbe's literary discourse is framed in a dialogue with missionary writing. Resistance to Christianity, or its questioning, has been carried out by opposing religious movements and secession from the mainline churches, and also through fictional narratives in an intertextual relationship with the colonial and missionary archives. Relevant to the topic that unites the different essays in the present volume, African writers' counter-discourse as 'symbolic resistance' is a *prise de parole* for rereading and revising history, contesting and criticizing, interrogating and questioning, but also for rebuilding and looking forward towards the future. In *Between Tides*, after his guerrilla escapade, Pierre Landu returns to the church and joins a Catholic monastery. In *The Poor Christ of Bomba*, if Father Drumont's missionary work

looks like a failure, when he leaves the country to return to Europe, he is replaced by a younger missionary who, like Mr Brown in *Things Fall Apart*, arrives with a different vision and ideas about how the work of Christianity and evangelization ought to be implemented in the new and changing world of today. On both sides, foreign as well as native missionaries', the ambivalence and ambiguity may remain, but cohabitation still seems possible.

Notes

My thanks to Claire Dunlop for her editorial assistance: she transformed the French-like style into a more suitable English.

1. See Charles de Witte, 'Les Bulles pontificales et l'expansion portugaise au xvème siècle', *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 48.3-4 (1953), 688-718; 49.2-3 (1954), 160-77 and 438-61; 51.1 (1956), 413-53; 53.1 (1958), 5-46 and 443-71. For this introduction, I am drawing from Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi, *Essais sur les cultures en contact: Afrique, Amériques, Europe* (Paris: Karthala, 2006), pp. 17-47.
2. Stephen Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Missions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966); Leon de Kock, *Civilizing Barbarians. Missionary Narrative and African Textual Response in Nineteenth-Century South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1996); Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004); Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880-1914* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003); Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire 1800-1860* (Cambridge University Press, 1972).
3. Johannes Fabian, *Language and Colonial Power: The Appropriation of Swahili in the former Belgian Congo 1880-1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 79-80.
4. Henri-Alexandre Junod, 'Les Ba-Ronga: étude ethnographique sur les indigènes de la baie de Delagoa', *Bulletin de la Société Neuchâteloise de Géographie* (1898), 8-9.
5. Achille Mbembe, *Afriques indociles: Christianisme, pouvoir et Etat en société post-coloniale* (Paris: Karthala, 1988), p. 40.
6. Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, trans. Colin King (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1959), p. 186.
7. *Pastorale* and *catéchèse* are probably mostly used as Catholic terminology, but the terms indicate the same reality in other denominations.
8. Georges Balandier, *La Vie quotidienne au Royaume de Kongo du xvième au xviième siècles* (Paris: Hachette, 1965); John Peele and David Yeadan, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).
9. Peel and Yeadan, *Religious Encounter*, p. 127.
10. Giovanni Francesco Romano, *Breve Relazione del successo della Missione de Frati Min. Capuccini del Serafico P. S. Francesco al regno del Congo. E della qualità, costumi, e maniere di vivere di quell Regno, e suoi Habitatori* (Rome: Sacra Congregazione de Propaganda Fide, 1648), p. 70.
11. The most complete account is by the Capuchin missionary Bernardo da Gallo, 'Relazione dell' ultime guerre civili nel Regno di Congo, della Battaglia data dal Rè D. Pietro Quarto, e della vittoria da lui ottenuta contro I Rebelli. Come anche del Scisma nella Fede per via d'una Donna, che si fingeva S. Antonio, felicemente superato colla morte di quella', in Teobaldo Fiesi (ed.), *Africa* 26.4 (December

- 1971), 473–508. It seems that the Capuchin missionary Bernardo da Gallo was implicated in Béatrice's death. In this account da Gallo clearly takes the king's side and castigates Béatrice. See also Teobaldo Filesi, 'Nazionalismo e religione nel Congo all'inizio del 1700: la setta degli Antoniani', *Africa* 27.1 (March 1972), 645–68.
12. Wyatt MacGaffey, *Modern Kongo Prophets: Religion in a Plural Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).
 13. Adrian Hastings, *A History of African Christianity 1950–1975* (Oxford University Press, 1994); Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995).
 14. Collective, *Des Prêtres noirs s'interrogent* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1957); Collective, *Civilisation noire et église catholique* (Paris/ Abidjan: Présence Africaine, 1997); Jean-Paul Messina (ed.), *Des prêtres noirs s'interrogent: quarante ans après, quelle actualité et quelle permanence théologiques?* (Yaoundé: Presses de l'UCAC, 2000).
 15. Fabian, *Language and Colonial Power*, p. 83.
 16. *Ibid.*, pp. 79–80.
 17. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
 18. Jean-Loup Amselle, *Logiques métisses: anthropologie de l'identité en Afrique Centrale et ailleurs* (Paris: Payot, 1995), p. 50.
 19. Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, *Christianisme sans fétiche: révélation et domination. Essai* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1981), p. 30.
 20. V. Y. Mudimbe, *Les Corps glorieux des mots et des êtres: esquisse d'un jardin à la bénédictine* (Paris and Montreal: Présence Africaine-Humanitas, 1994), p. 42.
 21. V. Y. Mudimbe, *Parables and Fables: Exegesis, Textuality, and Politics in Central Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), pp. 7–8.
 22. Henri-Alexandre Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe 1912–1913*, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1927).
 23. Edmund Leach, *Claude Lévi-Strauss* (University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 41.
 24. J. F. Ade Adayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841–1891: The Making of an Elite* (London: Longmans, 1965); Emmanuel Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria: 1842–1914* (London: Longmans, 1966); Paul Edward H. Hair, *The Early Study of Nigerian Languages* (Cambridge University Press, 1967); Peter Rutherford Mackenzie, *Inter-religious Encounters in Nigeria: S.A. Crowther's Attitude to African Traditional Religion and Islam* (Leicester University Press, 1976); Jesse Page, *The Black Bishop* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908); Duke Akamisoko, *Samuel Ajayi Crowther: His Missionary Work in the Lokoja Area* (Ibadan: Sefer, 2002); David Sweetman, *Bishop Crowther* (London: Longman, 1981); Jeanne Decorvet, *S. Ajayi Crowther, un père de l'Église en Afrique* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1992).
 25. Samuel Ajayi Crowther, *A Grammar of the Yoruba Language* (London: Seeleys, 1852).
 26. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate* (1921), ed. Obadijah Johnson (Lagos: CSS Bookshops, 1997).
 27. Ato Quayson, *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing: Orality and Literacy in the Work of the Rev Samuel Johnson, Amos Tutuola, Wole Soyinka and Ben Okri* (Oxford and Bloomington: James Currey and Indiana University Press, 1997). See also Toyin Falola, *Yoruba Gurus: Indigenous Production of Knowledge in Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999).
 28. Carl Christian Reindorf, *The History of the Gold Coast and Asante. Based on Traditions and Historical Facts. Comprising a Period of More Than Three Centuries from about 1500 to 1860*, 2nd edn (Basel: Basel Mission Book Depot, 1951).

29. Placide Tempels, *Philosophie bantoue* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1949, 1965). The book went through several translations. The original version was in Flemish and was translated into French by Maître Antoine Rubens. The English translation by Colin King (see note 6 above) is based on the French translation.
30. Johannes Fabian, 'Philosophie bantoue: Placide Tempels et son oeuvre vue dans une perspective historique', *Études africaines du CRISP* (Brussels: Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politique, 1970), 108–9, *Jamaa: A Charismatic Movement in Katanga* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971); Edmond Boelart, 'La Philosophie bantoue selon le R. P. Placide Tempels', *Aequatoria*, 9 (1946), 81–90; Paulin Hountondji, *Sur la philosophie africaine: critique de l'éthnophilosophie* (Paris: Maspero, 1977); V. Y. Mudimbe, 'Placide Tempels and African philosophy', *Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outremer*, 32.3 (1986), 349–61, *Tales of Faith. Religion as Political Performance in Central Africa* (Athlone Press: London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1997). See the bibliography on Tempels collected on his website by *Aequatoria*: www.uia.ac.be/aequatoria/tempels/HomeEng.html
31. Tempels in King's translation, p. 184.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 169
33. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
37. The French version is much stronger. It reads: 'la civilisation bantoue sera chrétienne ou elle ne le sera pas' (Tempels in Rubens's translation, p. 120) (bantou civilization will be Christian, or it will not be civilization). My translation here differs from King's.
38. Tempels in King's translation, pp. 182–3.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
41. Georges Balandier, *La Vie quotidienne au Royaume de Kongo du xvième au xviième siècles* (Paris: Hachette 1965), pp. 42–3; John Peel and David Yeadan, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), pp. 126–8; Mongo Beti, *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1956), trans. Gerald Moore as *The Poor Christ of Bomba* (London: Heinemann, 1971), pp. 53–5, 38–9.
42. See for example, Vincent Mulago, *Un Visage africain du Christianisme. L'Union vitale bantu face à l'unité ecclésiale* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1975); John Mbiti, 'Christianity and African culture', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 1 (September 1986), 26–40, also *Bible and Theology in African Christianity* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986); Eboussi Boulaga, *Le Christianisme sans fétiche. Révélation et domination: essai* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1981).
43. See Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and ideological state apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1989), pp. 170–86; Simon Gikandi, 'African literature and the colonial factor', in Abiola Irele and Simon Gikandi (eds.), *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 379–97.
44. Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985).
45. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the subaltern speak?' in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

46. Aimé Césaire, *Une Tempête* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p. 88.
47. Mudimbe-Boyi, *Essais*, pp. 125–9.
48. Birago Diop, *Les Contes d'Amadou Koumba* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1961).
49. Simon Gikandi, *Reading Chinua Achebe: Language and Ideology in Fiction* (London and Nairobi: Heinemann, 1999), pp. 48–9.
50. Quoted in Abiola Irele (ed.), Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart: Authoritative Text, Context and Criticism. A Norton Critical Edition* (New York and London: Norton and Company, 2009), pp. 103–4.
51. Beti, *Le Pauvre*, pp. 93–8.
52. Balandier, *La Vie quotidienne*, p. 55.
53. Quoted in Abiola, *Chinua Achebe*, p. 117.
54. As in a diary, each chapter of the novel begins with chronological indications, such as 'Lundi, 2 février' (Monday, 2 February).
55. Mongo Beti, *Le Pauvre*, pp. 93–4.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
57. *Ibid.*, Moore's translation, pp. 55–6.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 253–4.
59. *Ibid.*, Moore's translation, pp. 156–7.
60. V. Y. Mudimbe, *Entre les eaux. Dieu, un prêtre, la révolution* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1973), trans. Stephen Becker as *Between Tides* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991).
61. Mudimbe, *Entre*, pp. 104–5.
62. *Ibid.*, Becker's translation, pp. 89–90.
63. Mudimbe, *Entre*, pp. 34–5.
64. *Ibid.*, Becker's translation, pp. 28–9.

Postcolonial auto/biography

PHILIP HOLDEN

Introduction

The connections between autobiography and the postcolonial are profound. Postcolonial studies has brought political concerns to bear on literary texts, showing not only how such texts respond to structures of power and privilege, but also how they may play a part in creating or contesting such structures. In parallel, autobiography studies takes as its object a series of texts that cannot simply be addressed in formalist terms, that insist on their referentiality even as they form new subjectivities, both individual and collective, for writers and readers. Parallel battles over terminology, indeed, indicate intersecting disciplinary tensions. As Ato Quayson's introduction illustrates, debates over the inclusion of the hyphen in 'post(-)colonial' arise from discussions over whether the term marks a temporal or an epistemological rupture. Auto/biography studies, similarly, has recently made greater use of the terms 'auto/biography' and 'life writing' as concepts more inclusive than Philippe Lejeune's definition of autobiography as 'a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his [sic] own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality',¹ widening attention to a variety of forms in different social and cultural contexts. At the same time, others have insisted on the specificity of 'autobiography' as a particular modern genre promoting individual subjectification, and constituting a site of struggle over redefined individual and communal identities in modern society.

Such connections, indeed, go beyond parallels. Much postcolonial thought has been expressed through life writing. Postcolonial literary studies has made active use of autobiography, and a common reading strategy for the postcolonial critics is to excavate autobiographical elements in literary texts. In addition, postcolonial theorists and critics frequently make use of autobiographical anecdotes, and many theoretical luminaries have written full-length autobiographies that consciously enact processes of postcoloniality, such as Sara Suleri's

Meatless Days, Henry Louis Gates's *Colored People* and Edward Said's *Out of Place*.² As postcolonial studies has become embedded in the academy as a discipline, however, writers and scholars have also struggled against the 'biographization' of literary production that the 'postcoloniality industry' brings,³ and particularly the manner in which liberal multiculturalism ignores the autonomy of literary texts and demands that such texts speak the truth of collective ethnic identity, with the creative writer as 'native informant'.⁴ In responding to such debates, contemporary writers such as Jamaica Kincaid and J. M. Coetzee have recently made strategic new uses of autobiography as a genre, consciously foregrounding its interplay of fictionality and referentiality.

This series of contestations has resulted in renewed critical attention to postcolonial auto/biography. 'Autobiography' is not indexed in early summative accounts of postcolonial studies such as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back* or Elleke Boehmer's *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature*, but C. L. Innes's more recent *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English* devotes a whole chapter to the genre. Later publications from 2008 onwards bear out this renewed interest: David Huddart's *Postcolonial Theory and Autobiography*, Philip Holden's *Autobiography and Decolonization* and Bart Moore-Gilbert's *Postcolonial Life-Writing* explicitly yoke postcolonial literary studies and life writing, as do recent special issues of journals such as *Wasafiri*'s life-writing issue.⁵ These in turn build on earlier edited collections and monographs with more specific geographical, temporal or gender foci: Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Woman's Autobiography*, the *Research in African Literatures* special issue on African Autobiography, Alfred Hornung's and Ernstpeter Ruhe's *Postcolonialism and Autobiography* – concentrating on the Caribbean and Maghreb – Gillian Whitlock's *The Intimate Empire*, Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee's *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, and David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn's *Telling Lives in India*.⁶ From the margins of postcolonial literary studies, auto/biography now seems to have travelled to centre stage, even as new technologies extend its reach into film-sharing sites such as You-Tube, social networking sites, and to institutional attempts at social redress such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This chapter makes strategic choices in focus. It is not closely concerned with forms of life writing before or outside formal modern colonialism. This is not to say that these other forms are unimportant: they too, bear traces of other colonialisms and imperialisms, and will often be re-appropriated and reworked in the present. Autobiography has played a crucial part in literature in Arabic, as evidenced by publications such as Ibn Sina's (Avicenna's) *The Life of Ibn Sina*,

Usamah ibn Munqidh's *The Book of Learning by Example*, or Abn Hamid Al-Ghazali's *The Deliverance from Error*; in Persian, we have Mir Muhammad Taqi's *Zikr-I Mir*.⁷ Further important auto/biographical traditions exist in South, Southeast and East Asian languages, and oral auto/biographical narratives are present in many cultures, re-emerging in the present in dialogue with chirographic practices: Nelson Mandela's inauguration as president of the New South Africa in Pretoria in 1994 was marked by the performance of a traditional life-writing form, the praise poem, in a number of languages. Indeed, it is arguable that a work that is often taken as foundational to a Western tradition of life writing, Augustine's *Confessions*, is in fact a paradigmatic postcolonial text, written by an African on the margins of an earlier European empire in an imperial language that was not his native tongue.⁸

The need for focus necessitates the closing off of many of the productive routes of inquiry outlined above. The chapter will also exclude substantial focus on forms of life writing covered elsewhere in the volume – slave narratives, for example, or the prolific genre of colonial travel writing that has been the subject of numerous overviews, place-, gender- or author-specific studies, and is ably covered in the chapter by Gareth Griffiths. It will bracket other forms that seem peripheral to its historical focus: for example, the imbrication of auto/biography and colonial discourse.

Colonial negotiations

This chapter thus focuses on print autobiography, which gained popularity from the nineteenth century onwards in societies undergoing the upheavals of modernity. The words modern, modernization and modernity, as Frederick Cooper and others have recently cautioned, need to be approached with some caution, since popular usage in the contemporary humanities and social sciences has arguably evacuated them – especially the last term – of specificity.⁹ Nonetheless, I wish to use the notion of the modern – itself a term used by many of the writers we will discuss – in dialogue with the 'postcolonial', to emphasize that even as we deploy the notion of the postcolonial we must be aware of its limits. All the elements of a text and its contexts are not determined by colonialism or a response to it. This is not to simplify modernity and its discontents; nor do I intend to make a facile sharp division between the oral and the chirographic,¹⁰ equate precolonial and premodern periods, or identify the colonial as inaugurating the modern. As Terence Ranger and his successors have shown, colonialism was uneven, and was adept at reforming and utilizing feudal cultural forms. Yet the advent of print capitalism transformed the

relationship between texts and their life worlds. In an environment in which both autonomous individual and cultural group became objects of both governance and self-fashioning, print autobiography came to play a crucial role, constituting what Simon During, writing of fictional texts, describes as series of ‘portable machines’ for the production of new selfhoods, translatable to new contexts, in which ‘localism was itself universalising and, conversely, . . . universalism was dependent on . . . localism’.¹¹

Autobiography might be seen as a ‘constraining template’ under colonialism, a form of mental colonization. This was the opinion of Georges Gusdorf who, in his seminal definition of autobiography, identified it as a Western genre, noting that non-Western autobiographers were ‘annexed by a sort of intellectual colonizing to a mentality that was not their own. When Gandhi tells his own story, he is using Western means to defend the East.’¹² Yet Gusdorf neglected to mention that Gandhi had already foreseen this accusation and made a reply, arguing in the preface to the English translation of his *Autobiography* that he was not simply acceding to a Western discursive practice, but actively creating something different, not a ‘real autobiography’ but simply ‘the story of my numerous experiments with truth’.¹³ it was possible to take a template, and to use it to produce something that resisted colonial power, or spoke of the possibility of creating something entirely new.

An early example of the complex place of life writing under colonialism from the nineteenth century is Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir’s *Hikayat Abdullah*, a work often considered a foundational text in modern Malay literature. The work’s title draws on the traditional genre of the *hikayat*, a narrative written within the confines of the *kerajaan*, or feudal Malay state, that chronicles the activity of the raja and his subjects. Yet any reader of Abdullah’s work would notice its marked disregard for generic conventions: it is written in the first person by a named author, and it describes, albeit episodically, the development of an individual’s life. Abdullah was a product of the colonial milieu of the Straits Settlements, a series of littoral and island territories on the periphery of what is now peninsular Malaysia first unified under East India Company control in 1826. Moving from Malacca to Singapore, Abdullah learned English and became enmeshed in the cosmopolitan life world of the colonial entrepôt. He worked as a scribe, teacher, translator and interpreter for colonial officials and missionaries, and assisted missionary translation of scriptures into Malay and the production of Malay-language school textbooks. Abdullah’s contemporaries and some recent commentators have seen him as a stooge of colonialists such as Stamford Raffles, ‘a captive mind in the world of colonialism’.¹⁴ Yet Abdullah never abandoned Islam, and his praise of British rule is directed not

towards acceptance of colonialism but towards the reformation and modernization of Malay society, in which modern, self-disciplining free individuals are contrasted to premodern subjects of the raja, mired in the ignorance of superstition and 'foolish custom'.¹⁵ In the space of the Straits Settlements, Abdullah reconfigures a worldview under the influence of dissenting missionaries and figures such as Raffles who were deeply influenced by the Scottish Enlightenment, indulging in what Lydia Liu has in a different context characterized as 'translingual practice', bringing new words into Malay, and wrenching older ones into new meanings.¹⁶

An episode of the autobiography that indicates Abdullah's ambivalent position occurs when he visits a boat in Singapore harbour containing slaves due to be sold in the port. He is outraged by 'iniquity' and lack of respect for their humanity, associating slavery with an irrational premodern feudal political order,¹⁷ and yet when he later mentions his experiences to Raffles, the latter confesses that slavery still exists in England, although he hopes that if 'we live to be old we may yet see all the slaves gain their freedom and become like ourselves'.¹⁸ This episode is preceded by an account of the construction of Raffles' 'place for learning for all races', the Singapore Institution, yet the building will remain unfinished and unoccupied long after Raffles's return to Britain.¹⁹ Juxtaposed, the two incidents illustrate the constitutional contradictions of colonial modernity, in which the primary fruit of political modernization, equality, is continually deferred into an ever-receding future. Even as Abdullah uses his life story to urge reform upon Malays in order to make them fit subjects of modernity, so the structures of modern colonial power prevent the free circulation of such subjects in a colonial public sphere.

Yet for all its stress on the making of individuals, the *Hikayat Abdullah* might also cause us to question some of the ready divisions made in autobiography studies between modern individuals and postmodern, community-based or performative selves. For if Abdullah's autobiography works as a Foucauldian technology of the self, illustrating the self-disciplining necessary for a modern individualization, and enabling 'individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves',²⁰ it is also founded on appeals to and indeed a reconstruction of community. As Anthony Milner has noted, Abdullah's autobiography replaces the traditional *hikayat*'s reference to the authority of the raja with a new form of moral collectivity based on the notion of *bangsa*, or race.²¹ Abdullah himself was a hybrid product of the colonial trading port, of Yemeni and Indian heritage, yet he embraced a new Malay ethnic identity as a foundation for politics in the colonial world.²² Such an

insight reveals the complex function of autobiography in constructing both individual and community under colonialism. 'Race' and other markers of putatively primordial community would become a primary means of colonial classification and rule by the 'ethnographic' colonial state,²³ but they are not simply impositions of colonial discourse. Rather, their appearance, internalization and deployment through life writing indicates a process of accommodation, struggle and reformation of social imaginaries. Reading texts such as the *Hikayat Abdullah* enables us to see the formation of a conceptual terrain on which the struggles of anti-colonial nationalism and the postcolonial developmental state would be fought – a 'peculiar way of making the world visible and legible' that one commentator has argued still underpins discussions of globalization today.²⁴

To the example of Abdullah's text we might add many others, written in colonial languages or in indigenous languages undergoing institutionalization and codification. In India, early autobiographies were produced in Gujarati (Narmadashankar Lalshanker's *Mari Hakikat* (My Factual Story), 1866), Bengali (Rassundari Debi's *Amar Jiban* (My Life), 1876) and other languages, including English (e.g. *Saguna* by Krupabai Satthianadhan (1887–8)): each mediates between public and private selfhoods, drawing both on rediscovered tradition and a sense of newness.²⁵ In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, missionaries frequently devised new written forms for African languages, spread printing technologies, and encouraged the writing of conversion narratives and spiritual autobiographies. As Gareth Griffiths notes, these texts often take the form of 'release narratives' from a violent African past through the civilizing force of Christianity: given the circumstances of their production and their role in soliciting funds from metropolitan audiences, it is questionable whether they might be called African writing at all.²⁶ Yet, as Griffiths shows, African writers struggled to take control of the genre in the twentieth century, resisting missionaries' civilizational discourses. Nor was there a simple movement from oral to chirographic: Isabel Hofmeyr's work illustrates the complex manner in which written mission texts might be appropriated into oral culture.²⁷ Similar struggles occurred with slave autobiographies: as William Andrews has demonstrated, there was continual negotiation in the United States between the need for liberal abolitionists to shape lives to indicate the possibility of emancipation, and the reality of slave lives which ended in privation, rather than material success, in the cities of the North. To gain the trust of white readers, black autobiographers had to adopt constricting modes of self-making, but they also found opportunities to develop rhetorical approaches that circumvented established polemical binarisms.²⁸

Colonial travel writing was an important autobiographical genre written by both men and women, and it began to be supplemented by accounts of

settlement in which the landscape was no longer exotic or inhospitable, but might be claimed, tamed and made home. Thus pioneer texts such as Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852) have become foundational to national traditions; others have been recovered from archives and published for the first time.²⁹ Foster Fyans's Australian autobiography *Memoirs Recorded at Geelong, Victoria, Australia*, which was written in 1850s, for example, was not published until 1986.³⁰ Such narratives are often doubled-voiced: they are colonizing with reference to the indigenous people who occupy the land of the settler colony, yet they also begin the process of claiming the landscape as part of a process of gaining autonomy from the colonial centre. Indeed, such doubleness is constitutive of these narratives, with new proto-national subjectivities and lives being formed by reference to non-Western others.

Public and private uses of autobiography under colonialism meet in Liliuokalani's *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* (1898). In the nineteenth century, Hawai'i refashioned itself as a constitutional monarchy with widespread literacy as an attempt to resist annexation by commercial Euro-American interests and a succession of colonial powers. After the overthrow of the monarchy and subsequent annexation by the United States in 1898, testimonies such as *Hawaii's Story*, written by the deposed Queen, Liliuokalani, make the narrative of a life metonymic of a larger political argument. Liliuokalani begins by locating her birthplace within the Hawai'ian landscape and by defending traditional Hawai'ian social order against the assertions of 'foreigners'.³¹ In telling the story of national progress and downfall, Liliuokalani emphasizes the doxological history of the colonial civilizing mission in which 'a savage people, pagan for ages, with fixed hereditary customs, have made . . . progress in civilization and Christianity in the same time'.³² Yet there is a rhetorical twist: Hawai'i is now a Christian country because it resists the 'vices introduced by foreigners': the ruling classes are the guardians of Christian morality, and will undertake the developmental 'work of saving and civilizing the masses'.³³ In using her life as an exemplary political text, Liliuokalani draws on a larger tradition of the deployment of life writing in nineteenth-century Hawai'i: Hawai'ian-language newspapers would retell the lives of Gladstone, Napoleon and other prominent figures from world history, and compare the lives of Hawai'ian historical figures to them.³⁴

Autobiography and decolonization

Liliuokalani's example provoked more successful projects of self-realization in colonial public spheres. Autobiography and other forms of life writing had a

significant role to play in anti-colonial nationalism, and in the imagining of new nation states as formal empires disintegrated in the twentieth century. Forms of life writing by activists written in the early twentieth century often harness modern technologies of self-fashioning to embed individuals within a newly imagined community. Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound* (1911) is commonly viewed as an autobiographical novel and indeed is presented as fiction, following its protagonist Kwamankra through proto-nationalist movements in the Gold Coast, and moving in setting between London, America, the Gold Coast and a parallel spirit world.³⁵ Yet there are close parallels between Kwamankra's and Casely Hayford's lives that would be unmistakable for contemporary readers. In producing a generically hybrid text that mixes autobiography, biography and fiction, realism and magic, standard English, Fante and Gold Coast English, Casely Hayford's narrative challenges, as do many subsequent life-writing texts, the cultural and ideological freight carried by the conventional autobiographies from which it is derived. A different challenge is posed by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's *Autobiography* (1925–9) which, despite its author's elaborate prefatory protestations to the contrary, initially appears to be a more generically conventional text. Gandhi's text is more significant for its thematic innovation: it refuses the 'hyper-masculine worldview' through which much anti-colonial writing answers back to colonialism, drawing instead on a series of ascetic 'experiments' on the body that incite the capacity for self-rule.³⁶ Narratives such as Casely Hayford's and Gandhi's exploit ideological tensions and fissures in the colonial world they inhabit, yet they reinscribe even as they oppose. Casely Hayford's vision of African manhood seems in many ways a reiteration of Victorian masculinity, while Gandhi's stress on frugality enacts, in a displaced and hybridized manner, discourses of 'self-help' that emerge from autobiographies such as Benjamin Franklin's and become central to Victorian self-fashioning through the writings of Samuel Smiles.

As decolonization progressed, so autobiography's role advanced. From the 1930s until the 1990s, a series of influential autobiographies were written by national fathers, or fathers-to-be, in which a gendered parallel is made between an individual life and that of the nation. The prototype of these is Jawaharlal Nehru's *Autobiography*, written during his imprisonment by the British from 1934 to 1935, and published in 1936, long before India achieved independence in 1947. Nehru's narrative and those that succeed it are based on a series of gendered binarisms, in which the state and disciplinary practices performed on a male body are contrasted to the unruly, feminized enthusiasm of the nation. Nehru's narrative thus stresses his own control and moderation, in contrast to

the 'child-like' enthusiasm of his wife, Kamala.³⁷ In correspondence, he notes how his wife became a symbol of India for him, and his *Autobiography* and later works are saturated with images of India as 'Bharat Mata, Mother India, a beautiful lady, very old but ever youthful in appearance, sad-eyed and forlorn, cruelly betrayed by aliens and outsiders, and calling upon her children to protect her'.³⁸ Yet Nehru's narrative is most interesting where the binarism between state rationality and national enthusiasm dissolves: in crowd scenes the Congress leader feels his division from the masses erode, a sensation that is both empowering and disconcerting. Nehru's own uncertainty regarding the place of the nation in modernity is also expressed in his ambivalent characterization of Gandhi: the latter's 'amazing and almost irresistible charm and subtle power over people' resulting from an embodiment of Indianness,³⁹ but complemented by an 'utterly wrong and harmful' rejection of modernization and development.⁴⁰

Nehru's model was followed by other male politicians in the era of decolonization, notably Kenneth Kaunda's *Zambia Shall Be Free* (1962), Nnamdi Azikiwe's *My Odyssey* (1970) and Kwame Nkrumah's *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (1957).⁴¹ Written for publication at the moment of Ghana's independence in 1957, Nkrumah's autobiography is less self-reflexive than Nehru's, but also establishes a series of parallels between national and personal narratives. As a young man growing up in the Gold Coast, Nkrumah's protagonist moves outwards through a series of communal identifications: family, ethnic group and then finally nation. He sojourns abroad and returns to Ghana, his relationship with the nation symbolized in his removal from and reunion with his mother. Nkrumah's narrative establishes fraternal or filial relationships with other men, such as the educationalist Kwegyir Aggrey, but writes out significant relationships with women, most notably the Ghanaian leader's private secretary, Erica Powell, who was responsible for the final preparation of the manuscript of *Ghana*. Like Nehru, Nkrumah envisions his autobiography as something with wider resonance than simply the story of a life: it is also a conduct-book for the production of new Ghanaian citizen-subjects. *Ghana*, indeed, was widely read by other nationalists in Africa and beyond in the process of decolonization from the 1950s to the 1970s. The narrative tradition inspired by Nehru and Nkrumah was made use of not only by nationalists who succeeded, but also by those whose visions remained unrealized. Oginga Odinga's *Not Yet Uhuru* (1967) plots its protagonist's movement beyond Luo ethnicity (and indeed is silent on Odinga's status as a traditional Luo spiritual leader) towards a 'feeling not of tribal differences, but of Kenyan identity'.⁴² Like Nkrumah's text, it suppresses the personal (here exemplified

in Odinga's troubled marriage) in order to project an account of personal growth in parallel with the nation's attainment of independence. Yet, in contrast to *Ghana*, it depicts the Kenyan nation under Kenyatta as having fallen away from the narrative of modernity; its preface, written by Nkrumah from exile in Conakry, indicates just how many hopes were shattered during this period.

While national autobiographies of this sort were usually written by male writers, the form was also appropriated by women. Hsieh Ping-Ying's *Autobiography of a Chinese Girl* (1936, trans. 1943) describes the transformation in consciousness of a young woman from rural Hunan Province, China, in the aftermath of the May Fourth movement. The text concludes by making use of a fictional topography common in many Chinese novels of the time, such as Ba Jin's *Family* (1933): the protagonist embarks on a passage to the semi-colonial metropolis of Shanghai, where the modern nation will be forged.⁴³ Ellen Kuzwayo's *Call Me Woman* tells the life story of an anti-apartheid activist who witnesses the Soweto uprising of 1976, and continued struggle following Black Consciousness movement leader Steve Biko's death in 1977.⁴⁴ Kuzwayo follows the form of the national autobiography in embedding her own narrative within a wider narrative of historical progress towards an as-yet-unrealized free South Africa; she tends to elide the personal except where it impinges directly on the politics of the struggle. *Call Me Woman* concludes with lists of pioneering South African black women medical doctors and South African black women lawyers: it thus seeks to expand the manner in which history is conceived in national autobiography to include women's experiences, making use of an enlarged but broadly congruent template.

National autobiography, indeed, has had an afterlife that extends to the present. Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994) and Lee Kuan Yew's *The Singapore Story* (1998) in many ways seem to be extensions of the genre: they also rigorously suppress personal affect in an attempt to create a progressive national narrative.⁴⁵ Yet these texts are also very different from their predecessors: Mandela's, for instance, is not the extension of the prison memoir it purports to be, but in fact a narrative evolved from interviews through the processes used by international publishers to produce contemporary celebrity autobiography. Lee's is a particularly interesting case. After stepping down as prime minister of Singapore in 1990, Lee might plausibly claim to have delivered on the hopes of developmental modernity expressed in so many earlier narratives to have successfully moved, in the words of the title of the second volume of his memoirs, *From Third World to First* (2000).⁴⁶ Yet Lee's text is haunted by the perpetual deferment of the denouement of its progressive

narrative, and marked not so much by the autonomy of the nation as imagined individual, but by what John Paul Eakin has termed the ‘relational dimension of identity formation’,⁴⁷ its protagonist achieving selfhood through the production of racialized others. As a genre, national autobiographies are significant because they problematize a tendency in postcolonial studies in the 1990s to identify the ‘non-Western’ text as always challenging the master narratives of modernity. These texts inhabit Enlightenment narratives of modernity, often with minimal discomfort, and seek to make use of them to create autochthonous or indigenized versions of the future. Flawed and deeply androcentric as many of these narratives are, they are nonetheless significant in the way that they mediate between public and private, inciting the production of new subjectivities through countless individual acts of reading. Many national autobiographies, indeed, have achieved national and international readerships far greater than that of most novels, the literary form most often associated with the production of national consciousness.

Auto/biography and cultural identity

Other forms of life-writing in the era of decolonization worked in parallel with, but in different modes to, national autobiography. Anthropology and ethnography initially became rationalized as social sciences, and the overt biographical details featured in texts by a previous generation of amateur colonial administrators were expunged. Anthropology, Johannes Fabian has noted, is premised on ‘allochronism’, splitting of the temporality of representation in which the anthropological subject is placed in ‘another Time’ from that of the narrator/observer and thus made amenable to analysis.⁴⁸ Yet such a splitting conceals a reliance on the anthropological subject in the narrator’s identity-formation: as the twentieth century wore on, anthropology became increasingly self-reflexive, seeking to understand the manner in which study of the cultural other involved the construction of a cultural self. The struggles of decolonization and the decline of European power, furthermore, meant that such questions could never be considered in isolation from larger sociopolitical contexts.

The foundational text in this tradition is perhaps Claude Lévi-Strauss’s *Tristes Tropiques* (1955), which interweaves travelogue, autobiography, anthropological fieldwork and meditation on larger comparative anthropological subjects. *Tristes Tropiques*, like the Amazonian rivers its protagonist follows, continually turns back on itself, always chasing self-reflexivity, but never fully able to shake off the limits of anthropology’s framing of the subjects and

objects of disciplinary inquiry.⁴⁹ Lévi-Strauss's vision of the Amazon as a lost Eden, for instance, is clearly influenced by the destruction of Europe in World War II. The text begins with a tortuous account of the author's escape from Vichy France, yet never explicitly acknowledges its projection of the ruins of European civilization onto the site of fieldwork. There are also silences: Lévi-Strauss's wife, who accompanied him in fieldwork, is mentioned fleetingly. The French anthropologist's plotting of the founding of successive religions from Buddhism to Christianity and then to Islam as a series of regressions leaves out Judaism, the religious community into which he was born and the cause of his exile from France.

Lévi-Strauss's example would be followed by a succession of other anthropologists who would problematize the distinction between subject and object through the use of life writing, and who would frequently attempt to open up a space for the object to speak. Anthropology was also appropriated by those who had been made its objects. Jomo Kenyatta studied under Bronislaw Malinowski at the London School of Economics, and his *Facing Mount Kenya* makes use of functionalist anthropology to emphasize the fundamental rationality of his own Gikuyu culture. His account of land ownership as the possession of private property by extended families counters colonial notions of *terra nullius* that held that 'huge lands . . . were not put to "proper" uses',⁵⁰ and thus justified colonial policies that opened them up for European settlement. Nkrumah performed a similar auto-ethnography in an unpublished document that was presumably his unsubmitted thesis at the University of Pennsylvania, using the universalism of his philosophical training against the cultural specification of anthropology, and urging a movement beyond the 'determination of types' to look 'into the basic and fundamental meanings underlying all cultures so as to arrive at a basic cultural *Weltanschauung* by which mankind may realize that even though race, language and culture may be separate and distinct entities yet they are *one* in the sense that there is but one race: *The Homo Sapiens*'.⁵¹ Anthropology and ethnography were further unsettled from within by figures such as Zora Neale Hurston. In her allusive and at times factually evasive autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942), Hurston recalls studying anthropology under Franz Boas, and then conducting research in the American South.⁵² She thus experienced acutely the 'double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others' that W. E. B. Dubois saw as central to the African American experience (and, by extension, other experiences of being excluded from full subjecthood in colonial modernity).⁵³ Hurston responded by viewing her research as constituting an experiential performance that opened up the possibility of other performances. After

visiting the Bahamas and researching folk music there, for instance, she introduced it to the New York stage.

In an influential essay in the late 1980s, Michael Fischer considers ethnography and autobiography in a new configuration. Examining the simultaneous increase in popularity of 'ethnic autobiography' and 'textual theories of deferred, hidden, or occulted meaning', Fischer notes that the yoking of these two phenomena enables ethnography to operate as a form of cultural criticism.⁵⁴ In Fischer's account, just as the realist novel enabled bourgeois self-fashioning during the nineteenth century in an industrializing society, so 'ethnic autobiography and autobiographical fiction' offer important ways of exploration of 'pluralist, post-industrial, late twentieth-century society'.⁵⁵ In a later essay, Fischer is even more optimistic, noting that in such writing 'a degree of serious cross-cultural critique' is possible 'that was utopian only fifty years ago'.⁵⁶ A writer cannot now, as anthropologists of the first half of the twentieth century did, other a culture to critique his or her own, because of the multiple subject positions occupied by readers, and the increased recognition that 'people increasingly construct their sense of self out of pieces that come from many different cultural environments'.⁵⁷ Arif Dirlik's recent work provides a corrective to Fischer's. While not denying the intrinsic properties of such texts, Dirlik stresses that exploration of their engagement with questions of ethnicity needs to account for their reception in contemporary societies that profess multiculturalism. For all their textual complexity, such works may be emplaced as representative of ethnic communities, and indeed the classification of works such as Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* as autobiography may, under discourses of multiculturalism that fetishize ethnicity, result in a lack of comprehension of the autonomy of such texts as works of art. Dirlik's solution is one that Fischer would no doubt agree with: culture itself needs to be historicized. Kingston's text explores membership of a number of different communities: 'Cantonese Stocktonite' and indeed 1960s counter-cultural activist emerge as equally relevant descriptors as 'Chinese American'.⁵⁸

Much writing that explores race, ethnicity, or cultural community in a postcolonial environment has attempted such historicization of culture by retrieving representative but forgotten community stories and consciously adopting different modes of storytelling. Indigenous communities suffering internal colonization in the United States, Canada and Australia have made use of oral narratives when claiming ownership of land: in Canada, indeed, court cases in the last decade up to and including recent rulings on the British Columbia Treaty Process have turned on the admissibility of oral tradition, often consisting of autobiography or other life stories, as evidence. At the same

time, testimony of abuse and forcible assimilation – the removal of Australia's Aboriginal 'lost generation' from their parents, or the trauma of abuse in residential schools for First Nations children in Canada – has brought hidden histories to light, and into the realm of public discussion and – often belatedly – policy.

A pioneer autobiographical text that dramatizes the historicity of culture under internal colonization in the United States is M. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969). Momaday's narrative describes a Kiowa culture that is dynamic, subject to continual change. The text plots a triangulation between three intersecting narratives that are differentiated by page layout and a variety of typefaces. The first tells the story of the Kiowas from 'inside' through stories, many of which Momaday glosses as received from 'kinsmen';⁵⁹ the second is more anthropological in tone, giving information on the Kiowas and often elaborating rituals such as the Sun Dance or peyote ritual, at times even drawing from external sources such as the writings of anthropologist James Mooney. The third is a personal recollection by Momaday himself. The effect is to immerse the autobiographical subject in history, and also to produce different cultural histories, which overlap but may also at times contradict: history from inside and outside are placed alongside each other, and neither is prioritized, just as Momaday as narrator explores his own identification with and exile from Kiowa identity, marked by his memories of prayers at his grandmother's house as a series of haunting sounds which he cannot speak Kiowa well enough to understand.

Such a concern with the historical emplacement of culture is manifest in much other postcolonial life writing which centres on the representation of place and a cultural community. Wole Solinka's *Aké: The Years of Childhood* (1981) describes the experiences of a young Yoruba boy growing up in Abeokuta, Aké, Nigeria: the beginning of the text explores a spirit world in which conventions of realism are problematized, and the many Yoruba words present are inconsistently glossed. Yet Soyinka's auto/biography does not simply celebrate a prelapsarian vision of organic Yoruba culture: rather, it shows how modes of cultural identification and belonging are in flux. The narrator's father has moved from his home town of Isara and an immersion in Yoruba-speaking life to become a head teacher and a practising Christian in an environment much more deeply marked with the traces of colonialism: his children move between English and Yoruba, inhabiting multiple worlds of language and cultural reference. The narrative of *Aké* is discontinuous, and initially profoundly embodied, as the child explores the irrational world of adults. As the protagonist ages, so he becomes more aware of external events in

Nigeria and the world, of women's anti-colonial consciousness manifested through an anti-tax campaign, and the rise of nationalist leaders such as Ogedengbe Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe. Narration becomes more consciously retrospective. 'The smells are all gone', Soyinka's narrator notes, mourning the passing of a cultural moment. 'In their place, mostly sounds, and even these are frenzied distortions of the spare, intimate voices of humans and objects alike which filled Aké from dawn to dusk, whose muted versions through the night sometimes provided us with puzzles of recognition as we lay on our mats resisting sleep.'⁶⁰ Now the village is 'shrunk', filled with 'stores peddling the products of a global waste industry', while traditional food products have vanished.⁶¹ Yet observation of this change is only possible from the perspective of a shadowy narrator whose life story the narrative pursues: distance from and desire for a past are only enabled by the process of physical and mental travel that Soyinka, and many of his contemporaries, went through.

An auto/biographical text such as Derek Walcott's *Another Life* (1973) takes this connection between a life and cultural history further, reworking the formal qualities of autobiography to realize this goal. Manuscript evidence indicates that Walcott envisioned *Another Life* as a prose memoir, and only moved to using verse half way through composition.⁶² If for Soyinka Yoruba cultural traditions can still be mapped onto a specific locale, Walcott finds his own personal history and that of the Caribbean marked by a series of dislocations. *Another Life* remembers the violence of colonial history to critique a postcolonial present that has fallen away from the promise of decolonization through the excesses of 'all the syntactical apologists of the Third World'.⁶³ In an autobiographical poem marked by different voices and modes of address, Walcott maps his own life onto a storehouse of characters in visual and literary texts, exploring fluid histories while at the same time forestalling the 'amnesia' of the present.⁶⁴ A defining feature of postcolonial auto/biography after the age of formal decolonization has passed, indeed, has been its mixing of genres, and its resultant questioning of referentiality.

Testimony and ethical responsibility

Walcott's scepticism concerning colonial governance illustrates the shifting status of autobiography under decolonization, what Caren Kaplan calls an 'out-law' genre becoming a 'master' genre.⁶⁵ Texts such as Nkrumah's and Nehru's that once promised to wrench history from the hands of the colonizer, and the biographization of the social field that accompanied them, often later

took on the status of gendered conduct-books for the production of new national subjects within a constraining template. The social imaginaries of postcolonial nation states were often, with varying degrees of permanence, mapped onto personality cults. Yet in the era after formal decolonization, auto/biography has undergone generic changes that have maintained its insurgent possibilities. Central and South America, have experienced postcoloniality differently from anglophone African, Asian and Caribbean postcolonies.⁶⁶ Independence was often achieved in the nineteenth century, but often resulted in the prominence of national elites, and continued discrimination against indigenous peoples. Nationalism's governmentality in the service of development often manifested itself as internal colonialism, which life writing might serve to critique.

A text that exemplifies the possibilities of such autobiographical writing, and yet also the overdetermined nature of such writing's reception, is the *testimonio* of Rigoberta Menchú Tum, first published in 1983, and translated into English in 1984. *I, Rigoberta Menchú* documents, through an individual's life story, the discrimination faced by Maya people in Guatemala, their attempts at political organization, and the brutal suppression of resistance by the Guatemalan state in the 1970s and early 1980s. Menchú's *testimonio* mixes searing description of rape, torture and execution by the Guatemalan military with a celebration of the communal nature of Maya culture, writing back against civilizational discourses that denigrate indigenous peoples. At the same time, Menchú makes connections beyond indigeneity in search of social equality and civil rights. Her text, she emphasizes, 'is the story of all poor Guatemalans. My personal experience is the reality of a whole people',⁶⁷ and a key element of the narrative is its protagonist's realization of shared interests with poor or disenfranchised *Ladinos* (Guatemalans of non-indigenous origin). The text is conversational, interpellating the reader as confidant, while at the same time refusing to serve as simple ethnography. While Menchú Tum's narrative contains elaborate descriptions of Maya cultural practices and rituals – enough, indeed, to cause her editor, Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, anxiety that narrative momentum would be lost – it is also marked by continual refusals to reveal 'all our secrets' and cultural syncretism in its use of biblical motifs to inspire resistance.⁶⁸

I, Rigoberta Menchú brought its author international prominence, and gained significance in a number of contexts. Within Guatemala, it helped to forge an alliance between progressive *Ladinos* and indigenous peoples,⁶⁹ while in the United States the text was widely adopted in university humanities courses that were reformulated to question Eurocentrism and affirm diversity.⁷⁰ The

narrative was also a contributory factor to Menchú Tum's involvement in a growing transnational alliance of indigenous peoples which culminated in her being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. Menchú's *testimonio* might thus be seen as an example of the revolutionary literature called for by Frantz Fanon, expressing the 'small voice of History'⁷¹ theorized by Ranajit Guha and other subalternists, one of a series of 'micro-narratives' that have the power to interrupt modern 'macro-narrativity'.⁷² Yet the text itself and the history of its reception also demonstrate the numerous layers of mediation involved in the production of such stories and voices. The narrative originally emerged from interviews with Menchú conducted in Paris by the ethnographer Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. In Burgos-Debray's admission, the process of mediation was a complex one: Spanish was for Menchú a newly acquired language, and Burgos-Debray edited the text substantially, rearranging the material into thematic chapters after Menchú's narration deviated from a planned chronology.⁷³ Burgos-Debray's account of the genesis of the text, furthermore, has been disputed by Arturo Taracena, the Guatemalan historian and activist who introduced Menchú Tum to her, who argues that he and other activists had a much greater role in the book's making than the ethnographer claimed. The first edition of the book gave Burgos-Debray's name as author, but there have been continual disputes between her and Menchú Tum regarding royalties.

The question of authorship, however, has been overshadowed by a more contentious dispute that reflects a central concern of postcolonial autobiography: the relation of Menchú Tum's narrative, and by extension all autobiographical narratives, to historical truth. Anthropologist David Stoll's *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (1999) claimed that the key incidents recounted in the *testimonio* either did not happen or could not have been witnessed by Menchú Tum herself.⁷⁴ Stoll's book and resultant coverage ignited a worldwide media frenzy that continues to this day. Commentators have noted that the *testimonio* itself is not simply an exercise in subaltern self-representation, but rather a sophisticated transcultural form that rephrases marginalized experiences and worldviews within a narrative form familiar to those who live in metropolitan capitalist societies.⁷⁵ David Beverley has further argued that the *testimonio* is a context-bound genre. It is different from autobiography in a number of ways, particularly in the manner in which it strives for an 'affirmation of the individual self in a collective mode'.⁷⁶ The pact such texts assume with the reader is thus different from the conventional autobiographical contract theorized by Lejeune. In order to fully address questions of ethics, Beverley and others have argued, we need to see texts such as Menchú's as performative, as not simply being appropriated but also themselves engaging

in strategic acts of generic appropriation. While debates will continue regarding the extent to which a larger collective truth may legitimately be expressed through the conscious fictionalization of individual experience, the example of *I, Rigoberta Menchú* illustrates the manner in which literary texts themselves are part of postcolonial political processes, enabling the formation of alliances across borders and classes, and yet never escaping from the politics of a variety of specific sites of reception.

Individuals and collectives

Tension between collective and individual self-fashioning has, indeed, been central to further developments in postcolonial life writing. Prison writing is a genre that has been central to anti-colonial and postcolonial political struggles, and at first sight the narrative of imprisonment might offer a reduction to a degree zero of self, the individual opposed to the power of the state. Yet in most cases imprisonment becomes a metaphor for a larger collective experience. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, for instance, notes in *Detained* that he has 'tried to discuss detention not as a personal affair between me and a few individuals, but as a social, political and historical phenomenon' in the context of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and the 'historic struggles of the Kenyan people'.⁷⁷ *Detained* is thus prefaced by official documents such as Ngũgĩ's detention order, and photographs of a demonstration calling for his release in front of the Kenyan High Commission in London in 1978; it ends with a series of appendices that include letters to the Detainee's Review Committee that are clearly addressed to a much larger audience, discussing the politics of language use, and the perils of economic and cultural neo-colonial dependence. This is part of a larger pattern: in examining a number of African prison narratives, Oliver Lovesey has noted how these texts consciously explore the contradictions of nationalism, working to 'violate the convention of private, introspective "self-writing"'.⁷⁸ In the context of the Indian anti-colonial struggle, David Arnold shows how imprisonment was often perceived by middle-class activists as enabling contact with a 'real India' of inmates of other classes, from whom they had previously been separated by social stratification.⁷⁹

In a complementary manner, postcolonial life writing that has commenced from the position of collective identities often returns to individuality and individuation. Women's groups have perhaps been the strongest advocates of collective autobiographies that challenge doxological narrative forms centred on the autonomous individual. Two texts, separated by twenty years, illustrate the possibilities of collective processes of re-telling, discussion, transcription

and collaboration. The Sistren collective's *Lionheart Gal: Life Stories of Jamaican Women* (1986) emerged out of the experiences of a female theatre collective founded in 1977, most of whom were working-class women participating in a temporary work programme introduced by the Michael Manley government. The book began as documentation of the collective's work, but quickly took on a life of its own; it was produced in a manner that followed a theatrical workshopping process, with collective meetings, interviews between Sistren collective members and editor/interviewer Honor Ford-Smith, transcription and then further editing.⁸⁰ The final text contains a variety of narratives in a variety of registers – some make extensive use of patwah (patois), while others are in formal English – which have a common concern to tell women's stories. The narratives also bear the traces of a common process of composition: most start from a key incident or decision made by the narrator in childhood or adolescence, and then move to explore the consequences of that decision. The result is a series of smaller stories that intersect with each other, and indeed – perhaps against the original collective's intention to simply give women voice – bear signs of hybridization and dialogism.

Lionheart Gal is a conceptually innovative text that continues to be taught and read extensively, and the critical attention it has received has inevitably returned to the conditions of possibility of collective autobiography. As Honor Ford-Smith herself has noted, the book emerged at a particular historical juncture when it seemed that many of the apparent victories of anti-colonial struggle might be extended into the sphere of gender. Twenty years later, with the spread of neo-liberalism after the end of the Cold War, these possibilities have not been realized in Jamaica: poverty and violence persist. At the same time, the 'NGOisation' of social movements has arisen, with non-governmental organizations becoming professionalized, moving into terrains of struggle, and thus arguably rephrasing forms of hegemony. Reflecting on these changes in 2004, Ford-Smith acknowledges that *Lionheart Gal* in many ways embodied the very problematics it sought to critique, especially in her own role as editor, 'a white, middle-class Jamaican wom[a]n working with black-working class women'.⁸¹ Yet she defends her work and the collective's through the fact that it embodies such contradictions: texts such as *Lionheart Gal* 'challenge inequitable relations, but they do not finally abolish them'.⁸²

The Sangtin writers' *Playing with Fire* (2006) is a text that attempts to work through these difficulties. It evolved from a process of collaborative writing among women from Sitapur District, Uttar Pradesh, that originally produced a Hindi text, *Sangtin Yatra*, in 2004. As with *Lionheart Gal*, the process of collaboration involved women of different backgrounds: in addition to seven women

diarists who had been drawn into NGO work as village-level activists, the collective included Richa Singh, a district-level activist, and Richa Nagar, now an academic at the University of Minnesota. *Playing with Fire* goes further than *Lionheart Gal* in that it is truly a collective autobiography, with successive chapters following the women through a narrative of their lives in which individual stories are braided dialogically together. The initial chapter, for instance, collects stories of childhood, and ponders their differences and the problematic nature of recollection and transcription. In the conclusion, connections emerge – a recurrent similarity, for instance, is that five of the seven women diarists ‘cursed our own birth’.⁸³ The second chapter describes marriage and the way it is embedded in structures of women’s oppression, while later chapters describe the protagonists’ initial interest in NGO work as a possible way of stepping out of social ‘cages’,⁸⁴ the difficulties of confronting caste and religious prejudices in working with other women, and personal transformations in which the psychic is often embodied in the material. Learning to ride bicycles, for instance, gives the women greater mobility; at the same time, they work out collectively the extent to which they will make compromises with traditional social practices they now find oppressive. Finally, the NGO for which they work is not exempt from critique: in its structures they find social hierarchies reproduced, the experiences of village women are often being reduced to a series of case studies published by middle-class activists without thought about the stories’ confidentiality or the consent of their tellers.⁸⁵

In working with the collective, Richa Nagar documents how she became conscious that her status as a ‘Hindi creative writer and researcher’ might be problematic: while efforts were made to democratize textual production, she and Richa Singh still led the process of writing and collaboration.⁸⁶ In response to her anxiety, group members noted that writing was one skill among many, and the process of discussion began the work, in Nagar’s words, of ‘deconstructing the scholar or writer as an expert in this kind of collaboration’.⁸⁷ The text of *Playing with Fire* moves beyond *Sangtin Yatra* in not simply translating the Hindi text, but also providing a series of contextual introductions or appendices, including an account and analysis of the unfavourable response the text received from the NGO it critiqued.

Playing with Fire, *Lionheart Gal* and other similar projects are important attempts at collective autobiography, yet they do not posit a collective self in opposition to ‘Western’ individualism. Rather, they plot various possibilities of collective subjectivities, both what Benedict Anderson has called the ‘bound serialities’ of ‘caste’, gender and religion, and the ‘unbound serialities’ of affiliation that various processes of social transformation offer.⁸⁸ Community

is bound up in individual identity construction, and community norms become the medium of individual expression. Yet a discovery of shared histories that have previously remained inarticulate can also facilitate a sense of autonomy, and result in the fashioning of new individual subject-positions. To such efforts one might add other collective writings by women, such as those sponsored by the Philippine women's organization Gabriela, or Julie Cruikshank's careful collaboration with three indigenous women from the Yukon, and her braiding of their lives in *Life Lived Like a Story* (1990).⁸⁹ Collective autobiography, whether in the form of individual stories or a single merged narrative, offers the possibility of reconfiguring national or other narratives that found social imaginaries. Ng Yi-Sheng's edited collection *SQ21: Singapore Queers in the 21st Century* (2006), for instance, writes the lives of LGBT individuals into a Singaporean national space that often seeks to exclude them through a reliance on homophobic colonial-era legislation: the title of the collection puns on a government-sponsored campaign to think about Singapore's future.⁹⁰ An earlier contribution to the genre, indeed, was the testimony of ex-slaves collected in the 1930s New Deal Federal Writers' Project and compiled by George Rawick as *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (1972).⁹¹

The postcolonial and the global

Both *Lionheart Gal* and *Playing with Fire* are marked by processes of diaspora that Ato Quayson notes constitute a further dimension of the postcolonial. *Playing with Fire* was composed while Richa Nagar was in Minnesota, and enabled through e-mail correspondence; Honor Ford-Smith notes that increasing migration from Jamaica after 1980 is mirrored in the experience of members of the Sistren collective.⁹² Migrancy as part of a process that we now call globalization is not new, but it has perhaps returned with new force after the end of the Cold War, with the founding of the World Trade Organization and increased cultural, economic and human traffic across national borders.

Both postcolonial studies and autobiography have grappled with a transformed world order. In the last decade, the utility of the word 'postcolonial' has been much debated, with terms such as migrancy, diaspora, or world literatures promoted as alternatives. Revathi Krishnaswamy and John C. Hawley's collection *The Postcolonial and the Global* is only the latest of a number of texts addressing such intersections.⁹³ Similarly, auto/biography studies has engaged directly with the question of globalization in Rosamund Dalziel's *Selves Crossing Cultures: Autobiography and Globalisation*, in a special issue of the journal *Biography*, entitled *Inhabiting Multiple Worlds: Auto/Biography in an*

(*Anti*-)Global Age, edited by David Parker, and indirectly in studies such as Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith's *Human Rights and Narrated Lives*, which draws on case studies from different parts of the world.⁹⁴ In the introduction to this chapter, I suggested that postcolonial autobiography was becoming prominent as an area of study; the last few years have seen a parallel movement by fiction writers to autobiography in order to map the complexities and contradictions of transnational lives. The chapter thus concludes with two case studies of writers who have moved to auto/biography later in their literary careers to plot intersections of the postcolonial and the global.

Much postcolonial women's fiction draws on life writing. A pertinent example is the work of Jamaica Kincaid. Kincaid's work emerges out of a tradition of generic shifting and hybridity in Caribbean auto/biography. George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*, for instance, is presented as fiction and told through a third-person narrator, yet readers are encouraged to make identification between the protagonist 'G.' and the author himself.⁹⁵ C. L. R. James's *Beyond a Boundary* mixes Trotskyist analysis of class relations, an account of cricket as a force in decolonization, and a personal account of transnational migration.⁹⁶ As we have seen, Walcott's *Another Life* is a verse autobiography that appropriates the generic conventions of works such as Wordsworth's *The Prelude* only to explode them, shifting from first person to third person, and from past to present tense. While Sandra Pouchet Paquet sees the Caribbean tradition of auto/biography as primarily male,⁹⁷ we might note that women writers from the Caribbean have responded to it by making use of autobiographical and biographical voices in poetry and prose: Lorna Goodison, Merle Hodge and Michelle Cliff, and indeed the Sistren collective discussed above. What links these authors is perhaps the desire to undertake the role that Françoise Lionnet has characterized as that of an 'autoethnographer', moving beyond the exploration of private selves to 'ethnic history, the re-creation of a collective identity through the performance of language'.⁹⁸

Kincaid's work initially seems uneasy in its relationship to all collectivities, using autobiographical performance to both negotiate possibilities of agency and explore how generic conventions may, in Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's words, 'recolonize peoples'.⁹⁹ The author's early fiction, the short-story collection *At the Bottom of the River* (1984), and the novels *Annie John* (1985) and *Lucy* (1990) contain much that is autobiographical, charting the various sections of a life story of a transnational migrant who grows up in Antigua, leaves to become a domestic worker in the United States, and, having renamed herself, embarks on a career of writing.¹⁰⁰ Yet, unlike Lamming, there is little celebration of community in Antigua, and moments of solidarity between women are undercut

with unresolved conflict. Kincaid's protagonists' complex relationship with their mothers, in particular, have been the subject of debate: as contradictory critical readings which place the mother in the position of colonizer or of colonized show, the mother–daughter relationship that is at the centre of much of Kincaid's work is not a simple allegory of the process of decolonization,¹⁰¹ nor does it simply signify women's solidarity when faced with oppression. Kincaid's later work has engaged with auto/biography more explicitly. *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996) imagines a fictive autobiography of a woman who resembles Kincaid's own mother in life story but not in name; *My Brother* (1997) recounts the life and death of a younger brother from AIDS, while *Mr Potter* (2002) reconstructs the life story of Kincaid's father.¹⁰² Even generically more diverse work, such as *A Small Place*, a jeremiad both against the cultural imperialism of tourism in Antigua and the lack of self-awareness of Antiguan who permit it, draws much of its effect from a strong autobiographical voice.¹⁰³

The postcolonial is clearly central to Kincaid's texts: Kincaid, and her various fictional protagonists, are born into and grow up in a colonial environment. Figures from colonial history's pedagogy, such as Horatio Nelson and Christopher Columbus are encountered, and re-narrated in the present, while the literary symbols of the metropolitan centre – Wordsworth's daffodils, for example, in *Lucy* – are appropriated and discarded. Kincaid's own act of discarding her original name of Ellen Potter Richardson to claim a name that was originally simply a nom de plume might appear a paradigmatic example of the postcolonial subject acquiring her own identity and voice. At the same time, her own life and the versions of it told in her texts extend the scope of the postcolonial. Bruce Robbins has noted that Lucy's experience as an au pair is an exploration of the problematic 'upward mobility' in lives of cosmopolitan migrants; the United States, the country to which Kincaid migrates, replaces the United Kingdom as a hegemonic colonial power in a new world of revived transnational cultural and capital flows.¹⁰⁴ In this environment, Kincaid's protagonists try on different life scripts, constituting themselves through writing, yet always remaining conscious of the limits of the scripts themselves. Kincaid's writing is elaborately self-reflexive, making continual references to the process of writing itself. In *The Autobiography of My Mother*, Kincaid makes no effort to give her protagonist a distinctively different voice, but rather uses a narrator who is very similar to those in *Annie John* and *Lucy*, thus hinting at the importance of auto/biography as a mode of self-constitution for the reader, as well as the writer. In *My Brother*, Du Bois's double consciousness is again operative. Kincaid presents accounts of conversations with her brother in reported speech that is fully mediated by a narrational consciousness, but then regularly undercuts this

by returning, parenthetically, to what her brother actually said in Creole. Thus Kincaid's writings explore transactional and transnational selves constituted in the process of migration, various selves produced publicly and privately that do not fit neatly 'in one bundle, tied up together'.¹⁰⁵

Our second author is J. M. Coetzee. Coetzee's early career was marked by fictional texts written in the context of apartheid in South Africa. Novels such as *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) and *Foe* (1987) did not directly address apartheid, in contrast to the fiction of writers such as Nadine Gordimer or Lewis Nkosi, but they clearly allegorized the violence of colonialism and imperialism, exploring the manner in which Othering also involved silencing and how structures of power cannot be overcome simply by individual acts of benevolence.¹⁰⁶ Like many white writers in the New South Africa, Coetzee has searched for a new role after 1994: his controversial novel *Disgrace* was followed by migration to Australia, where he now resides. In the last decade, Coetzee has moved away from allegory to explore life writing in the three texts *Boyhood* (1997), *Youth* (2002) and *Summertime* (2009), and also, in a more complex manner, in *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007).¹⁰⁷

While Coetzee's earlier autobiographical texts bear the influence of previous South African writing – Jennifer Wenzel, for instance, notes how *Boyhood* revises earlier tropes of an Afrikaner relationship to the land¹⁰⁸ – they also ask questions that move beyond the nation. They are concerned with internal and external migration, and both end inconclusively, showing a modernist fragmentation. Significantly, both texts are written in the third person without the presence of a strongly retrospective narrator. The result is to resist the possible closure of confession and absolution that retrospective first-person narratives often attempt: in our modern world, Coetzee has written in his only major essay on autobiography, 'there is an auditor or audience', but we are no longer able to appeal to a 'confessor empowered to absolve'.¹⁰⁹ *Diary of a Bad Year* is more complex in its referentiality. It is set in Australia, and features as a central character an ageing migrant writer who is known to us as C., and who shares many – but not all – biographical details with Coetzee himself. The text of each page is divided into up to three narratives. In the first, C. writes a series of opinionated essays on contemporary topics that we later learn have been commissioned by a publisher; in the second, we learn his private thoughts, marked by intense self-doubt and a growing obsession with Anya, a woman of Filipino origin whom he hires to type his manuscript for him. The third narrative gives Anya's own perspective, and for much of the narrative this lags temporally behind the first two narrative strands, drawing readers back to incidents or ideas that were foregrounded earlier in the text. The effect is

heteroglossic in a Bakhtinian sense in that different voices are dialogized by each other. Coetzee's central concern is a paradox: the absolute necessity for postcolonial subjects to speak out on questions of injustice is accompanied by an almost paralyzing self-awareness of the problematic nature of authority, and the assumption of a right or position to speak. In writing *Dairy of a Bad Year*, the author thus expands a concern with irony as a means of evading entrapment within binarisms from a specifically South African context into a wider environment in which postcolonialism and globalization overlap.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

Recent interest in postcolonial autobiography by both writers and scholars indicates transformation in the number of fields we think of as postcolonial studies. The intellectual engagements of two generations of anti-colonial activists in the process of decolonization were succeeded, in the 1980s, by a movement growing out of literary studies that sought to problematize canonicity and received knowledge. As postcolonial theory expanded to other disciplines in the 1990s, scholars turned back to historicization, and a concern with the limits of the postcolonial as an explanatory rubric in the face of a new vocabulary: diaspora, cosmopolitanism, globalization, migrancy. Autobiography, as a nodal point at which the self (*autos*), life (*bios*) and writing (*graphos*) inescapably meet, allows us to think through postcolonial pasts both textually and historically: if we look back into the colonial world, speeches, letters and court testimony emerge as powerful decolonizing genres. In more recent times, life writing has been a place of continued struggle, drawing on cultural, social and governmental discourses of both individuation and collectivity. Life writing has exploded into new forms: websites such as huaren.com that collected the testimony of Chinese scapegoated in the riots in Indonesia after the fall of Suharto in 1997; weblogs that permitted an expansion of debate in the 2008 Malaysian general election; social networking sites that offer the possibility of new communities. At the same time, as discussion above has shown, the print autobiography remains a powerful mode of interrogation of disparities of power, identification and belonging that characterize a postcolonial world.

Notes

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Orality and the genres of African postcolonial writing

UZOMA ESONWANNE

Let us begin by reminding ourselves of where the efficacy of genre analysis of literary works of art lies. It lies, Northrop Frye writes in *Anatomy of Criticism*, in its capacity for illuminating the ‘traditions and affinities’ that literary conventions invoke. For our purposes one of the interesting things to note about Frye’s argument is that he deduces it, in part, from a consideration of literary works that inscribe the spoken word. Thus, he points out that in using a narrator Joseph Conrad assimilates writing to speech; and that in using the epic invocation in *Paradise Lost* John Milton suggests that the most intimate affinities of the genre also lie with speech.¹ So Frye’s argument locates the efficacy of genre analysis in its facility for contextualizing the relationship between a specific text and others, both literary and oral, within a tradition. Although his examples consist of literary works that use the oral, it does not, thereby, prohibit a consideration of oral texts that invoke the literary. Thus Frye’s argument opens up to us the space required to pose and address several questions concerning orality and the genres of African postcolonial writing. What generic affinities exist between orality and literacy in African postcolonial writing? How do African postcolonial oral and literary works inscribe the conventions of orality and literacy? What, specifically, is postcolonial about these generic conventions?

To begin with the last question, I would like to paraphrase a story by Paul Stoller. The event on which the story is based occurred in 1969, just nine years after the Republic of Niger became independent. At the time Stoller, an American expatriate then teaching English in the local secondary school, had gone with his French expatriate friends to Chez Jacob, a Nigerian-owned ‘dusty bar’ in Tera, for a drink. Neither Stoller nor his friends, all of whom daily patronized Chez Jacob, knew that their watering hole abutted the home of a local priest (*zima*). Nor, for that matter, could they have anticipated the encounter with a *Hauka* that their privileged seating just outside their drinking

place would give them when this divinity emerged from the spirit world. But encounter the *Hauka* they did. Thus began Stoller's many transformations, from expatriate beer-hall patron to the spectator unnerved and bewildered by his initial rendezvous with a spiritually embodied African performance art form and, years later, to the anthropologist recalling the encounter and offering us an ethnographic theory of the *Hauka*. But what was it that had unnerved him initially? It is unlikely that it was the *Hauka* itself. To be sure, the incongruous juxtaposition of violin and percussive music with the grotesque (vomiting, sand eating, belligerent gestures and obscene insults) in the performance of the spirit's carnivalesque possession dance must have simultaneously jarred and fascinated his senses. But apparently what truly discomposed him that day, and what he never forgot, was the fact that the *Hauka* had lured him into salty repartee about his parents' anatomy. Conducted in 'pidgin French', the repartee would become emblematic for him of the deflationary style characteristic of *Hauka* discourse. Knowing this, we appreciate Mr Stoller's prudent retreat from the arena.

But the retreat did not efface the impression that the *Hauka* had made on him. Indeed, its impact was so profound, and so enduring, that six years later he returned to Niger, this time for a scholarly rendezvous. And what a productive rendezvous it was. Within one year he had mastered the idiom of *Hauka* (Hausa for 'craziness') performance sufficiently to understand its aesthetic (grotesque parody), its purpose (to amuse, mock and deflate), and its favourite target (conceited European expatriates, especially military officers who condescendingly address their African troops in pidgin). Though also an expatriate, Mr Stoller did not belong to this particular honoured fraternity when he made his first acquaintance with the performance art form. But in being ridiculed in pidgin by a Hausa divinity he had inadvertently been given a taste of the medicine that the Songhay prescribe for less modest folks. Fortunately the pill, though perhaps initially distasteful, aroused not outrage but curiosity, with the welcome result that he was able to provide, from his investigation, as close a definition of the *Hauka* as, one imagines, the Songhay might themselves offer. In his words, the *Hauka* is

a dramatic form in which the deities practice horrific comedy. This comedy, I suggest, provides a symbolic means by which the Songhay anchor themselves culturally in a world which the way of the European is rapidly changing. By aping the European they have resisted culturally the way of the European and have expressed metaphorically their preference for the traditions of their ancestors. In so doing the Songhay have used symbolism to protect their cultural identity from the ever expanding encroachments of European civilization.²

Later, Stoller defines *Hauka* as a 'comedy of paradox' that uses the techniques of terror and parody to exorcise the baleful presence of alien forces while reaffirming ancestral ties.³

But I have not glossed Stoller's definition of the genre in order to validate or invalidate it. Rather, I do so because his definition of the *Hauka* is epistemologically and ideologically *postcolonial*, and is so in a manner that, seen against the backdrop of the ethnocentrism that often bedevils colonialist perceptions of African artistic expression, we can now readily recognize as being virtually normative in much contemporary scholarship on the interplay between orality and literacy in African postcolonial letters. It is epistemologically postcolonial because, in identifying the actors as 'deities', it presents the *Hauka* from the vantage of its Songhay practitioners whose mythology it invokes. Thus, it posits no dissonance between Songhay spiritual belief, social values and artistic traditions, on the one hand, and an alien and culturally alienating modernity with which it is supposedly incompatible, on the other. And it is ideologically postcolonial because it recognizes that as art *Hauka* parody is a dynamic rather than a static form, and that it is from this dynamism that it derives its political efficacy.

A similar epistemological and ideological postcoloniality characterizes explanations that scholars offer about the value of orality in postcolonial African literatures and cultures, and it does so even when, perhaps acting on the premise that colonial intervention either compromised precolonial African culture or altogether severed it from modern Africa, writers and scholars today seek to specify the interplay between orality and literacy in African postcolonial writing. Is the oral as inscribed in African letters ornamental or functional? Is the interplay between orality and literacy designed merely to conceal the non-African provenance of the aesthetic, or is it the postcolonial writer's imaginative redaction of extant modes of cultural expression? Is the contemporary African literary imagination alienated from or firmly grounded in the aesthetics of orality, such that it may claim to translate both into what are, essentially, literary genres? Does African orality inscribe the 'precolonial communitarian values' of the African's venerable ancestors, or is it, as transformations in its formal structures and generic conventions might suggest, also the site of ideological contestations that testify to its historicity?⁴ Although the responses most scholars of African literature today offer to these questions are, like Mr Stoller's, rigorously postcolonial in the senses specified above, they nonetheless differ.

Some commentators hold that in works by exponents of Negritude orality appears to be ornamental rather than integral to the literary aesthetic.

Contesting this view, others insist not only that the creative afflatus in postcolonial Africa is oral but also that orality is the condition to which, to be *African*, literary forms must aspire. With regard to the first proposition, it is necessary to explore the argument further by looking at Léopold Sédar Senghor's 'Nuit de Sine' which is cited as an exemplary Negritude text. In this poem, the oral element appears as a parenthesized reference to musical instruments ('Pour kora et balafongs') that should accompany the poet during a public recitation. The problem is that this is the sum of orality in 'Nuit de Sine'. Beyond this, Senghor's poetics is decidedly literary. So what, then, is the function of this reference to the oral? The answer is that it is a metonymic (and mechanical) invocation of a bardic figure, the *jeli*. As artistic performers whose genealogy predates the modern encounter between Africa and Europe, the *jeli* offers Senghor an indigenous African poetic ancestry. So by laying claim to *jeliya*, the artistic heritage of the *jeli*, he implicitly places 'Nuit de Sine' and his poetry in general within that African poetic tradition. In other words, the purpose such references to the oral serve is not so much to inscribe the formal structures and poetic conventions of oral genres in 'Nuit de Sine' as it is to foreground and underscore its *African* provenance. In his bid to legitimate his claim to being demonstrably *African*, Senghor reifies the oral, which he then uses to validate a racialized, ontologically suspect African identity that, instantiated in the poet's biography, appears to anchor the poem in a stable cultural referent. Unfortunately, this nativist association of the oral with a precolonial African ontology merely reprises the melancholy celebration of orality in colonial anthropology as the repository of that 'hidden good Nature' now lost to Western European culture.⁵ Reminding us that oral discourse is performative rather than textual, those who question such valorization of orality urge us to adopt an interpretive methodology that attends closely to the generic context in which the text inscribes the oral since, far from reproducing them, literary iterations of oral genres 'mean something new, accomplish something different'.⁶

Today, not even those who hold that the literary imagination in postcolonial Africa is ontologically or culturally predisposed to orality are likely to subscribe to the proposition that orality is the trans-historical, uncontaminated repository of African values, however these values are defined. Far too many studies, many of which dispute the suggestion that there is a rigid distinction between the oral and the literary in Africa, and demonstrate that precolonial oral forms inscribe ideological tensions in African communities, have now rendered this proposition so suspect as to make its proponents more circumspect in voicing it than they hitherto were. Citing the *Malouf*, a hybrid form that combines the

verbal performance of literary Arabic texts (*qasida*, *muwashshahah* and *zajal*) with music, Sabra Webber reminds us that oral and literary genres are hybrid and eclectic precisely because historically they ‘borrow across linguistic boundaries, interacting with and enhancing each other’.⁷ Farida Abu-Haidar makes a similar point with regard to the *qasida*, a pre-Islamic Arabian ode of ‘more than sixty or seventy verses . . . that became formalized in the eighth century’.⁸ What such studies demonstrate is not only that oral and literary genres have never been hermetically sealed from each other, but also that even in pre-colonial and colonial Africa oral discourses were as much sites of ideological contestation over power and meaning as African postcolonial texts that inscribe the oral are today.⁹

So what then has changed in the thinking of those who place orality at the core of the African literary imagination? Just this: how they define the oral, and the interpretive method they recommend for the analysis of orality in post-colonial African writing. With regard to definition, the prevalent view is that orality is a textual or dramatic phenomenon that comes into being only in the act of its enactment or performance. Definitions that accentuate the textuality of orality find their rationale in monumental genres such as the *Ifa* corpus (divinity chants) whose characteristic features (complex prosodic structures and rhetorical forms, as well as the capacity to exist and circulate as autonomous works) correspond, they argue, with those of the written text.¹⁰ Definitions that accentuate the dramatic character of orality find their rationale in dramaturgy – physical space and structure, time, *mise-en-scène*, interplay between actor and audience, and so forth – that comprise the conditions of performance.¹¹ With regard to exegesis of literary works that inscribe the oral, both subscribe to contextual analysis, although their conceptions of the object of analysis may differ.

To grasp the difference, let us turn to a key passage in *The African Imagination*: ‘Whereas writing decontextualizes and disincarnates, orality demonstrates the contextual dimension of communication and restores the full scope of imaginative expression, which writing in its reductive tendency cannot fully capture or even adequately represent. Thus, orality proposes a dynamic conception of literature, one that envisages literature as *text in situation*.’¹² Here, and in the passage quoted earlier on the ‘recombination’ of textual elements, we may discern a shared view that literary meaning is contextual. However, it is also worth asking if there is a discernible difference between the *contextual* and *situational* semiotics of literary citation of orality advocated by Julien and Irele respectively. Are the analytical modalities explicitly and implicitly outlined in these statements compatible or incompatible? There are at least two grounds

on which they can be reconciled. First, both stress the social and participatory character of oral discourses.¹³ Second, Irele's claim that orality '*restores* the full scope of imaginative expression' notwithstanding, the situational mode of literary analysis he proposes aims not so much to recover an original and authentic *African* meaning that orality conveys to African writing as, by annulling the distinction between orality and literacy, to make possible a critical appreciation of literature as art capable of generating affective intensities similar to those aroused by multimedia oral performances.

But insofar as contextual semiotics circumvents the inferential logic by which literary orality comes to be *interpreted* as that which authenticates the literary work of art, they differ, for while situational semiotics invites us to treat the literary text that inscribes orality as if it were (possessed of the dynamism of the) oral, contextual semiotics proposes that we treat oral discourses in the same text as *literary* devices. By so doing, we recognize that to transpose the oral into the literary medium is not 'to repeat' it; rather, it is 'to speak' it 'in a new context and thus create a new utterance' whose meaning is not pre-discursive. If it is true that in the 'modern life-view' to repeat is to recollect 'forwards',¹⁴ then we must view the contexts in which African post-colonial writing inscribes orality as initiating a change (Greek *κίνησις*) in the meaning of the utterance. As I hope to show in this chapter, first through a review of recent studies of the history of African drama from the precolonial period to the present and, subsequently, through readings of selected post-colonial African writing, any attempt to valorize orality as Africa's 'true' literature is likely to founder on the shoals of history.

Theatre

Contemporary cultural history suggests that, at various periods since the European colonial incursion that followed the abolition of the slave trade, African literary production has undergone radical formal and aesthetic transformations. If the evidence that cultural historians offer us is accurate, then we must rethink the view, currently widely held in African literary criticism, that orality is the normative form of imaginative expression in African postcolonial drama. Indeed, we might also have to entertain a contrary proposition: that far from being ontologically grounded, African literary forms and aesthetics are historically contingent. Thus, we argue that literary production in Africa from the colony to the postcolony has been characterized by periodic shifts towards or away from an oral poetics, and that these shifts are always provisional, ideologically freighted, responses to exigencies, material and symbolic. In

addition, we suggest that understanding this shift calls for a corresponding shift in methodology. Rather than comb through texts to identify, analyse and interpret passages in which forms and techniques of oral expression and narrative performance (for example, masking, songs, ejaculations and interjections, apothegms, riddles and jokes) have been used, we propose symptomatic readings of selected plays, poetry and prose in which the dialectical interplay between the oral and the literary is manifest.¹⁵

That the history of African drama from the precolonial past to the postcolonial present lends considerable credence to this argument should come as no surprise. After all the performance arts were the least dependent on the written text of all arts in precolonial Africa. This is certainly as true of para-drama (the *Halqa*, *Djehe* and *Baste* in the Maghreb) as it is of masquerade drama (the Mbunda *Makisi* of Zambia, the Bamana *Kote-tlon* of Mali, and the *Otunkpa*, *Gelede*, *Apídán* and *Egúngún*, all of Nigeria). But what now may seem remarkable to us is the fact that although Bible operas or cantatas, the embryonic form out of which the Yorùbá travelling theatre emerged, drew upon Yorùbá orality, Yorùbá travelling theatre would itself seek, during its later phases, to expunge traces of the oral form from its theatrical repertoire. To understand this shift, we need to recall the history of the form.

Scholars of the Yorùbá travelling theatre trace its origins to the cantatas or Bible opera, itself the product of rifts in the colonial culture of late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century Lagos. Then a British colonial Protectorate, Lagos would become the administrative capital, economic entrepôt, and cultural nerve centre of the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria in 1914. But even before then it had served those who flocked to it as a kiln in which African initiative could smelt received and indigenous languages, religious doctrines, artistic modes and cultural institutions into new syncretic forms. The Yorùbá language ‘native’ play (also called cantatas and Bible opera), a form created in independent Aláduúrà churches by a coalition of disaffected Africans (Christians by the proscription of things ‘native’, and the elite by the imposition of exorbitant box-office fees at theatres), was one of these. Set to choral music, these operas dramatized biblical stories by improvising stage settings, scenes and characters and, in some cases even incorporating elements of Yorùbá oral discourse. Shortly thereafter, it would undergo modernization by a process Karin Barber calls ‘editing’ tradition (or ‘virtual writing’) at the hands of its lumpen and comprador elite creators and patrons. From about the end of World War II, the Yorùbá operas would undergo further transformation, much of it initiated by Hubert Ògúnnidé. First was the addition of more highlife music to the ‘set pieces, long solo and choral songs in . . . highlife style,

accompanied by stylized gestures, with only limited movement around the stage' that characterized the form, as we see in *The Garden of Eden and the Throne of God* (1944). Next was the shift from sacred (biblical) to secular (political and social) themes, as we see in anti-colonial operas such as *Worse Than Crime* (1945), *Tiger's Empire* (1946), the first opera performed by the Ògúndé Company, and *Human Parasites* (a social satire). Then came the use of modern technology (lighting, sound system, musical instruments) and adaptation of foreign expressive forms such as English tap dancing and Gold Coast (Ghana) concert party vaudeville. Finally, the introduction of improvised dialogue between musical interludes, as we see in *Black Forest* (1950) and *Bread and Bullet*, gives way to dialogue punctuated with choral music and, by the 1980s, to dialogue alone when the form was adapted to television in the 1980s. Of significance for our argument, however, is the contribution of the Adéjóbí Company to the professionalization of the opera. Far from being content with oral performances, this Company drew on literary sources and the literary medium to create its dramatic texts, advertise performances and reproduce them for a wider, non-theatre-going audience. In the first place, it drew on literary sources. Thus, its repertoire included several plays (*Kíyè* and *Taking Care of Kúnlé*) based on J.F. Òdunjo's novels or adapted (*The Secret is Out*) from Olu Daramola's literary drama, and it published *Atoka*, a photoplay magazine version of its plays. What this summary suggests is that the development of the 'orally improvised' Yorùbá travelling theatre was punctuated at various points by a 'yearning' for 'the condition of literacy' that belies the proposition that African literature finds its aesthetic fulfilment when it aspires 'toward the condition of orality'.¹⁶

Nor is such aspiration to the condition of orality peculiar to specific genres (for example, travelling theatre) or literacy epochs. We find it, for example, in concert party, a hybrid theatre that fuses the conventions of the Akan and Fanti *anansesem* (trickster tales), the regimental spectacle of Empire Day school concerts, the grave didacticism of church morality plays, the humour of vaudeville (Charlie Chaplin) films and African American comedy, and the *joie de vivre* of highlife music. In the 'unscripted' and improvised performances of this popular theatre, a character may 'playfully' quote whole sentences directly from non-indigenous languages.¹⁷ Is there any reason, then, to doubt that were we to investigate *Beni*, a militaristic mime, or *Garagöz*, a form of puppetry, we may find in these other legacies of Africa's colonial past desires similar to those we traced in travelling theatre and concert party? When we observe also that these desires may unfold even in the careers of individual writers such as Christopher Okigbo (1932–67), we begin to understand even more why

associations of orality with an African ontology are suspect. As is well known, Okigbo's poetics swung over a ten-year span from the opaque hybrid idiom of *Labyrinths*, an idiom he had fashioned out of literary modernism (Joyce, Eliot, Pound, Yeats, Woolf and Bodkin),¹⁸ Greek and Roman classics, and Near Eastern, Christian and Igbo myths, to the Igbo and Yorùbá drum prosody of 'Lament of the Masks' (1965), 'Dance of the Painted Maidens' (1965) and *Path of Thunder: Poems Prophesying War* (1968). The fact is that the processes of cultural production and transformation described above were not unique to any regions of the continent, any artistic forms, or any epochs. Elsewhere on the continent as well, the aspiration of drama during the colonial era to conditions either of orality or of literacy emerged in response to exigent, sometimes even contradictory, circumstances. If, on the one hand, state educational policy, for example, prompts colonial technocrats to foster African popular theatre that adapted precolonial performative arts (dancing, singing and folktales, for example) to such didactic ends as cultural deracination, on the other the proselytizing imperative at the core of the Christian evangelizing project may prompt in Africans a profound disdain for African oral performance arts. Although, during the period of decolonization, cultural nationalism would gradually intensify the yearning in African writing for the condition of orality, it would not altogether extinguish from the imagination of African writers all aspiration to produce works that valorize literariness. Thus, we might argue that what African cultural history reveals about the interplay between orality and the genres of African postcolonial writing is not that the African imagination has an ontological affinity for the oral but, rather, that the desire for literacy or orality is historically contingent, and that in virtually all genres attitudes to the oral have been characterized by ambivalence rather than by certitude.

Earlier, we saw how both precolonial African popular dramatic forms such as the *Hauka*, *Halqa*, *Makisi*, *Kote-tlon*, *Otunkpa*, *alàrínjò*, and *Egúngún*, and hybrid theatre such as concert party and travelling theatre that emerged during the colonial era were, in Fredric Jameson's memorable phrase, 'socially symbolic' acts.¹⁹ Need we recall, as corroboration, that a 'white devil' *alàrínjò* welcomed Clapperton to Yorùbá land in 1826 with a burlesque walk, that a spirit possession dance in Zambia transformed itself into protest theatre to resist colonial social policy, and that Ògúnnké developed satirical drama such as *Worse Than Crime* and *Human Parasites* for similar reasons?²⁰ Regarding popular theatre, some of which remains extant, we may now observe that the degree to which each play draws on and, in so doing, transforms indigenous genres may vary. For every Dúró Ládíípò who adapted Yorùbá mythology, *oríkì*

(praise poetry), *ofo* (incantations), *eṣe Ifá* (Ifá divination poetry), and ‘performance modes’ such as *dùndún*, *bàtá* and *ìgbìn* drums, for his ‘traditional’ plays, a Kólá Ògúnmolá who produced realist drama laced with ironic social commentary, or an Oyin Adéjóbí who specialized in mythic histories, satire and comic drama, there was an Isola Ogunsola happy to adapt prose fiction and literary drama to the stage and to television.²¹ The point to be made here is that in these cases, and in cases such as the communal Kamirĩthũ village theatre project in Kenya and the Marotholi Travelling Theatre of Lesotho, playwrights’, producers’ and actors’ inclinations towards the oral are often circumscribed by the variables (politics, audience, location and resources) that shape the context of production, hence the difference between plays such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1938–) and Ngũgĩ wa Mirĩĩ’s *I Will Marry When I Want* (1977) that were composed, directed and produced collaboratively, and the Marotholi Travelling Theatre that ‘builds on’ *lifela* oral ‘protest’ poetry.²²

Since decolonization in the late 1950s several developments have altered our perception of theatre and its relationship to orality in contemporary African drama. Chief among these developments is a shift in our conception of theatre itself. If in the colonial period theatre entailed the interpretation on stage of a dramatic script outlining the narrative plot and conflict, setting, dramatis personae, dialogue (and, occasionally, monologue), song, and silence, movement in space and time, and so forth, in the period after decolonization there emerged, especially among the educated elite, ‘the national longing for form’ that would find its fulfilment in experimentations in language, stagecraft, production and directing as well as in the composition of dramatic narratives that synthesize oral and literary forms in a style that we now broadly recognize as the signature of an African cultural modernity.²³ Generally speaking, art theatre embodies that modernity. Defined by its ability to articulate in received europhone rather than in indigenous languages that capacity of the tragic afflatus ‘to transform the painful’ legacies of colonial and postcolonial ruin into expressions of the desire for ‘human freedom and transcendence’ that we can call the postcolonial sublime, it has virtually become a synonym for African postcolonial drama.²⁴ Although key works in this subgenre are notable for their bold and innovative appropriations of African narrative conventions and the dramaturgical idiom of popular African performance arts,²⁵ the latter are rarely accorded the critical attention lavished on the former; thus, Wole Soyinka (1934–) is placed above Dúró Ládiípò (1931–78), and *Death and the King’s Horseman* (1975) over *Oba Waja (The King Is Dead)* (1964).²⁶

Horseman is, undoubtedly, a masterpiece of African postcolonial drama. Like *Oba*, it is also a historical drama based on a tragic ‘slice of Oyo history’ that occurred in 1946.²⁷ In bearing witness to this event that colonial historiography would ignore if not altogether expunge from memory, both plays draw upon mythic and transition ritual ‘conventions’.²⁸ For example, they draw upon the highly charged conventions of ritual action (the drumming, singing, dancing and masking) to dramatize how the community attempts to fortify the will of the King’s *Horseman* to fulfil his suicide covenant, a pact that, though expressed in terms of social relations, is in fact also concerned with temporal relations. For at stake in the ritual acts are bonds linking individuals, *in* time, with each other (Elesin and the dead Alaafin, for example) and with the community (Oyo), bonds that represent for all that shared sense of *communitas*,²⁹ encoded in Oyo moral norms – veneration of ancestors (time past), preservation of family honour (time present) and spiritual faith (future time) – that European incursion threatens; hence the dismay with which, in *Horseman*, Iyaloja greets Elesin’s interjection of his carnal desire into the ritual of transition.

As for myth which, following Frye, we can take to mean ‘the imitation of actions near or at the conceivable limits of desire’, it provides the context in which we may best grasp the performativity of orality in African postcolonial drama.³⁰ For here, as I hope to show, a specific proverbial speech may do rather than say something, and this because its utterance brings something into being in much the same way that, spoken in the presence of the assenting kindred, ‘those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble’ censures Okonkwo for his verbal assault on Osugo.³¹ Consider, for example, the mythic imagery in *Horseman* and *Oba*. In images of death and an aborted transition through darkness to the afterlife both plays project an apocalyptic vision of Oyo. In this vision the state, as represented in the figure of the dead Alaafin, has been cast adrift from its cosmic moorings. Dismayed by Olori Elesin’s failure to execute the suicide necessary for his king’s passage into ‘heaven’ the Oyo people, in Ládiípo’s *Oba*, accuse him of leaving the dead king ‘to wander in darkness’ and, thus, of destabilizing ‘the world’ in his ‘time’. Similarly, in Soyinka’s *Horseman*, Iyaloja, leader of the market women, rebukes Elesin for condemning ‘our king to wander in the void of evil with beings who are enemies of life’.³² What these images of a wandering king convey is a mimesis of cosmic disorder, a universe in which the orderly transition of beings that should serve as a model for the human world has collapsed. In this sense, the imagery by which the Oyo in *Oba* and *Horseman* articulate their dismay at the crisis unleashed by Elesin’s failed suicide are mythic metaphors.

Yet there is a difference between the use of the oral in *Oba* and in *Horseman*. Scholars have described at some length how Soyinka heightens the aesthetic effect of his mythopoeia by employing a polyvocal, densely textured, layering of hieratic and demotic speech in *Horseman*. There the language of the Yorùbá characters (Elesin, Praise-singer, Iyaloja) who are involved in the ritual surrounding Elesin's suicide is suffused with proverbial utterances, while others (the Pilkings, Amusa, the girls) speak in a vulgar register, be this formal English or the 'pidgin' of the African auxiliaries of the colonial administration. They have also drawn attention to the fact that proverbs register the instability of the state of transition that Elesin, Soyinka's protagonist, inhabits.³³ But what they have so far overlooked is the fact that in *Horseman* proverbial speech appears to have more than a referential function.

We can best grasp this by a comparative analysis of proverbial speech in *Oba* and *Horseman*. Ulli Beier adapted *Oba*, the version reprinted in the Norton Critical Edition of *Horseman*, into English. In his 'Introduction' to *Three Nigerian Plays* (1967), Beier states that Ládiípò's 'plays are always in Yoruba'.³⁴ We cannot tell if Beier is referring to Yorùbá language literary texts or live performances. What we do know is that the version reprinted by Norton is the translation into English of his 'adaptation' of an antecedent work. Of what significance is this information for grasping the meaning of orality in *Oba*? Refuting the charge that an adaptation is derivative and, therefore, inferior, Linda Hutcheon first describes adaptation as a 'transposition of recognizable other work or works', 'a creative *and* an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging' and an 'extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work', before inferring that it is 'its own palimpsestic thing'.³⁵ In adapting *Oba* Beier may have produced a text that creatively appropriates and extensively engages Ládiípò's play. He may also have transposed the latter from the medium of stage performance into the literary medium. All of these possibilities would be significant for any consideration of the meaning of oral utterances in Beier's *Oba*. But lacking access to Ládiípò's version, we are left with Beier's translation. As a translation, Beier's *Oba* is unique. Its singularity does not lie in any fidelity it might be taken to bear to a supposedly original 'source' text. Rather, it lies in the manner in which Yorùbá orality so imprints itself on Beier's writing as to retain its legibility even after it has been transposed into written form.

Like *Oba*, *Horseman* is based on a well-known event: the suicide, in 1946, of a courtier in the palace of the Alaafin of Oyo, following his own son's suicide in reaction to his failure to will his own death after the Alaafin's death. However, in its treatment of this incident it differs from *Horseman* in at least

one important respect: the correlation between characterization and verbal utterance. In *Horseman*, Elesin is the tragic hero. As Horseman of the King on his way to keep a 'tryst' with a fate for which he requires no 'adornment', he dominates the marketplace, the sacred site in which the community conducts ritual events, with a virtuoso performance of verbal mastery.³⁶ Indeed, two things are peculiar about this performance. First, it is characterized by multiple shifts, moving as it does from the generally comic register of sensual embodiment in which the dialogue between Elesin, his Praise-singer, and the market women is cast (Act 1) to the sombre, albeit also triumphant, idiom of ritual disembodiment with which the Praise-singer signals his transformation at the end of Act 3 before, finally, settling on the pathos of the denouement. In all of these shifts Elesin's verbal virtuosity is signalled not just by the skill with which he cites extant proverbs that serve his interests ('A life that will outlive / Fame and friendship begs another name'), but also by his ability to create proverbial discourse, exemplified by the brilliant 'Not-I bird' chant with which he reassures the Praise-singer of his intention to fulfil his ritual obligation to Oyo, that remind us that though proverbs may be a closed form, proverbial utterances even in literary drama are performative speech acts. What this suggests is not merely that 'proverbs in African writing' represent 'the citational relationship that obtains between oral traditions' and literary traditions.³⁷ It is also that, in African postcolonial drama, they are verbal *acts*. Thus, the second peculiarity of Elesin's performance: its efficacy as a speech act is attested by the community which, in the play, is represented by praise-singers, the drummers and the market women. In this context, the 'Not-I bird' chant reassures the community that Elesin is the man they 'all know' him to be,³⁸ a man who, though momentarily distracted by his appetites, remains firmly committed to the fulfilment of his duty. That the market women and Praise-singer are predisposed to yield, later, to Elesin's importunate demand for Iyaloja's son's fiancée that delays the dissolution of his 'flesh' as, attended by the Praise-singer's elegiac chant, he *sinks deeper into his trance-dance* (p. 35), is to be attributed to the performative authority of orality.

But such performative efficacy seems attenuated in *Oba*. There the force of proverbial speech seems to lean towards communication. Consider the following passage, in which the market women attempt to steel Olori Elesin for the impending ordeal of ritual self-sacrifice:

WOMEN: *One hand by itself cannot lift the load on the head*
Ajeje – it is a fact.
Alaafin must not cross the river alone.

Ojurongbe Aremu, commander of the king's horse;
Follow in your father's footsteps.³⁹

Used primarily to invoke the authority of conventional wisdom, the women's apothegm cites an image that most African patrons of Ládiíṣọ's theatre would probably know: the image of a person attempting to hoist a burden onto her head. Unlike proverbial speech such as Elesin's 'Not-I bird' chant in *Horseman*, this apothegm has a largely referential significance in the scene in which it unfolds, its purpose being to suggest to Olori Elesin that the burden of his undertaking would not be his to bear alone. An equally referential emphasis is to be found in the apothegm with which Olori Elesin attempts, unsuccessfully, to explain his failure to carry out his ancestral obligation:

OLORI ELESIN: What have I seen,
Why should this happen within my own life time . . .
But to the toothless man
The softest bean cake is as hard as bone.
My charms were rendered impotent
By the European.⁴⁰ (p. 81)

Casting himself as 'toothless', Olori Elesin invokes the image of a geriatric; thus, he simultaneously invites solicitude for his condition and deference for the elderly that, traditionally, the Oyo community would accord the aged. Perhaps the predominance of referential over performative apothegms such as these derives from the fact that, as we see in his *mise en scène*, Ládiíṣọ structures dramatic tension in *Oba* around culture conflict rather than ritual self-sacrifice. Put another way, in *Horseman* Elesin's proverbial utterances are designed to alter the characters' behaviour precisely because he enacts them in a ritual context while he is functioning as chief celebrant and sacrificial victim, whereas in *Oba* apothegms are rhetorical devices by which the market women and Olori Elesin seek only to rationalize tradition or explain failure to uphold tradition. From the foregoing discussion, we may now essay a proposition regarding the significance of orality in African postcolonial drama: briefly, that in literary adaptations such as *Oba*, in contrast to 'art theatre' plays such as *Horseman*, the oral is treated as a citation whose functions correspond more closely to those outlined by Adéékó – 'to mark thematic shifts, indigenous high rhetoric, self-conscious speech, and the intellectual sharpness of characters'.⁴¹ In the former, we could argue, the repetition of oral genres acquires meanings that are postcolonial in precisely the epistemological and ideological senses which, earlier, we deduced from our discussion of Stollers's definition of the Songhay

Hauka: in transposing proverbs into literary form it strives not to exoticize them, and it recognizes that they are dynamic.

Poetry

Since the early twentieth century, history has compelled African poets to make grim choices. First was language: in which should one write, indigenous *or* non-indigenous languages? Second was poetics: which, African oral or European literary poetics, was best suited to the African poet's needs and imagination? That these needs were not just aesthetic made each choice even more onerous. In what language might one explore colonial subjection, rapidly changing cultural ecologies, the disintegration of social institutions, psychic disorder and political disenfranchisement, racial abjection and sexual exploitation, economic decline and state repression, and in which forms and idioms? To what audience might one address one's poetry, and with what expectations? These were also questions of literary value: they demanded of poets that they consider artistic production in aesthetic *and* non-aesthetic terms. This is the situation that confronted indigenous South African poets in the 1930s. Divested of their lands, hedged into restricted areas, restricted to domestic labour, mining and farm work, denied access to services (education, health, transportation and so on), and often dislocated from their communities, they were caught in an existential dilemma whose resolution called for an imaginative response. That response came in the form of a passionate debate between H.I.E. Dhlomo (1903–56) and B.W. Vilakazi (1906–47), two of the most prominent literary figures of the period. To be sure, some of the passion with which Dhlomo and Vilakazi conducted this debate may have been due to their own literary ambitions.⁴² But insofar as they were also aware that what was truly at stake was nothing less than the fate of indigenous African cultures, the resolutions they proposed reflect a tacit recognition that whatever 'poetics of the crossroads' they enunciate had to deal of necessity with quotidian concerns.⁴³

If we begin our discussion of orality in African postcolonial poetry with the Dhlomo–Vilakazi debate it is not because they bequeathed a conclusive resolution of the challenges mentioned earlier to postcolonial poets. Rather, it is because the views they expressed have resonated down the decades and in different contexts, some of the most memorable being at the 1962 Kampala Conference debate on the language of African literature and, of course, in the interventions on language and poetics by various writers such as Achebe, Ayi Kwei Armah, Ngũgĩ, Soyinka, Okot p'Bitek, Christopher Okigbo and Mazisi

Kunene.⁴⁴ But it is also because the Dhlomo–Vilakazi positions and interventions have often found expression in experimental poetic forms and idioms that, far from merely replicating and conserving literary or oral antecedents, strive, as the Songhay *Hauka* does, to produce a new poetic ‘utterance’.⁴⁵

So how did Dhlomo and Vilakazi address the existential questions of language and poetics in late 1930s South Africa, and how did the answers they proposed differ? It is best to begin with the question of language. H.I.E. Dhlomo wrote in English, but Vilakazi preferred Zulu, each for reasons whose echo we hear, decades later, in the Achebe–Ngũgĩ debate. Although in *The New African* (1985) Tim Couzens initially surmises that Dhlomo may have elected to write in English because he wished to assimilate ‘into a general European society’,⁴⁶ he later gleans from his theoretical reflections on ‘modern African drama’ what might be considered a more persuasive explanation: that Dhlomo ‘hinted that English could become an African language and might be suitable as “a Bantu lingua franca”, that is, a universal and common medium of communication’.⁴⁷ By contrast, Vilakazi, for whom Bantu drama could only be ‘drama written by a Bantu, for the Bantu, in a Bantu language’, insists that drama in English and Afrikaans could never be ‘contributions to Bantu Literature’. For him, to write in indigenous languages is to make a contribution towards racial self-affirmation and African cultural revitalization.⁴⁸ But why exactly would writing in English or Afrikaans not accomplish the same objectives? Vilakazi’s rhetoric suggests an answer: ‘Bantu languages and literature’ could thrive only if their writers ‘learn to *love* their languages and use them as vehicles for thought, feeling and will’.⁴⁹ If to write in English or Afrikaans is to exhibit one’s affection for either language over Zulu or Xhosa, then by this logic not to write in Zulu or Xhosa must be a symptom of abjection. But is it?

As Couzens has suggested, Dhlomo’s faith in a ‘universal and common’ language may have been a pragmatic response to statutory policies of racial segregation, the effect of which was to prohibit and censure cross-cultural dialogue.⁵⁰ Far from being the symptom of racial pathology, the choice to write in English may well have been an assertion of the freedom of the human intellect to pursue its interests unhindered by the ethnocentric politics of race. If so, his foresighted speculation about the possibility that English could become an ‘African language’ anticipates Achebe who, years later, pointedly asserts his determination to write in an English that he would bend to his own purposes. However, perhaps the greatest irony in all of this may be found in Dhlomo’s review of Vilakazi’s *Inkondlo kaZulu* (*Zulu Songs*) (1935). Generally negative, the review questioned Vilakazi’s attempt to force his thoughts into

the straitjacket of metric verse and rhyming patterns instead of the rhythmic structure that Africa had bequeathed to the 'artistic world'.⁵¹ For Dhlomo, 'the wider, less defined sea-basin of blank and parallel verse' could invigorate African poetry, as it does the poems in *Amal'Ezulu (Zulu Horizons)* (1945), whereas rhyme and prosody, with which Vilakazi sought to 'temper' and, thus, to 'modernize' his Zulu poems in *Zulu Songs*, only constrict it.⁵²

Poems such as 'Inkelenkele YakwaXhosa' ('The Xhosa Calamity – 1856'), 'Phezu Kwethuna LikaShaka' ('The Grave of Shaka') and 'USHaka KaSenzangakhona' ('Shaka, Son of Senzangakhona') in *Zulu Horizons* suggest that Vilakazi did take some of Dhlomo's criticism to heart. Consider the last two stanzas of 'Shaka, Son of Senzangakhona':

You, like a buffalo, led your charging herd,
And all the land soon overflowed
With those who fled from you in horror.
Then young and old became like vultures,
Fleeing in terror; with heavy hearts
They left their huts and sites deserted,
Destroying first their cattle-folds,
While you, great threatening buffalo, menaced all,
Waiting beside the fords to trap them.

O Bull who bellowed when they stabbed you,
Who never fleeing, welcomed danger;
You who were ominous as night
And, like the duiker, hid your wounds
And staunched them
In case their bleeding might betray you –
Your name, reviled throughout the earth,
Will live while men can speak and write
And strive to solve your mystery! –
Yet who, mighty Shaka, shall fathom your heart?

As the denominative eulogues 'buffalo' and 'Bull' indicate, Vilakazi's Shaka is both a menacing force bent on destruction and an embodiment of heroic courage. In developing them, Vilakazi inscribes Shaka in a Zulu 'ethical system' out of which emerges the complex figure towards whom the *imbongi* (poet) evinces ambivalence.⁵³

Interestingly, Dhlomo seems not to have always heeded his own counsel. He may have censured Vilakazi for modernizing Zulu poetry, but he could not restrain himself from dipping into rhyme patterns when, as Atwell points out in his reading of *Valley of a Thousand Hills* (1941), it appears to have suited his

mood.⁵⁴ Dhlomo characterizes the rhythmic structure of African oral verse as ‘a virgin field accessible to African scholars’ adding:

The *izibongo* and other artistic tribal compositions are, as it were, an extensive dense forest where we can go and gather sticks to fight our literary and cultural battles, timber to build our literary genius, wood to make our poetic fires, leaves and flowers to decorate and give perfume to our achievements. They give us contact with the culture, the life, the heart of our forebears. They are a sacred inheritance. They are the essence of our being, the meaning of our name. They can only live through us, and we through them. In them the old and the new meet and unite and flower forth into a birth miraculous.⁵⁵

But in practice he seems to have been more flexible about modern African poetics than his critique of Vilakazi suggests. Why?

Some clues to this question are provided in the poem we cited a moment ago. Is Dhlomo’s imagery – ‘sticks’, ‘timber’, ‘wood to make our poetic fires’, ‘leaves and flowers’ – in this passage nativist? Perhaps. More significant than any traces of Nativism in this passage is the significance of his organic imagery. These vegetal images do not merely naturalize the bond between poetic imagination and so-called ‘tribal compositions’. They do more. In a striking rhetorical escalation from the vegetal to the anthropological (‘contact with the *culture*, the *life*, the *heart* of our forebears’) and, finally, the spiritual (‘*sacred* inheritance’), they almost obliterate the initial spatial distinction between the literary imagination and the arboreal orality with which the passage began; thus does the ‘extensive dense forest’ from which the African scholar is urged to extract the symbolic weaponry and resources needed for his cultural battles and representational labour become ‘the essence’ of his own ‘being’. In the end, then, Dhlomo and Vilakazi seem not to have been as far apart on the issues that animated their ‘dispute’ as the passionate glow cast by their rhetoric suggests. For both, literary language and orality have the status of ontological categories. It is this that recommends their arguments to writers of the period as instruments by which modern African poets could produce works that both articulate and secure the self against the seemingly ineluctable forces of history.

English, Dhlomo thought, could become an African language. Today, it has become an African language indeed, but so have Afrikaans, Spanish, French, Portuguese and, centuries ago, Arabic. Each of these languages now sustains a literary tradition on the continent. In addition, some have even spawned local dialects or ‘pidgin’. Although still largely spoken rather than written, in those regions of the continent where they function as the informal lingua franca, dialects such as Swahili and West African pidgin English have even begun to emerge as literary languages. This, along with the emergence of indigenous

language literary production, has profoundly transformed the profile of African postcolonial poetry. To be sure, since the Dhlomo–Vilakazi controversy the development of poetry in all of these languages has been very uneven. In vast swathes of the continent anglophone, francophone and lusophone poetry remain dominant, especially among the university-educated elites. But alongside them is the oral tradition which continues to thrive, particularly in the countryside, in indigenous languages. Surveying African postcolonial poetry in the postcolonial and post-apartheid era, then, one is tempted to conclude that it has achieved a profile that, though modest by comparison with African postcolonial drama and fiction, is nonetheless impressive.

But what, one wonders, is the nature of the relationship between oral and African postcolonial poetry? Do contemporary African poets view orality as the repository of a retrievable African ontology and aesthetic, as Dhlomo did, or have they, perhaps, abandoned or even repudiated that view? Is the *turn towards* orality always a *turn away from* alien poetic traditions? Is such a turning away possible, given the fact that poets in colonial and postcolonial Africa have been exposed through their education to all manner of oral and literary versification from the epics of Gilgamesh and Homer to *Sunjata* and Icelandic sagas, from the Upanishads and the Koran to Rabindranath Tagore and Akpalu and everyone in between? And even if it were possible, should it therefore be desirable? What effect might such turning away have on our understanding of what constitutes postcolonial African poetry? Perhaps one of the most remarkable aspects of Dhlomo's literary theory is the wilful contradiction that runs through it. On the one hand, an acute consciousness of the dynamics of history prompted him to correctly anticipate the transformation of English into an African language. On the other, it seems to have failed him when he contemplated orality, hence the strange circumstance in the passage quoted earlier of 'are', the copula by which 'tribal' art, first evicted from history and insulated from its vicissitudes, is then yoked to a supposedly prehistoric organic and stable African self. Caught between Dhlomo's quasi-theological language and the more secular rhetoric that is employed today to characterize its relationship to African literature, orality, in this scenario, continues to appear as if its forms, conventions and meanings were unchanging; hence our ability to conceive of it as a symbolic resource from which the poetic imagination could fashion for us an organic, coherent and singular African subjectivity, provide us aesthetic pleasure, and prohibit the proliferation of meaning.

This tendency can be perceived, for example, in *The New African Poetry: An Anthology* (1999). Edited by Tanure Ojaide and Tijan M. Sallah, this volume includes poetry by Kofi Anyidoho (1947–), one of those they classify as a 'third'

(or ‘new’) generation poet. According to Ojaide and Sallah, the distinguishing characteristics of third-generation poets include the repudiation of modernism, the poetic tradition that had inspired in their literary forebears a predilection for formal complexity and obscure techniques, in favour of oral poetry whose ability to generate multiple meanings in a style that, nonetheless, is clear and simple, makes it amenable to their aim of fostering social transformation.⁵⁶ But recent studies of adaptations of the prosody of drum poetry in print poetry suggest that the simplicity and clarity of the oral may be more a matter of *praxis* than of fact. Two examples of such studies should suffice. First is J. Bekunuru Kubayanda’s study of African ‘drum rhythmic’ poetry in ‘Polyrhythmics and African print poetics: Guillen, Césaire, and Atukwei Okai’ (1985). Here, Kubayanda describes drum poetry as a genre that attempts to communicate an ‘extralinguistic “message”’ to an audience by means of ‘sonic symbols and metaphors’, occasion, drum type and drumming technique, and tone. To do this, it fuses word and sound into an indissoluble unity, using sound (normally orchestrated at key points – opening and closing lines or formulae, for example) rather than stanzaic breaks to signal beginnings and endings, climactic episodes, important motifs and transitions, and relies on the alternation of the pitch at which words are vocalized and the polyphonic rhythmic beats of multiple percussive instruments cutting across and interweaving with each other. In print adaptations, Guillen, Césaire and Okai use unstressed beats, variations in stanza length, uneven line lengths, assonance and consonance, breaks and silences, ideophones, and the iterative pattern of alliterative and assonantal sounds that Kubayanda calls ‘The Law of Repeats’ to simulate the ‘relationship of tensions and conflicts, plurality and consensus’ that occurs in drum poetry.⁵⁷

Robert Fraser has made a similar observation about Kofi Awoonor’s adaptation of what he calls the ‘cornucopia of aural sensation’ in Ewe *akpalu* (or *nyayito*) in ‘Songs of Sorrow’.⁵⁸ His comparative analysis reveals that Awoonor distils ‘Songs’ from ‘Xexemenyawo zu ganami mefa’, the Ewe *akpalu* (dirge) palimpsest it overwrites in English, by compressing its ‘polytonal, polyrhythmic structure’ into a few lines of print, transferring its ‘rhythmic focus’ from musical beats to syntactic parallelism, and substituting the personal pronoun ‘I’ on which any reader may assert proprietary claim for the proper name, the convention by which the *heno* (cantor) identifies himself in *akpalu*.⁵⁹ Therefore, what emerges from both of these studies provides a crucial insight into the value of the oral tradition in African print poetry: from Vilakazi and Dhlomo to Okot p’Bitek and Anyidoho, formal simplicity and clarity of expression are aesthetic effects achieved by paring down the complex,

multimedia techniques of oral versification. They are not intrinsic attributes of oral texts that the poet effortlessly transfers into the written word.

We can see this process in Anyidoho's 'Tsitsa', a poem that is loosely based on the *haló*, a multimedia performance art form of the invective practised by the Anlo-Ewe of Ghana that combines poetry, drumming, dance and mime. According to Daniel K. Avorgbedor, there are three forms: 'factual/reportage, fictive (half-truths, inventions, libels or false accusations, etc.), and maledicta (insults and scatological materials)'.⁶⁰ A *haló* song text may, however, braid elements of all three into a powerful invective, as the following lines suggest:

A public disgrace but no one knew
This brief thief's song exposed you
Steal HHH's fishing net
Then sold it to III (a woman)
As a pawn for a debt owed.

Net is not a woman's business
He gave the net to III to lay
New owners saw the net
AAA is more hard-headed than his father
AAA tall-crooked with dry temple⁶¹

Aside from its note of moral censure, the first stanza consists of reportage. In the next stanza, moral censure yields to personal invective directed not only at the miscreant and his ancestors but also at his body. Both, the speaker suggests, are temperamentally and physically deformed. In the subsequent stanza the speaker, having unburdened himself of facts related to the theft, lets loose with saltier invectives that further underscore the idea of physical and familial deformity.

'Tsitsa' follows a similar pattern, beginning with reportage before turning to maledicta. Yet by comparison with the stanzas above, it seems quite restrained. The restraint is owing, it seems, to a variety of factors: the occasion – possibly young adults reminiscing about the strangeness of their experiences at school; the relationship between them and their teacher which, the passage of time notwithstanding, is marked by residues of the deference African pupils are taught to show their former teachers; and the speaker's tone which, on account of his language – a hybrid mixture of Ewe (for example, 'ako' – parrot) and English loanwords ('tsitsa' – teacher; 'koledzi' – college; 'Inglishi' – English; 'Masita' – Master; and 'trozasi' – trousers) and a preference for mild over harsh invective – is decidedly comic. In the last two lines, the speaker caricatures Masita Matiasi: 'He had the belly of a toad and he always / talked pulling up his

ancient trozasi'.⁶² In this image of Matiasi as an amphibian, the speaker expresses the groups' disdain for their misguided teacher. Is it possible that the speaker prefers restrained laughter over vituperative satire because, ultimately, 'tsitsa' is not the true object of his *haló*? Is it not possible that, in the vanity and pedantry of 'big man Masita Matiasi' who descends from his mountain 'koledzi' with his head so 'full of skies' that he invokes 'Mawu Yehowa' as if god and he were kin and speaks 'Englishi' to mesmerize his charges, they recognize a colonial pathology they fear has infected them, his former pupils? If in 'Tsitsa' Anyidoho adapts oral satire, then he does so by attempting to do with verbal utterance something similar to what Awoonor does with 'Xexemenyawo zu ganami mefa', an Ewe *akpalu* or dirge, in his 'Sorrow': that is, pare down the elements of an Ewe oral poetic genre and adapt it to free verse.⁶³ As in 'Sorrow', literary simulation of oral performance entails substitution and displacement: in 'Songs', the third-person mode of self-identification employed by the *heno* (cantor) in *akpalu* by the poet-persona's generalizable first-person mode; in 'Tsitsa', the polyphonic voices in which the Ewe might, as in the *odima*, satirize deviancy, by a multiplicity of voices braided together in a narrative recollection of the eccentricities of 'tsitsa'.⁶⁴

Okigbo's 'Lament of the Masks' and 'Elegy for Slit-Drum' suggest just how far an inspired poet could carry this process. Written on the occasion of the celebration of Yeats's centenary, 'Lament of the Masks' is one of the most accomplished reworkings of the generic conventions of the Yorùbá personal *oriki* and the *oriki* of the Timi of Ede in postcolonial African poetry.⁶⁵ Generally, *oriki* are "heavy" words that 'evoke a subject's quality' or 'essence'; however, in contrast to divine and communal (*orile*) *oriki*, personal *oriki* consist of epithets that 'allude, often in condensed, witty and oblique style, to the subjects achievements, sayings or qualities'.⁶⁶ As in drum verse, 'Masks' begins with an opening sequence, a burst of short rhythmic phrases, none of which addresses the subject. Rather, they collectively establish the context and mood of the performance. That context, as images of impending violence (animated 'rumour' dashing off 'to the assault') piling up against each other indicate, is defined by the muting of the poetic voice just as disaster looms 'At the end of the road, / The last bend before the broken teeth of the river'.⁶⁷ Into this scene the poet defiantly interjects his 'Panegyrics for the arch-priest of the sanctuary . . .', a sequence of epithets that, first obliquely and then directly, ascribe to Yeats qualities of courage, defiance, industry, inventiveness to which, perhaps, the poet-persona might wish to lay claim. In formal terms, however, what is most impressive about 'Masks' is the pacing, duration and variation of epithets, the shift, for example, from the unrhymed couplets of movement II with its combination

of nominative and interrogative phrases, to the uneven stanzaic patterns of movement III in which the indomitable will of the Poet is eulogized, before, in movement IV, the *oriki* subsides into a reflective denouement that, as if closing a circle, returns us to the almost despondent mood of movement I. What is peculiar about this is the fact that, unlike in some of Senghor's poetry, 'Masks' relies on phrasing, syntax, imagery and stanzaic structure to evoke the fluid rhythmic progress of a musical performance.

That before he went off to war in 1967 Okigbo had become even more skilful at adapting even the musical qualities of oral poetry to literary form is evident in 'Slit-Drum', a poem whose 'structure and presentation', and whose 'dramatic tensions and use of language', has earned it the accolade of 'most African' poem in *Path of Thunder*.⁶⁸ What this accolade means may be uncertain, but far less so is Okigbo's poetics – the antiphonal structure, repetitive syntax, nominative epithets and self-invocations of Igbo songs by which, as the lines below demonstrate, he composed an elegy capable of conveying to his audience the melancholy fate that awaits them:

condolences quivering before the iron throne of a new
conqueror:

the mythmaker accompanies us (*the Egret had come and gone*)
Okigbo accompanies us the oracle enkindles us
the Hornbill is there again (*the Hornbill has had a bath*)
Okigbo accompanies us the rattles enlighten us –

condolences with the miracle of sunlight on our feathers.⁶⁹

Prose fiction

African prose fiction seems to adapt oral discourses almost effortlessly into its tissue. Often the process appears seamless, an impression that the narrator in *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Achebe's realist tale of the disintegration of Igbo society, conveys in the narrator's ethnographic gloss on the function of proverbs in Igbo oratory: 'Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten.'⁷⁰ Enhancing the effects of orality in such novels is the simulation of the style of verbal utterance and integration of oral expressive modes such as folktales and fables, myths and legends, riddles and jokes, songs and ejaculations. Even so, the impression of a genetic affinity between prose fiction and orality is often belied by the text's stratagem of relying on the ethnographic perspective to articulate local knowledge that African readers (and readers knowledgeable

about oratorical art in African societies) must surely possess. At such moments, realist and modernist texts such as Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* (1964), Ngũgĩ's *The River Between* (1965) and *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), T.M. Aluko's *One Man, One Wife* (1959), Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966), Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966), Grace Ogot's short fiction, and Ousmane Sembène's *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* (1960) / *God's Bits of Wood* (1962) disclose the gap between orality and literacy in which the narrator's ethnographic voice resides. By contrast, non-realist texts diminish or close this gap by disposing altogether of the ethnographic perspective and, exceeding the ambitions of realists and modernists, ambitions that by comparison seem rather modest, simulate the narrative forms and conventions of oral genres. Thus is the impression of an almost organic kinship between prose fiction and orality even further enhanced.

If, in the foregoing précis of the relationship between orality and African prose fiction, we have refrained from characterizing the difference between the modalities by which texts inscribe oral forms and conventions as a chronological shift, it is because they have developed concurrently across time, space and languages. Consider, for example, *Mhudi* (1930) by Sol T. Plaatje (1878–1932) and *Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga* (1968), the translation by Soyinka of *Ọgbójú Ode Nínú Igbó Irínmalè* (1938) by D.O. Fagunwa (1903–63). Separated by several thousand miles and language, *Mhudi* and *Forest* chronicle the adventures that two sets of culture heroes, Mhudi and her husband Ra-Thaga, on the one hand, and Akara-Ogun, on the other, experience as they wander through an unstable and violent world. But though in presenting the world through which Mhudi and Ra-Thaga journey in their search for stability Plaatje occasionally uses gnomic discourses such as proverbs and fables, the predominant register in which the narrative is presented remains consistently realistic. Indeed, far from detracting from that realist register, these proverbs and fables further affirm it, as we can see in Chief Moroka's address to his Barolong people on the occasion of a debate in Thaba Nchu over the Voortrekkers' request for assistance in their fight against general Gubuza's Ndebele army:

'Men of the Barolong,' he said aloud, 'listen! Old people say that 'the foolish dam suckles her young while lying down; but the wise dam suckles hers while standing up and looking for approaching hunters.' This day has brought with it the most appalling news since we pitched our abode on the banks of the Sepane River. For the first time since we experienced their depredations, the Marauders of Mzilikazi have forded the Lekwa (Vaal). They are now prowling on our side of that deep stream.'⁷¹

Winding down, Chief Moroka gestures towards the Voortrekkers' emissaries: "These young men have come to tell us that "the ox is found" (there is a state of war). Now I wish to know from you whether help shall be forthcoming and, if so, how quickly.⁷² In a metalinguistic passage that precedes Chief Moroka's address, and in the parenthetical interpretation of the ox apothegm, we encounter the ethnographic voice of the narrator who, here and in *Things Fall Apart*, mediates African oral discourse for a literate, largely English-speaking, readership in Africa and beyond.

Laura Chrisman describes *Mhudi* as 'an extended narrative' written in reaction to the British government's rejection of pleas for protection against racial 'segregation and exploitation' in South Africa.⁷³ Just eight years after *Mhudi*, *Forest* was published in Nigeria, then also a British colony. Although we cannot adduce a specific historical event that acted as the catalyst for its composition, we can observe that it is informed by a deep concern for the collective welfare of Yorùbá and 'black people'.⁷⁴ That this concern, which signals a thematic preoccupation with colonial and racial subjection, is cast in ethnic and Pan-Africanist terms, suggests that Fagunwa saw no contradiction between the specificity of the ethno-cultural generative matrix of his work and the transnational scope of his ideological affiliations. This probably accounts for his choice of the Yorùbá hunter's tale and his use of opening and closing formulae to construct a framework story whose audience (and *Forest* inscribes an audience), though clearly Yorùbá-speaking, is meant to stand in for 'black people' in general.⁷⁵ Taken together with the fact that he wrote in Yorùbá, these choices of genre and narrative form afforded him considerable freedom in the simulation and transposition of oral folktale conventions into literary form.

Fagunwa exercises this creative freedom in 'The author meets Akara-Ogun', the first part of the novel. Ostensibly, this is the literary correlative of the interjection or *dialogos*⁷⁶ with which, in an oral folktale, the storyteller requests his audience's attention and the audience gives its assent to the storyteller. In *Forest*, however, this minimal device is elaborated into a framework story, the purpose of which is to allow 'the author', clearly a displacement of the storyteller, to establish the conditions of the storytelling performance. It is this elaboration of an oral narrative convention into a literary function at the very outset of narration that allows Fagunwa's 'author' to mediate the narrative event about to follow in the extended metaphor of drum music ('a veritable *agidigbo*',⁷⁷ a word Soyinka glosses as 'leisurely music played mostly at social occasions') which he (the author) would play while his audience dances (interprets). The dance metaphor places motion or kinesis at the core of the interplay between storytelling and interpretation: both activities may be

mutually dependent, but the story's meaning can only be determined by the audience. Achebe, who describes dance and masquerade as the Igbo 'art form *par excellence*', might well give his assent to Fagunwa's view. Indeed, the passage in which Akara-Ogun gives the author the mandate to write his story could be read as a prolepsis of Achebe's speculation that the Igbo valorize dance because they believe that movement could negate death:

Take up your pen and paper and write down the story which I will now tell you. Do not delay ... I would not myself have come to you today, but I am concerned about the future and there is this fear that I may die unexpectedly and my story die with me. But if I pass it on to you now and you take it all down diligently, even when the day comes that I must meet my Maker, the world will not forget me.⁷⁸

For Akara-Ogun, writing is an ally rather than an adversary of speech. The one complements the other. What verbal recitation does for his narrative in the village – dissemination – the written word does for it in the wider world. Because it is only through its dissemination that narrative can negate oblivion, because only the literary retelling of his story can offer him the prospect of immortality, Akara-Ogun evinces no anxiety about the expenditure of the immediacy of voice that allegedly afflicts logocentrists. But why does the 'author' of the framework story require a mandate to write? And why is it to Akara-Ogun that he turns for this mandate and not, say, to a farmer, blacksmith, trader, *babalawo*, or warrior? Explaining Fagunwa's preference for hunters as heroes, Ato Quayson argues that he 'postulates heroism as a "natural" extension of certain figures'. Is it illogical to surmise that in having Akara-Ogun confer the authority to write on his framework 'author', Fagunwa symbolically imbues the latter with those ideals of 'physical and spiritual energy' and valour for which the Yorùbá celebrate them in *ìjálá* (hunters' poetry) as culture heroes?⁷⁹

If we add to the foregoing the observation that in the closing frame of the framework story the 'author' offers us only an inconclusive resolution of the question, who is Akara-Ogun, we would begin to appreciate the difference between orality in *Mhudi* and *Forest*. Whereas in *Mhudi* it erupts into the speech of the Barolong at moments of crisis, in *Forest* it legitimates literary authorship in terms of dance, perhaps the paradigmatic art of Africa. Is African literature, then, kinaesthetic? Akara-Ogun's embedded narrative comprises episodes of hunting expeditions into the forest of Irunmale, all of them loosely strung together by his reckless quest for game. Perpetually in motion, he survives through magic, luck and the generosity of daemons all of the threats Irunmale

poses only, in the closing frame of the framework story, to disappear, leaving behind 'a little scrap of paper' that bears the words, 'Akara-Ogun, Father of Born Losers'.⁸⁰ So in the end writing averts oblivion. But in doing so it leaves unanswered a question that lurks in the opening frame of the framework story: who is Akara-Ogun? Is he the intrepid and reckless 'Akara-Ogun, Compound-of-Spells' or the wiser but saddened 'Akara-Ogun, Father of Born Losers?' Fagunwa's narrator provides no resolution. Like the daemons of Irunmale, Akara-Ogun may disappear, but he will never be lost to memory. In writing, his name, like his story, will defy time. *Forest* ends as it begins, with the author instructing his audience to be 'wise' in interpreting Akara-Ogun's story and inviting them to give it 'solid kola and not the segmented' in order to sustain it in this world.⁸¹ As author, the storyteller/writer may be solicitous of the story's welfare, but not of its meaning. That, apparently, is the task of criticism.

Neither *Mhudi* nor *Forest* is a postcolonial text if, by 'postcolonial', we mean what came after formal colonization. In them we see two models for adapting orality that, differences in language and cultural provenance notwithstanding, broadly replicate themselves in African postcolonial prose fiction to this day. We are not suggesting that postcolonial writing has not produced its own innovative ways of transposing the narrative forms and conventions of oral texts into the literary domain. The argument is, rather, that these innovations have been in changes to both the form and meaning of oral rhetorical forms and genres, and that in prose fiction some of the most striking changes have been to interjections, trickster tales and local myth.

With regard to verbal interjections by the audience during the narration, some of the most exemplary adaptations occur in *Devil on the Cross* (1982), the English translation of *Caitani Mutharabaini* (1980) by Ngũgĩ, 'The Green Leaves' by Grace Ogot (1930–), and *The Fortunes of Wangrin* (1999), the English translation of *L'Étrange Destin de Wangrin* (1973) by Amadou Hampâté Bâ (1900/1–1991). According to Simon Gikandi (2000), Ngũgĩ's *Caitani* begins with a formulaic opening, 'Rugano ruuru ni rwa kiiriu' (This is a contemporary story). As with similar devices in African folktales this overture, which is excised from *Devil*, is a speech act which, when uttered by the storyteller, does several things: it establishes the normative cultural context for the performance of the narrative, identifies the kind of story to be told, defines the relationship between participants, and specifies their mutual obligations and responsibilities in the performance. By describing his story as 'contemporary', Ngũgĩ's narrator invokes this crucial convention of the oral storytelling tradition while signalling, at the same time, that his story would deviate from it. But how precisely does it deviate from the convention as used in the oral tradition?

We can answer this question by examining what the storyteller *does* in the overture. According to Gikandi, he contextualizes *Caitani* by reminding his audience of recent developments in his career, including his decision to write in Gikuyu and the state's imposition of brutal repressive measures such as censorship and incarceration against him. More significantly, he invites his audience to interject *iitha* ('yes! go on!'). As a response to 'This is a contemporary story', 'Yes! go on!' gives communal assent to the storyteller and assumes, at the same time, that the audience would be actively involved in the performance of the narrative.⁸² In other words, it does not merely transpose the oral *dialogos* into the literary domain; rather, it transforms the relationship between writer and reader by conceptualizing it as a contractual relationship between interlocutors bound together, as in the performance of the traditional folktale, in common aim, namely, to collaborate in the enactment of the story, even in the isolation of the reading space, as a shared enterprise. The effect of this transformation is to ameliorate if not break down altogether the gap between reader and writer, thus diminishing the reader's isolation.

We encounter a similar device in *Wangrin*. Like *Forest* and *Caitani*, *Wangrin* is also a framework story whose opening and closing frames are literary redactions of the opening and closing formulae in the oral folktale. However, Bâ's overtures differ from Ngũgĩ's in two ways. First, as the text's 'Foreword' and 'Afterword' they emphasize closer kinship to *literature* than Ngũgĩ's overture does. Traditionally, forewords are written by a person other than the author, and most set out to recommend the text to readers. In effect, forewords are invitations to join the author's community of readers. By writing his own 'Foreword', Bâ appropriates this function. Secondly, Bâ's 'Foreword' includes no equivalent for Ngũgĩ's *iitha*; there is, in other words, no explicit speech act establishing a narrative contract between writer and readers. On the contrary, it emphasizes conditions essential to the production of *Wangrin* as a literary text – Wangrin's wish to preserve his life story for posterity: 'My little Amkullel, in the days gone by you were a fine storyteller. Now that you have learned to write, you must take down the story of my life and after my death compose it into a book which will not only amuse but also instruct . . .'⁸³ The story of a man who devotes a long and rewarding career in the colonial bureaucracy of French West Africa, duping the authorities, outwitting implacable adversaries such as Romo Sibedi, performing philanthropic deeds, and generally defying fate, Wangrin's story is, indeed, a very compelling adaptation of the oral fable,⁸⁴ complete with topics taken from trickster tales, that ends with an 'Afterword' in which the author confirms that he has fulfilled his promise to his protagonist: 'As for me, I am most happy – through this

work – to keep a promise made to a man who had always kept his, so much so that it was said of him: “Wangrin’s words are gold, and his promises are as durable as bronze.”⁸⁵

Together, Bâ’s ‘Foreword’ and ‘Afterword’ are speech acts that give priority to the contractual relationship between the author and the narrator-protagonist of the embedded narrative. In contrast to *Forest* and *Caitani*, texts whose transference of formulaic openings and closings orient the significance of the embedded narrative towards the audience, Bâ’s ‘Foreword’ and ‘Afterword’ orient it towards Wangrin, thus betraying a residual anxiety in the author over writing’s ability to successfully mediate Wangrin’s Pular chronicle in French. Like Fagunwa’s *Forest*, *Wangrin* ends with a closing formula or ‘Afterword’. In it the author, having assumed the role of custodian of Wangrin’s reputation as a beneficent Robin Hood, attempts to lay to rest all scepticism about Wangrin’s character, thus conclusively answering the question posed in the ‘Foreword’ – ‘Who was Wangrin?’ Does the ‘Afterword’ accomplish this task? Only, the author declares, insofar as Wangrin derives pleasure in seeing a ‘new episode added to his other adventures . . .’⁸⁶ In this sense, the ‘Afterword’ does not provide narrative closure. The question, ‘Who was Wangrin?’ cannot be resolved. Long after they put down *Wangrin*, readers would continue to ponder the question of his identity just as they would that of Akara-Ogun in Fagunwa’s *Forest*. Thus, each text ends with an enigma that provides the storyteller further opportunity to augment the narrative with additional episodic yarns.⁸⁷

No less episodic is *Famished Road*, a ‘contemporary’ myth fashioned from the road and *abiku*, topoi of orality now virtual staples of the literary imagination in postcolonial Nigerian literature.⁸⁸ In developing these topoi, Okri refrains from abstracting them altogether from reality. Indeed, one of his achievements in this sprawling novel is to integrate them into the fictional world of Azaro, his protagonist. Azaro is an *abiku* or spirit-child; thus he is subject to an interminable cycle of reincarnations. As a spirit-child, Azaro inhabits two dimensions of being, the spirit and the human; insofar as these dimensions are not discontinuous, the perceptual angles from which he narrates events in which, as the protagonist, he is also involved, is doubly privileged, fractured and unstable. This perceptual variability is matched by the unpredictability of plot events, which show Azaro in perpetual motion, as if propelled forward by a baleful fate against which hope, as symbolized by his name – Azaro is shortened from ‘Lazaro’⁸⁹ – seems helpless. The road Azaro travels may be real enough. It refers, after all, to the highway that abuts the forest fastness inhabited by gods, spirits and other supernatural beings. But as with the

pathway that runs by the Evil Forest in *Things Fall Apart*, it is also mythic, having 'in the beginning' been a river. As 'destiny' propels him along this 'hungry' trail, Azaro traverses a world whose frequent spasms of violence, official corruption and social malaise some sudden and unexpected irruptions of grace, of generosity and of love render sublime.

Half a century after independence, literary scholars struggling to grasp the relationship between orality and African postcolonial writing often seem, like Okri's *abiku* protagonist, destined to travel on a road. Although unlike Azaro's mythic pathway theirs may consist of words, it often seems no less hungry. In roadside bushes and around corners lurk numerous and often competing notions of African identity, along with equally spellbinding theories of African literatures and literary criticism. In travelling this road in the foregoing discussion we explored contextual and situational theories of the oral-literary interface in postcolonial texts and, availing ourselves of African literary history which demonstrates that Africans have no ontological disposition to orality, argue that attitudes to the oral are characterized by ambivalence. Coming to terms with this ambivalence may not bring us the deep serenity Azaro finds at the end of his adventures, but might failing to do so not further prolong our fear 'of Time'?⁹⁰

Notes

1. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 247–8.
2. Paul Stoller, 'Horrific comedy: cultural resistance and the Hauka movement in Niger', in Frances Harding (ed.), *The Performance Arts in Africa: A Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 258–9.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
4. David Kerr, *African Popular Theatre: From Pre-colonial Times to the Present Day* (London: James Currey; Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995), p. 4.
5. Eileen Julien, *African Novels and the Question of Orality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 7–17; for a nativist valorization of orality and its critique, see, respectively, Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, vol. 1: *African Fiction and Poetry and Their Critics* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1983); and Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'Topologies of nativism', in *My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (Oxford University Press, 1992).
6. Julien, *African Novels*, p. 47.
7. Sabra Webber, 'Arab and Berber oral traditions in North Africa', in F. Abiola Irele and Simon Gikandi (eds.), *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 50, 62.
8. Farida Abu-Haidar, 'African literature in Arabic', in Irele and Gikandi (eds.), *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, vol. 1, p. 179.

9. Ato Quayson, 'Pre-texts and intermedia: African theatre and the question of history', in John Conteh-Morgan and Tejumola Olaniyan (eds.), *African Drama and Performance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 48; Kerr, *African Popular Theatre*, pp. 14–5; Kamal Salhi, 'Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia', in Martin Banham (eds.), *A History of Theatre in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 40–50; Eric Charry, *Mande Music: Traditional and Modern Music of the Mande and Mandinka of Western Africa* (University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 54–61.
10. Abiola Irele, *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa and the Black Diaspora* (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 31–2.
11. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 109–10, 122; Lupenga Mphande, 'Heroic and praise poetry in South Africa', in Irele and Gikandi (eds.), *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, vol. 1, p. 77.
12. Irele, *The African Imagination*, p. 37.
13. Julien, *African Novels*, p. 25; Irele, *African Imagination*, p. 37.
14. Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology*, trans. Walter Lowrie (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 33.
15. For further discussion, see Kacke Götrick, *Apidan Theatre and Modern Drama: A Study in a Traditional Yoruba Theatre and Its Influence on Modern Drama by Yoruba Playwrights* (Gothenburg: Graphic Systems AB, 1984), pp. 154–9; Daniel K. Avorgbedor, 'The preservation, transmission and realization of song texts', in Isidore Okpewho (ed.), *The Oral Performance in Africa* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1990), pp. 209–17; Elizabeth Gunner, 'Africa and orality', in Irele and Gikandi (eds.), *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, vol. 1, pp. 6–13; Kennedy C. Chinyowa, 'Shona storytelling and the contemporary performing arts in Zimbabwe', in Martin Banham, James Gibbs and Femi Osofisan (eds.), *African Theatre: Southern Africa* (Oxford: James Currey, 2004), pp. 39–44; Isidore Okpewho, *The Epic in Africa: Toward a Poetics of Oral Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 116–22; Adéléké Adéèkó, *Proverbs, Textuality, and Nativism in African Literature* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), pp. 50–1; Webber, 'Arab and Berber oral traditions in North Africa', pp. 58–9; and Kwesi Yankah, 'The folktale and its extensions', in Irele and Gikandi (eds.), *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, vol. 1, p. 31.
16. Karin Barber, *The Generation of Plays: Yorùbá Popular Life in Theatre* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 317; also Karin Barber, John Collins and Alain Ricard, *West African Popular Theatre* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press; Oxford: James Currey, 1997), pp. 38–42.
17. Kerr, *Popular Theatre*, pp. 72–4; Barber, Collins and Ricard, *West African Popular Theatre*, pp. 5–7, 33–35.
18. Sunday O. Anozie, *Christopher Okigbo: Creative Rhetoric* (London: Evans Brothers, 1972), p. 102.
19. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981, reissued 1986).
20. Quayson, 'Pre-texts', p. 48; Kerr, *Popular Theatre*, pp. 44–5.
21. Barber, *Plays*, 18–19; Kerr, *Popular Theatre*, p. 100; also Barber, Collins and Ricard, *West African Popular Theatre*, p. 41.
22. Zakes Mda, *When People Play People: Development Communication Through Theatre* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books; Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993), p. 75. Any illusions about the dynamism of oral African poetry should be dispelled by evidence which demonstrates that, in response to historical

- contingency, modern oral poetic genres such as the *lifela* may displace older genres such as the *lithoko* as an expression of contemporary national and transnational identity. See Gunner, 'Africa and orality', p. 5.
23. Timothy Brennan, 'The national longing for form', in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 46–7.
 24. I am indebted to Jahan Ramazani for his discussion of Yeats's category of 'tragic joy' for this notion. See Ramazani, *Yeats and the Poetry of Death: Elegy, Self-Elegy, and the Sublime* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 100.
 25. See Efua Sutherland, *The Marriage of Anansewa* (London: Longman, 1967); Osita Okagbue, *African Theatres and Performances* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Tejumola Olaniyan, 'Festivals, ritual, and drama in Africa', in Irele and Gikandi (eds.), *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, vol. 1; Kerr, *Popular Theatre*; and Luis R. Mitras, 'Theatre in Portuguese-speaking African countries', in Martin Banham (ed.), *A History of Theatre in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 394, for a discussion of the influence of indigenous African drama on works by key figures in this subgenre.
 26. Both plays are published in Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman*, ed. Simon Gikandi (New York and London: W. W. Norton 2003), and are hereafter abbreviated as *Oba* and *Horseman* respectively.
 27. Wole Soyinka, 'Elesin Oba and the critics', in Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman*, ed. Gikandi, p. 176.
 28. D. S. Izevbaye, 'Mediation in Soyinka: the case of the King's Horseman', in Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman*, ed. Gikandi, p. 149.
 29. See Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), pp. 55–6, 174. Perhaps following Soyinka's lead in *Myth Literature and the African World* (Cambridge University Press, 1976), scholars such as Ibitokun associate the ritual of transition in *Horseman* with a 'black' racial ontology. See Benedict M. Ibitokun, *Dance as Ritual Drama and Entertainment in the Gelede of the Ketu-Yoruba Subgroup in West Africa* (Ile Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 1993), p. 6. Against this I argue, pace Turner, that evocations of *communitas* encoded in the ritual of transition in *Horseman* are predicated on successful evocations, in decidedly non-ritual contexts, of core ideological or 'normative' values (for example, Amusa's reverence for the *egungun*'s 'uniform of death'). See *Horseman*, p. 19.
 30. Frye, *Anatomy*, p. 136.
 31. Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1996), p. 19.
 32. Ládiípò, *Oba*, p. 81; Soyinka, *Horseman*, p. 59.
 33. Ato Quayson, *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing: Rev. Samuel Johnson, Amos Tutuola, Wole Soyinka, Ben Okri* (Oxford: James Currey; Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 95.
 34. *Ibid.*, p. vii.
 35. Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 8–9.
 36. Soyinka, *Horseman*, p. 5.
 37. Adéèkó, *Proverbs*, pp. 50–1; for additional discussion of language in *Horseman*, see Quayson, *Strategic Transformations*, p. 95.
 38. Adéèkó, *Proverbs*, p. 9.
 39. Soyinka, *Horseman*, p. 77.
 40. Ládiípò, *Oba*, p. 81.
 41. Adéèkó, *Proverbs*, p. 50.

42. This 'dispute,' conducted in *Bantu Studies* and *South African Outlook*, occurred between 1938 and 1939. At the time of the debate, Dhlomo was better known as a playwright than a poet. According to Couzens, none of his more than twenty plays has ever 'been found'. See Tim Couzens, *The New African: A Study of the Life and Work of H. I. E. Dhlomo* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), p. 246.
43. David Attwell, *Rewriting Modernity: Studies in Black South African Literary History* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), p. 80.
44. See, for example, the much cited debate between Achebe (1975) and Ngũgĩ (1981) on the language of African literature, and the debate on orality in African literature, especially in the poetry of Léopold Sédar Senghor, cited earlier in this chapter.
45. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, p. 33.
46. Couzens, *The New African*, p. 46.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 161–2.
48. Quoted in Attwell, *Rewriting Memory*, p. 79.
49. *Ibid.* (italics added).
50. Couzens, *The New African*, p. 155.
51. Attwell, *Rewriting Memory*, pp. 78–9.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 89–90.
53. Mazisi Kunene, 'Notes', *Emperor Shaka the Great: A Zulu Epic* (London: Heinemann, 1979), p. xxix.
54. Attwell, *Rewriting Memory*, p. 102.
55. Quoted in Louise Bethlehem, *Skin Tight: Apartheid Literary Culture and Its Aftermath* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2006), pp. 26–7.
56. Tanure Ojaide and Tijan M. Sallah (eds.), *The New African Poetry: An Anthology* (Boulder, CO, and London: Lynne Rienner, 1999), p. 6.
57. J. Bekunuru Kubayanda, 'Polyrhythmics and African print poetics: Guillen, Césaire, and Atukwei Okai', in Kofi Anyidoho *et al.* (eds.), *Interdisciplinary Dimensions of African Literature* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1985), pp. 156–64.
58. Robert Fraser, *West African Poetry: A Critical History* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 16.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.
60. Daniel K. Avorgbedor, 'It's a great song! Haló performance as literary production', *Research in African Literatures*, 32.2 (Summer 2001), p. 18.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
62. Kofi Anyidoho, 'Tsitsa', in Ojaide and Sallah (eds.), *The New African Poetry*, p. 151.
63. Fraser, *West African Poetry*, p. 17.
64. I would like to thank Kofi Anyidoho for explaining the Ewe and English loanwords in 'Tsitsa' to me.
65. Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, 'The poetry of Christopher Okigbo: its evolution and significance', in Uzoma Esonwanne (ed.), *Critical Essays on Christopher Okigbo* (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 2000), p. 185.
66. Karin Barber, *I Could Speak until Tomorrow: Oriki Women and the Past in a Yoruba Town* (Bloomington and Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), pp. 12–13.
67. Christopher Okigbo, *Collected Poems*, ed. Adewale Maja-Pearce (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 79.
68. Ogundipe-Leslie, 'The poetry of Christopher Okigbo', p. 192.
69. Okigbo, *Collected Poems*, p. 96.
70. Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, p. 5.
71. Sol T. Plaatje, *Mhudi* (London: Heinemann, 1978), p. 112.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

73. Laura Chrisman, *Rereading the Imperial Romance: British Imperialism and South African Resistance in Haggard, Schreiner and Plaatje* (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 187–8.
74. D. O. Fágúnwà, *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga* (Ògbójú Ode Nínú Igbó Irinmale), trans. Wole Soyinka (Lagos: Thomas Nelson Nigeria, 1982), pp. 139–40; all further references will be to the English translation.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
76. Okpewho, 'Faithful record', in Okpewho (ed.), *The Oral Performance in Africa*, p. 116.
77. Fágúnwà, *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*, p. 7.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 8; Chinua Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments* (London: Heinemann, 1988), pp. 65–6.
79. Quayson, *Strategic Transformations*, p. 51.
80. Fágúnwà, *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*, p. 139.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 139–40.
82. Simon Gikandi, *Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 211.
83. Amadou Hampâté Bâ, *The Fortunes of Wangrin. L'Étrange Destin de Wangrin* (1973), trans. Aina Pavolini Taylor (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. xvii.
84. Irele, *The African Imagination*, p. 96.
85. Bâ, *The Fortunes of Wangrin*, p. xix.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
87. For an equally compelling explanation of the absence of closure in *Drinkard*, see Quayson, *Strategic Transformations*, p. 58.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
89. Ben Okri, *The Famished Road* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991), pp. 6–8.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 500.

Canadian literatures and the postcolonial

WINFRIED SIEMERLING

What is now Canada and Quebec remains marked by unequal relations of difference initiated by the advent of European explorers and settlers. Instead of assuming any perceived end of coloniality such as Canadian Confederation in 1867, legislative independence with the Statute of Westminster in 1931, the establishment of Canadian Citizenship in 1947, or the patriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1982, this chapter reads the postcolonial spaces of Canada as persisting in ongoing relations of power, dominance, contest, dialogue and negotiation in a field originally constituted by the moment of colonial contact. Initial settler relationships with indigenous populations, with their respective European imperial centres, and with other settlers (including here the colonies to the south, which in turn will become an imperial power) are complicated by other diasporas arriving later from everywhere on the globe, altering any previous emotional, social, economic, political and symbolic geographies of North America.

The inclusion of black, indigenous and other minority and subaltern writing from Canada appears uncontested in postcolonial studies, although this corpus certainly requires more visibility and discussion with attention to Canadian specificity. Theorists including Stephen Slemon, Linda Hutcheon, Donna Bennett, Diana Brydon and Cynthia Sugars have also argued, however, for the importance of other writing from settler nation states like Canada for postcolonial studies. That view is in keeping with the earlier suggestion by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* that the term 'post-colonial' should 'cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day'.¹ The present chapter thus encompasses white settler writing that negotiates Canadian difference with respect to imperial centres though often enacting imperial values with respect to cultural others, be they indigenous people or other migrant subjects. The following discussion also covers the consequences of the battle on the Plains of Abraham in 1759, resulting in what is known in English as the ceding of New France to England in the 1763 Peace of Paris, while it is called in French simply

'La Conquête' (The Conquest). To look at French Canadian writing – or what is known since the 1960s as 'littérature québécoise' – in terms of postcolonial writing is evidently subject to the same debates that concern other settler literatures. An additional caveat is registered from within that field of Quebec studies and literature itself. After a highly motivated Quebec reception of francophone writers of decolonization like Fanon, Berque and Memmi from the 1960s on, the later anglophone introduction of the term 'postcolonial' is sometimes seen here as discursive repackaging that means further marginalization of francophone difference in North America.

These concerns join other critiques of the inevitable implications of discourses of the 'postcolonial' and of literary history. E. D. Blodgett, who has studied some sixty-odd histories of the literatures of Canada, reminds us that such accounts are acts of 're-origination' that are contingent on communication factors including narrativization and selection; as Linda Hutcheon notes, many – if not all – literary histories are 'interventionist'.² This chapter is no exception. The following pages aim to increase the visibility of writing in Canada in international postcolonial discussion. While what is now Canada begins with First Nations populations, 'Canadian literatures' are discussed here as originating with texts destined for Europeans. I have opted for the following five sections: (1) 'From exploration writing to the mid nineteenth century'; (2) 'National culture and cultural nationalisms from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s'; (3) 'Regionalisms'; (4) 'Gender'; and (5) 'Multiculturalism, diaspora, ethnicity and race', with subsections on First Nations writing, Asian diasporas, and African Canadian writing. Given the scope of writing under consideration, the discussion proceeds necessarily in most cases by example (especially with respect to diasporic writing), and restricts itself to texts in English and French; as a comprehensive survey, it does not replace the detailed scholarship available on the literatures of Canada.³

From exploration writing to the mid nineteenth century

Exploration and travel

While indigenous cultures with as many as eleven different language groups and over fifty languages predate contact with Europeans, 'Canada' as 'necessary fiction', as E. D. Blodgett asserts, can be seen to begin with Jacques Cartier and his construction of it for a French audience. That 'beginning' is contingent on textual uncertainty, since the content of Cartier's lost text in French is

available only through the translations by Ramusio (1556) and Florio (1580).⁴ Authenticity and even authorship are problematic as Ramsay Cook, the editor of *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, points out. Cartier travels to the Saint Lawrence three times (1534, 1535–6, 1541–2), exploring the river up to what is now Montreal. Planting a large cross against Iroquois protests when he arrives in 1534 in the Gaspé peninsula, he abducts Iroquois chief Donnacona from the area that is now Quebec City on his second trip. In the absence of Native-authored testimony we can only conjecture, as Cook does, that the Iroquois saw Europeans much like Cartier saw them, as thieves who ‘steal everything they can carry off.’⁵ Samuel de Champlain, who founds Quebec City in 1608 and later becomes Governor of New France, continues the ethnographic description of the New World in his *Voyages de la Nouvelle France* (1632), describing his North American journeys beginning in 1603. Battling the Iroquois, he builds alliances with Algonquian groups and the Hurons, but Huronia will later fall to the Iroquois in 1649. These events are chronicled in the *Jesuit Relations*, the annual reports sent by missionaries to their French superiors from 1632 to 1673. Widely read in Europe at the time and often a source for later Canadian writing, they initiate the translation and recording of indigenous tales and customs. They also describe indigenous resistance to enemy-allied colonizers, as evidenced in the narrative of Father Jogues’s Iroquois captivity, or the martyr story of Brébeuf. Natives continue to be the subject of later travel and exploration writing by anglophone authors after the founding of the Hudson Bay Company in 1670. The Hudson Bay Company’s Samuel Hearne’s *A Journey from the Prince of Wales Fort in Hudson’s Bay to the Northern Ocean* (1795), for instance, contains the description of a massacre of Inuits at the hand of Cree and Chippewa Natives, although critics have suspected the passage to have been dramatized according to gothic conventions for European readers. Like Hearne, his successor David Thompson learns indigenous languages, living for extended periods with indigenous groups. *David Thompson’s Narrative*, based on journals beginning in 1789 but published only in 1916, includes Nahathaway (Cree) Saukamapee’s account of his life among the neighbouring Peigans, and of the impact of guns, horses and especially smallpox. While these texts provide considerable detail about indigenous cultures, they are also marked not only by their authors’ perspectives but also by editors’ concerns for European audience interests.

The early anglophone novel

The first novel written in Canada, Frances Brooke’s *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), an epistolary novel about English garrison life in Quebec

City after the British Conquest, seeks novelty for European audiences in sublime nature and the portrayal of Natives as the incarnation of careless and indolent human happiness (letter 4). A later passage, however, critiques indigenous gender roles and portrays Natives also as savage (letter 20). Set around the same time as Brooke's novel, John Richardson's *Wacousta, or, The Prophecy: A Tale of the Canadas* (1832) follows the adventure novel and the historical novel of Walter Scott to render Chief Pontiac's attack on British forts in 1763. Pontiac appears as the powerful and cunning nemesis of British colonization, but the novel caters mainly to European reader expectations with gothic suspense and horror. A more sober approach prevails in the texts of two settler authors often regarded as foundational to Canadian literature, Catherine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie. In Traill's *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836), Natives are reported to disappoint European expectations for want of 'warlike character and intelligence' (letter X). Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush, or, Life in Canada* (1852) dedicates an entire chapter to Moodie's interactions with Natives, calling their 'beauty, talents, and good qualities . . . somewhat over-rated' but appreciating the 'honesty and love of truth' ('The Wilderness and Our Indian Friends'); later she will call them 'true friends to us in our dire necessity' ('Adieu to the Woods').⁶ Some of the colonial/postcolonial ambivalences of these early texts can be located in their duality of configuring Natives for the European imagination – they are not examples of subaltern resistance – while also articulating nascent difference with imperial centres by invoking New World local specificity. This period crucial for Canadian literary history, however, produces at the same time forms of black expression especially after the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1834 and the United States Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, which will be examined below.

Early French writing after 1763

A tripartite model of the imperial centre, the colony and indigenous populations is further complicated by the domination of English over French Canada after the battle on the Plains of Abraham (1759). Many French notables leave, French immigration is stopped, and an oath of allegiance to the British Crown is required for all civil administrators of the colony. The situation is alleviated with the Quebec Act of 1774, when the British administration seeks the support of the French population given the American Revolution to the south (a Continental Army indeed unsuccessfully attacks Quebec City in 1775). French Canadian discontent, however, remains substantial. It comes to a head with the 1837 uprising under Louis-Joseph Papineau. The revolt leads to a report in 1839 by the newly installed Governor General Lord Durham,

claiming that French Canadians are a people ‘with no literature and no history’. François-Xavier Garneau’s *Histoire du Canada* (1845–8) is written to prove the contrary. It is a defining event that articulates French Canadian nationalism (but omits, until the fourth edition, the fact of slavery in New France). In its wake, the historical novel takes over from the early adventure novel. French Canada’s first novel, the younger Aubert de Gaspé’s *L’Influence d’un livre* (1837), is an adventure novel (like Joseph Doutre’s *Les Fiancés de 1812* a few years later). Even here, however, its unlikely plot about alchemist pursuits is almost secondary to the author’s interest in portraying typical traits of the local population and its superstitions, customs and legends. De Gaspé thus initiates a literary retrieval of oral traditions and local legends that becomes central to the subsequent attempts at building a specifically French Canadian literary tradition. After Garneau’s *Histoire du Canada*, the older Aubert de Gaspé publishes one of French Canada’s most important nineteenth-century novels, *Les Anciens Canadiens* (1863),⁷ which turns to the conventions of the historical novel popularized by Walter Scott to stage the tragic battle encounter of two friends who become involuntary enemies during the British Conquest. *Les Anciens Canadiens* seeks to recover a significant French Canadian past, following an appeal to that effect by the journal *Les Soirées canadiennes*. This journal, like the subsequent *Le Foyer Canadien*, is the main outlet for Le Mouvement littéraire de 1860 (a.k.a. L’École patriotique de Québec). Besides Garneau, especially the poet Octave Crémazie and the abbé, historian and later publisher Henri-Raymond Casgrain formulate here the influential, highly conservative beginnings of a French Canadian literature, against what these writers see as the nefarious nature of French culture after the revolution.

This movement works in tandem with the most important novelistic form of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in French Canada, the *roman du terroir*. Patrice Lacombe’s *La Terre paternelle* (1846) is an early major incarnation. Here the fortunes of a peasant family decline when it abandons the ancestral land. Commerce and the city become signs of poverty and moral decay. Partially in response to anglophone control over these domains and the professions, the *roman du terroir* becomes a moralizing, conservative space of resistance. It propagates the credo of the physiocrats that the wealth of nations derives from the land – from agriculture and further colonization – rather than commerce and trade. As a literary form, it establishes a clear contrast between the village and the city, and relies heavily on the portrayal of types. The genre, which includes Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau’s *Charles Guérin* (1846) and Antoine Gérin-Lajoie’s *Jean Rivard, le défricheur* (1862), continues well into the twentieth century with Louis Hémon’s *Maria Chapdelaine* (1914; 1916

altered Quebec edition). Later examples, like Claude-Henri Grignon's *Un homme et son péché* (1933), Félix-Antoine Savard's *Menaud, Maître Draveur* (1937) and Ringuet's (Philippe Panneton) *Trente Arpents* (1938), show the decline of this mode of living. The power of this type of writing is challenged from 1895 on by the École littéraire de Montréal, and the reception of the *parnassien* and symbolist poet Emile Nelligan. The result is a prolonged debate between 'regionalists' and the Paris-oriented 'exotics'. The latter group will make their point in the journal *Le Nigog*, although it appears for only twelve issues in 1918. Their efforts signal a partial autonomization of the literary field until it is recaptured by the nationalist and independentist movement.

National culture and cultural nationalisms from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s

In 1867, Queen Victoria gives royal assent to the British North America Act and Canadian Confederation. Canada East and West (renamed Quebec and Ontario), New Brunswick and Nova Scotia unite in the Dominion of Canada,⁸ prompting calls for a national culture to validate the new country and its difference from the Old World. These decolonizing aspirations are felt in discussions of poetry, the culturally dominant genre far into the twentieth century, but also mark the development of other genres.

Debates about poetry and national literature

Canadian specificity in content and form is debated already prior to Confederation. Thus Daniel Wilson, later the first president of the University of Toronto, critiques Charles Sangster's *The St Lawrence and the Saguenay and Other Poems* (1856) as formally derivative of Old World poetry and lacking in originality in its portrayal of Natives (1858). On the other hand, the Methodist minister Edward Hartley Dewart prefaces Canada's first anthology, *Selections from Canadian Poets* (1864), with a vigorous defence of indigenous literary production, pointing to its civic, nation building value. While nationally relevant poets like Charles Sangster or Charles Mair publish around Confederation, twentieth-century criticism later identifies a group of younger writers as 'Confederation poets' (although they begin to publish after 1880): Archibald Lampman, Charles G. D. Roberts, Bliss Carman and D. C. Scott. The preference given to the nation-identified term 'Confederation' over such alternatives as 'Romantic' or 'Victorian' signals the interventionist impulse behind such critical narratives of cultural emergence.

The relationship between poetry and national decolonization is also at stake in the ‘native vs cosmopolitan’ debate, an important controversy in the 1930s and 1940s about the content, form and function of modernist verse produced in Canada. In a rejected preface to the signature modernist anthology *New Provinces* (1936), influential poet and anthologist A. J. M. Smith hails the quasi-absence of Canadian specificity in the collection as proof that the ‘provincial’ is making way for the ‘cosmopolitan’. An analogous distinction between ‘native’ and ‘cosmopolitan’ poetry appears in his preface to the *Book of Canadian Poetry* (1943). The ‘cosmopolitan’ is characterized as an effort to ‘transcend the colonialism’ of poets who have ‘concentrated on what is individual and unique in Canadian life’. While Smith greets the absence of recognizably Canadian form or content as a sign of Canadian literary maturity and the end of coloniality, the writer, critic and editor John Sutherland, in texts like ‘Literary colonialism’ and ‘Mr Smith and the tradition’ critiques this rejection of the local as colonial adaptation to England.⁹

Developments in the anglophone novel

The novel continues to rely on European traditions but also engages with identifiably Canadian issues and locations. While the francophone *roman du terroir*, as we have seen, celebrates the land as source of identity for French Canadians after the Conquest, the anglophone novel repeatedly examines French Canada to explore possible cohabitation or indeed legitimize anglophone dominance. In *Antoinette de Mirecourt; or, Secret Marrying and Secret Sorrowing* (1864), the Montreal-born Irish Catholic Rosanna Leprohon presents anglophone readers just before Confederation with an earlier French upper class opting to accept – albeit reluctantly at first – social interaction with the conquerors. Leprohon uses a short preface to advertise her novel as ‘essentially Canadian’, and calls for a Canada-made literature in the face of the easily available European tradition and abundant imports from the United States. William Kirby’s *The Golden Dog: A Legend of Quebec* (1877) also reaches back – this time to pre-Conquest New France in 1748 – to reflect on contemporary French–English relations, yet here clearly to justify English Canada’s saving New France from a corrupt monarchy in France.

Although French–English relations remain a staple in historical novels, authors increasingly turn to new locales that acquire literary worth in their own right. Lucy Maud Montgomery’s portrayal of Prince Edward Island, from the hugely successful *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) onward, offers but one instance of novels marked not necessarily by social progressivism but by their assertion of place and of the local, independently of metropolitan valuations.

(In the case of *Anne*, the protagonist's ambivalent role between social conformity and successful female self-assertion has been subject to critical discussion.) Small-town Ontario, satirized and caricatured in Stephen Leacock's stories in *Sunshine Sketches* (1912), is portrayed realistically in Sara Jeanette Duncan's *The Imperialist* (1904) at English Canada's perennial crossroads between anglophone empires: as opposed to closer ties with United States, its protagonist promotes imperial federation with Great Britain. This concept, influential prior to World War I and favoured by both Duncan and Leacock, sees ex-colonies like Canada vie for more importance in the British Empire. *The Imperialist* approves of Canada playing the imperial power game; it endorses white settler dominance, and even conveys racial prejudice in an episode about Native electoral fraud. At the same time, the novel voices resistance to US dominance and British imperial imposition (such as demands for guaranteed markets for British manufacturing and for financing of the British army and navy), illustrating an ambiguous concomitance of imperialism, nation-building and national decolonization. While regional small-town locality serves here as a microcosm of national aspirations with both imperial and decolonizing vectors, later affirmations of regional identity such as prairie literature and Maritime regionalisms (discussed below) will open a spectrum from national identification to ambivalence and resistance to the centralizing forces of post-colonial nation building and its narratives.

Perhaps one of the strongest anglophone cases for region and difference to issue in Canadian unity and national postcolonial emergence is made in Hugh MacLennan's historical novel *Two Solitudes* (1945). The title, now paradoxically a household phrase for French–English isolation, derives from Rilke's poetic claim that 'Love consists in this, / that two solitudes protect, / and touch, and greet each other.'¹⁰ With his own Nova Scotia background allied to a national Canadian vision, MacLennan portrays French–English relations over two generations from 1917 to 1939, to suggest that only part of the older generation holds on to separate French and English 'racial legends'. Indeed, in the franco-phone perception of that generation, rural Quebec is conquered all over again, first by English-imposed conscription in World War I, then through Canada's Industrial Revolution. Athanase Tallard, representative of the old landed gentry of Quebec but ostracized for his willingness to do business with the English, is cleaned out to the last penny by Montreal business man Huntly McQueen. In the last two parts of the novel, however, MacLennan offers his hope for the emergence of a unified country through the next generation. The question of literary emergence against European traditions also comes to the fore here when Tallard's bicultural son burns his novel set in Europe. If a novel

about his own experience is to speak to readers used to the themes of the English and French literary traditions, he decides, it must reconstruct the Canadian background in detail. This is precisely what *Two Solitudes* does in parts one and two. Cultural emergence of the former colony – *pace* A.J.M. Smith – is thus linked to the articulation of local specificity rather than metropolitan-defined norms. The novel's nation-oriented strategy, however, elides other immigrant and indigenous cultures. MacLennan's vision of a culturally unified emergent Canada will be negated furthermore by separate English Canadian and Quebec cultural nationalisms that arise in the 1960s.

*Anglophone literature, criticism and cultural nationalism
in the 1960s and 1970s*

In the post-World War II period Canadian national culture is boosted by state intervention. Occasioned by questions of state control over radio and television, the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences investigates the relation between state and culture, reporting in the so-called 'Massey Report' (1951).¹¹ In its wake, the Canada Council for the Arts is founded in 1957, facilitating translation and later administering literary prizes and writers' grants. Literary production and cultural nationalisms benefit from these developments.

Anglophone developments accelerate in 1959, when the writer and critic George Woodcock founds *Canadian Literature*, the first specialized journal in the field, and the publishing house McClelland & Stewart launches the New Canadian Library. This series reprints major Canadian works, including francophone texts in translation, making them available for a wider audience and university instruction. Two years before Expo 67, Canada's centennial coming-of-age event that also changes its image abroad, the massive *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English* appears in 1965. Northrop Frye's 'Conclusion' causes controversy. His distinction between Canadian and great literature (a judgment revised in the second edition 'Conclusion' in 1976) recalls the split between local perspectives and metropolitan norms in Smith's distinction between 'native' and 'cosmopolitan'. Yet Frye also confers national status here on literature written in Canada, identifying influentially what he sees as its major themes – most famously a 'garrison mentality' stemming from Canada's 'Small and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological "frontier"'.¹² Frye inspires a school of Canadian thematic criticism, including poet and translator D. G. Jones, the novelist Ronald Sutherland, critic John Moss, and Margaret Atwood. Asserting large-scale, general thematic characteristics, this group makes a case for a Canadian

literature recognizable per se. Later criticized for the perceived neglect of formal criteria and its essentialism, the approach proves largely successful in providing 'debatable' prerequisites for the national *pedagogical* (albeit in the problematic sense identified by Homi Bhabha in *Nation and Narration*).

The postcolonial appeal of this programme is perhaps most visible in Atwood's *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972). Widely used for at least a decade in schools and universities to establish Canadian literature as a teachable subject, it pursues the eponymous theme through a large number of English and French Canadian texts, discussing possible victim positions from denial through resigned acceptance to creative non-victimhood. With *Surfacing*, also published in 1972, Atwood transposes these concerns to the novel. The signature text of this phase of Canadian cultural nationalism, it explores at the same time female self-discovery against patriarchal norms. Both with respect to gender and Canada's self-determination vis-à-vis United States neo-colonialism, *Surfacing* addresses issues of victimization, self-delusion, memory, agency and self-recovery, emphasizing personal responsibility and engagement with interiorized power relationships and complicity. Featuring anglophone visitors in a Quebec wilderness with hidden signs of an indigenous past, the novel recalls multiple relations of colonial power; evoking a nature that remains enigmatic and not conquerable by instrumental reason, Atwood's novel also shows an ecocritical bent that recalls observations by Northrop Frye (with whom she studied) about the 'arrogant abstraction' of technological reason and 'its conquest of nature by an intelligence that does not love it'.¹³

From 1971 to 1973, Atwood also works as an editor for House of Anansi Press, a small but influential publisher invested in Canadian cultural nationalism that is co-founded by Dave Godfrey and Dennis Lee after Expo 67. Lee, an important editor, poet and writer of children's literature, openly thematizes Canada as an American colony in his essay 'Cadence, country, silence: writing in colonial space', first published in 1973. The text becomes a touchstone for later Canadian postcolonial discussion, sharing with Atwood's *Surfacing* themes like the internalization of colonial power and the critique of technological mastery. Invoking Quebec poet Gaston Miron's reflections on French Canadian linguistic alienation, Lee relates his own temporary inability to write to uncritical and Americanized Canadian media coverage of the Vietnam War. Lee credits reading the Canadian philosopher George Grant with his return to voice. In *Technology and Empire* (1969), Grant critiques assumptions of unlimited liberty and technological conquest that for him are markers of the United States and of modernity. For Grant, however, there is no language of

dissent untouched by the very modernity and colonizing thought it might seek to critique. Lee recognizes the reasons for his earlier silence, yet discovers a new path in the possibility 'to speak the words of our space-lessness'.¹⁴ He returns to writing, revising his long poem on Toronto and Canada, *Civil Elegies* (1968/1972) – a title with echoes of Grant's earlier *Lament for a Nation* (1965).

Dave Godfrey, the other co-founder of House of Anansi, engages with colonialism in *The New Ancestors* (1970), a formally complex novel that thematizes the negative United States influence on an African country (Godfrey works in Ghana from 1963 to 1965). A slightly earlier example of an interested Canadian look at colonial conditions in Africa is provided by Margaret Laurence. She lives in the 1950s in what is now Somalia and Ghana, offering in *A Tree for Poverty* (1954) English written versions of oral tales and poems from Somalia. Based on her experiences in the Gold Coast (now Ghana), Laurence publishes the novel *This Side Jordan* (1960) and a collection of African stories entitled *The Tomorrow-Tamer* (1963). Both of these texts deal with encounters between African and white cultures and the colonial consequences of imperialism. After completing a study of Nigerian writing in 1968, Laurence reflects in 'A place to stand on' – in her essay collection *Heart of a Stranger* (1976) – on the affinities between African writers' recreation of the past 'in order to recover a sense of themselves' and the exploration of her own Manitoba background in the Manawaka cycle.¹⁵ Consisting of her four Canadian novels and a collection of short stories, the cycle succeeds in writing regional fiction of national significance, with *The Stone Angel* (1964) and *The Diviners* (1974) becoming two of Canada's most important novels of all time. *The Diviners* combines historical depth and a reflection on processes of memory and historiography with questions of class and mixed race while articulating a form of Canadian self-definition. At the same time, the novel's regionalism represents nationally centrifugal forces, for instance by staging the story of Louis Riel, the francophone Métis leader of the 1870 Red River rebellion in the future Manitoba, hanged after a second uprising in 1885, during Canada's first prime minister's tenure. The story of Riel, the official villain of early Canadian national narratives, appears as contested territory between the novel's Scots Presbyterian protagonist and her Métis partner, who counters the negative textbook images of Riel with more positive ones conveyed by oral history.

Canadian national myths are challenged in Leonard Cohen's sexually explicit and at that time shocking *Beautiful Losers* (1966), which uses postmodern and surrealist devices. Like Laurence, Cohen features the Native, French and English components of Canada's colonial history. Here, though, it appears in a sexual triangle of an indigenous woman, a Québécois terrorist and – the lone

survivor – an anglophone necrophile narrator trying to write a history of the Iroquois Kateri Tekakwitha. Western naming, from the spelling of Tekakwitha and the French naming of the Iroquois to the entire practice of history, is indicted as imperialism of instrumental reason, the means of acquisition, control and retention – parodically equated with the narrator-historian's much-belaboured constipation. The Quebec separatist, in his denunciation of British imperialism, invokes radical decolonization that includes an ecological revenge of nature: 'The English did to us what we did to the Indians, and the Americans did to the English what the English did to us. I demanded revenge for everyone . . . I saw the trees taking back the long-house roofs. I saw the shy deer murdering to get their dresses back. I saw . . . highway after highway falling into the wild swamps.'¹⁶ Cohen's fictive terrorist writes these words from a Montreal asylum, a space of exclusion. This is literally where two years earlier the francophone writer Hubert Aquin finds himself, arrested for gun possession after announcing connections with separatist terrorists. Awaiting trial in a psychiatric institution, Aquin writes *Prochain Épisode*, one of the classics associated with Québécois cultural nationalism in the 1960s, the Quiet Revolution, and what is called *littérature québécoise* from about 1963 on, in rejection of the perceived double colonization of the term *littérature canadienne-française*.

Francophone writing

Quebec's post-World War II period, later called *la grande noirceur* (The Great Darkness), remains dominated by the Catholic Church and the right-wing provincial government of Maurice Duplessis (1936–9 and 1944–9). Some signs of cultural transformations that intensify after 1960 with the Quiet Revolution, however, are already visible in this period. Most conspicuous is the manifesto *Refus Global*, a collection of texts and artwork by fifteen artists that is mimeographed in 400 copies in 1948. The main text, by the surrealist and automatist painter Paul-Émile Borduas, attacks the Quebec church, societal norms and aesthetic conventions. Part of a wider reception of surrealism in Quebec, the manifesto sees the clergy as having repressed spontaneity, individuality, responsibility, knowledge and art.¹⁷ Together with the manifesto's talk of revolution, these positions prove scandalous to most of Quebec, and intolerable to the authorities. Borduas is soon dismissed from his teaching position. From a later perspective, however, *Refus Global* is a call to arms against a Catholic Church seeking to perpetuate its privilege. The manifesto becomes an icon of Quebec's belated entry into modernity that will guide the generation of the Quiet Revolution.

In fiction, the realist novel takes over from the *roman du terroir*, depicting especially the city and working-class life. Roger Lemelin's *Au pied de la pente douce* (1944) and *Les Plouffe* (1948) show Quebec City in this vein, but the most notable example is Gabrielle Roy's *Bonheur d'occasion* (1945), set in Montreal's working-class neighbourhood of Saint-Henri. Hugely successful, the novel wins the Governor General's award and in 1947 the French *Prix Fémina*, the same year it is translated as *The Tin Flute*. In a 1978 ballot among Canadian literary critics and scholars, it tops Canada's 100 most important works of fiction. The reader follows the disappointments of the waitress Florentine and her mother Rose-Anna's resigned acceptance of a sad life, while the men enlist in the army to escape economic hardship. Roy's novel hardly qualifies as resistance literature in any obvious sense, and has actually been accused of defeatism. Yet the text delivers an unprecedented documentary stock-taking of francophone urban proletarian misery during World War II. Its rendering of *joual*, the anglicized and often despised urban vernacular, as well as its intense attention to the local conditions of an oppressed and exploited population is central later to the francophone literary insurgency of the 1960s. Another francophone novel that deals with the Saint-Henri working class but here also the Montreal communist scene after the war is Pierre Gélinas's *Les Vivants, les morts, et les autres* (1959), which details working conditions in particular at Imperial Tobacco (while in English playwright and prose writer David Fennario, best known for his bilingual 1980 play *Balconville*, chronicles aspects of the working class in the nearby Pointe St-Charles).

From 1953 on, the publishing house L'Hexagone begins to print otherwise neglected earlier and contemporary Quebec poetry. L'Hexagone becomes the most important publisher of an increasingly vocal, culturally nationalist generation of poets in the period leading to the Quiet Revolution, including Jean-Guy Pilon, Fernand Ouellete and Paul-Marie Lapointe. The title of Roland Giguère's surrealist *L'Âge de la parole* (1965) seems emblematic for the claim to be heard that is enabled by L'Hexagone. At the same time, Gaston Miron, one of the co-founders of the press, maintains silence as protest for a while, pointing to the postcolonial dilemmas of a compromised language in a cultural field functionalized by the colonizer. An activist who runs twice for the left-leaning New Democratic Party but in 1962, like many other writers, gives his allegiance to the separatist cause, Miron refuses to have his poetry collected, so it remains for a long time available only in small journals. In his 1965 essay 'Un long chemin', he remembers silence as a form of absolute refusal – an echo of *Refus Global* – of co-optation as 'talented writer' by the dominant system.¹⁸ Finally his collected poetry is published as *L'Homme rapaillé* in 1970, the year he

is jailed with other Quebecers in the October Crisis that has Trudeau invoke the War Measures Act after separatist abductions. The volume includes Miron's essays on language and colonialism and is reissued in different versions in 1981 and 1994.

The essayist and novelist Hubert Aquin, as already mentioned, is arrested in 1964 in connection with his political activities; in 1977 his suicide will shock Quebec. In his well-known 1964 essay 'Profession: écrivain', Aquin – like Miron – proclaims his refusal to play the role of the oppressed writer with talent.¹⁹ The following year, he nonetheless publishes what is perhaps the signature novel of the Quiet Revolution, *Prochain Épisode* (1965; trans. Sheila Fishman, *Next Episode*, 2001). In contrast with other interventions at the time, Aquin's strategy is not directed against syntax, lexicon, or accepted registers of language. His metafictional novel refuses instead any predictable positionality – in stark contrast with its narrator's confinement in a psychiatric institution (that mirrors Aquin's own predicament). The narrator sees his free will and agency negated by an alien logic that dictates his immobility, his inability to revolutionize the genre of the spy novel at which he tries his hand, and his protagonist's failure against a counter-revolutionary agent: 'Nothing is free here, nothing: not even this impetuous escape that I'm manipulating with my fingertips and think I'm controlling, when in fact it is obliterating me . . . I'm not writing. I am written.'²⁰ The author Aquin, however, destabilizes narratological oppositions to the point of undecidability: the closer his hero comes to killing his opponent, the more they resemble each other until they seem identical. *Prochain Épisode* – like the next step in the revolution which its title evokes – remains unpredictable, in keeping with Aquin's earlier Sartrean defence of existential human freedom against historical determinacy, voiced in his essay 'La fatigue culturelle du Canada français' in response to Pierre Elliott Trudeau's condemnation of nationalism.²¹

Sartrean perspectives and an interest in African decolonization – an African revolutionary appears in Aquin's following novel, *Trou de mémoire* (1968) – also mark a journal that both Aquin and Miron contribute to at some point, *Parti pris*. Published from 1963 to 1968, it actively promotes Quebec independence, laicism and socialism, and is engaged in the reception of Sartre and the francophone writers of decolonization (Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Jacques Berque). The journal also promotes the utilization of the vernacular *joual* (the *joual* word for the French *cheval*) as a literary language in Quebec. This affront to those who want Quebec recognized by the norms of 'international' French is defended by essayists, poets and novelists in the 1965 *Parti pris* manifesto issue 'Pour une littérature québécoise'. Quebec's future minister of

culture, Gerald Godin, the important poet Paul Chamberland – author of *Terre Québec* (1964) and *L’Afficheur hurle* (1964) – as well as novelist Jacques Renaud all advocate here the use of *joual* because it is the language of the people, and witness to French Canada’s oppressed condition. Jacques Renaud’s 1964 short novel *Le Cassé* is the first to polarize literary critics and a whole society over the question of *joual*. Its use as a literary device is ultimately legitimized by the success of Michel Tremblay’s 1968 play *Les Belles-Soeurs*. As literary critic Lise Gauvin (1983) has noted, the use of *joual* as an artistic device begins to lose importance with the 1976 provincial election victory of the separatist *Parti québécois*, which relieves the literary system of its role as main defender of Quebec self-determination. A rich cultural production remains nonetheless a hallmark of Quebec’s self-definition as a distinct society, including – to name but a very few – writers like Anne Hébert, Jacques Ferron, Gérard Bessette, Jacques Godbout, Réjean Ducharme, Marie-Claire Blais and Jacques Poulin, theatre genius and filmmaker Robert Lepage, musicians like Gilles Vigneault or Richard Desjardins, or the now worldwide operating *Cirque du soleil*.

Regionalisms

The texts discussed in the previous section are relevant to the critical narratives and cultural nationalisms that establish *littérature québécoise* and English Canadian literature in the 1960s and 1970s. A number of other vectors, however, pull simultaneously or shortly thereafter in different directions. Among these are Canadian regionalisms, which are examined for instance in George Woodcock’s *Northern Spring* (1987), W. H. New’s *Land Sliding* (1997), and Christian Riegel and Herb Wyile’s collection *A Sense of Place* (1997). More or less constitutive of English Canadian literature, regionalisms have also regularly contested internal Canadian ‘centre-periphery’ relationships.

A brief look at prairie prose writing may exemplify this claim. Prairie writing is one of the best-defined Canadian regional traditions. Book-length studies include volumes by Edward McCourt, W. H. New, Laurie Ricou, Dick Harrison, Arnold Davidson, and Alison Calder and Robert Wardhaugh.²² The best-known novels are Martha Ostenso’s *Wild Geese* (1925), Frederick Philip Grove’s (alias Felix Paul Greve’s) *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), Sinclair Ross’s *As for Me and My House* (1941), and W. O. Mitchell’s *Who Has Seen the Wind* (1947). No less important are Nellie McClung’s novels, Laura Goodman Salverson’s *The Viking Heart* (1923) and *Confessions of an Immigrant’s Daughter* (1939), Adele Wiseman’s *The Sacrifice* (1956), and John Marlyn’s *Under the Ribs of Death* (1957). Other examples by major writers are Margaret Laurence’s

already mentioned Manawaka cycle and Gabrielle Roy's novels set in Manitoba, such as *Rue Deschambault* (1955; trans. Henry Binsse, *Street of Riches*, 1957) and *La Route d'Altamont* (1966; trans. Joyce Marshall, *The Road Past Altamont*, 1966). In a postcolonial perspective, these texts are relevant mostly in their insistence on local and often ethnically defined circumstance.

This situation changes, however, with the following wave of prairie novelists, which includes Robert Kroetsch, Rudy Wiebe, Carol Shields, Sandra Birdsell, Kristjana Gunnars, Guy Vanderhaeghe and Aritha van Herk. In some of these authors, a strong postmodern deconstructive impulse accompanies the critique of centralized power structures. Robert Kroetsch sees himself thus engaged in a relentless process of 'unnaming' that challenges not only the Canadian but also specifically the prairie predicament of being defined elsewhere. Kroetsch insists on 'creating' the prairies against European and central Canadian versions, pursuing his open-ended verbal archaeology in the continuing poems of the ironically titled *Completed Field Notes: The Long Poems of Robert Kroetsch* (1989/2000), in novels like his 'Out West triptych' (*The Words of my Roaring*, 1966; *The Studhorse Man* 1969; *Gone Indian*, 1973), and in the critical essays of *The Lovely Treachery of Words* (1989). In a related vein, Mennonite prairie novelist Rudy Wiebe features historical figures of resistance against centralizing Canadian authority, such as Plains Cree Chief Big Bear and the Métis rebellion leader Louis Riel in epic historiographic novels like *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973) and *The Scorched-Wood People* (1977). Guy Vanderhaeghe thematizes Western myths and the historiography of the nineteenth-century Cypress Hills Massacre in *The Englishman's Boy* (1996). Aritha van Herk, in her essays and in novels like *The Tent Peg* (1981), *No Fixed Address* (1986) and *Places Far from Ellesmere* (1990), invests prairie perspectives with the additional edge of feminist critique and parody of male domination. Icelandic Canadian prairie poet, essayist and novelist Kristjana Gunnars, who also translates the earlier important Icelandic prairie poet Stephan Stephansson and anthologizes Icelandic Canadian writing, offers with *The Prowler* (1989) a stunning deconstructive metafictional novel set mostly in Iceland that reflects also on the island's colonial and then neo-colonial status with respect to Denmark and then the United States. These few names and titles only begin to suggest the wealth of prairie writing; a few further titles are discussed in sections below.

In British Columbia, the anagrammatically titled *TISH* magazine is published from 1961 to 1969 by a group that includes Frank Davey, Fred Wah and George Bowering. Inspired by Black Mountain poetics, these writers also give deconstructive impulses that will mark Canadian postmodern writing

(and Toronto's avant-garde Coach House Press with editors and authors like Michael Ondaatje and bpNichol), but also reimagine the local. George Bowering's novel *Burning Water* (1980) for instance parodically re-envision George Vancouver, who gives BC's largest city its name. This writing contributes to a substantial BC tradition that includes prose writers Emily Carr, Howard O'Hagan, Ethel Wilson, Sheila Watson, Audrey Thomas, Jack Hodgins and Douglas Coupland; the poets Earle Birney, Dorothy Livesay, P. K. Page, Phyllis Webb and Daphne Marlatt; playwright George Ryga, whose *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* (1967; pub. 1970) opens a period of increased drama activity in Vancouver; Native authors and storytellers from Pauline Johnson to Harry Robinson, Lee Maracle, Jeannette Armstrong and Eden Robinson; a recently documented line of black writers; and a strong Asian Canadian line including Roy Kiyooka, Joy Kogawa, Roy Miki, Sky Lee, Paul Yee, Wayson Choy and Larissa Lai. Some of these authors will be discussed in the following sections.

Other strong regional traditions come from the Atlantic provinces, comprising Newfoundland and the Maritime provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Independent since 1907, Newfoundland votes to relinquish self-government in 1934 during the Depression, reverting to British control after a devastating assessment of the nation by the Amulree Royal Commission. It renounces nationhood altogether and joins Canada after a controversial referendum in 1949. Newfoundland literature, chronicled earlier by Patrick O'Flaherty's *The Rock Observed: Studies in the Literature of Newfoundland* (1979), now explores postcoloniality in novels like Wayne Johnston's *Colony of Unrequited Dreams* (1998). Casting former iconographic premier Joe Smallwood as a main character and entertaining a revisionary intertextual relationship with D. W. Prowse's influential *A History of Newfoundland* (1895), the novel shows Newfoundland and its historiography under conflicting angles, undoing many of its myths; the ending evokes Newfoundland's settler-invader past, reflecting on the last known survivor of Newfoundland's Aboriginal population, the Beothuk Shanawdithit (Nancy April). Other novels that examine Newfoundland's past include Michael Winter's *The Big Why* (2004), which also recreates judge Prowse, and Michael Crummey's *River Thieves* (2001), thematizing again the vanishing of the Beothuk.

Writing in the Maritimes,²³ examined in volumes by Janice Kulyk Keefer, Gwendolyn Davies, and Wolfgang Hochbruck and James O. Taylor,²⁴ produces, with New Brunswick confederation poet Charles G. D. Roberts and the earlier mentioned Hugh MacLennan, Canadian cultural nationalists who also create regionally important texts. MacLennan's *Barometer Rising* (1941) makes class an issue against the background of the Halifax explosion in 1917. His *Each Man's*

Son (1951), set in Cape Breton, shows a mining community and the pressures of modern life on Gaelic Maritime culture. These subjects are also at stake in Sheldon Currie's *Glace Bay Miners' Museum* (1996; film version *Margaret's Museum*, 1995), and again in the novels and stories of Alistair MacLeod, which often draw on oral culture and storytelling to portray local culture. MacLeod's small but significant oeuvre comprises *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood* (1976), *As Birds Bring Forth the Sun and Other Stories* (1986), *No Great Mischief* (1999), and *Island* (2000). The marginalized populations of the New Brunswick Miramichi valley are given recognition in the richly textured, tragicomic novels of David Adams Richards. Black Maritime culture, beginning with the immigration to Nova Scotia of Black Loyalists in 1783 and anthologized in 1991 in George Elliott Clarke's two-volume *Fire on the Water: An Anthology of Black Nova Scotian Writing*, produces important contemporary work, often in response to local circumstances such as the destruction of Halifax's Africville (see below). Native concerns have been expressed in the poetry of Mi'kmaq writer Rita Joe, beginning with the bilingual volume *Poems of Rita Joe* (1978).

The Maritimes are also home to Acadian writing. Outside Quebec, this is the most important of the regional French Canadian literatures that also include that of western Canada, with its francophone tradition including Louis Riel and Gabrielle Roy, and the literature of Ontario, anthologized in René Dionne's *Anthologie de la littérature franco-ontarienne des origines à nos jours* (1997). Acadian writing is eclipsed by a hundred years of silence after the 1755 Acadian deportation by the British. It emerges only in the 1850s 'Renaissance acadienne' out of an oral tradition that recollects the traces of deportation, diaspora and subsequent return. In Antonine Maillet's Prix-Goncourt-winning novel *Pélagie-la-Charrette* (1979; trans. Philip Stratford, *Pélagie: The Return to Acadie*, 1982), the themes of this communal narrative recur in carnivalesque transformation. In an odyssey told through multiple voices, Pélagie LeBlanc, exiled to Georgia in the 1755 'grand dérangement', leads a mythic return of dispersed Acadians to their home. Maillet's earlier *La Sagouine* (1971), a hugely successful stage monologue by a former prostitute about class issues in the Acadian vernacular, came at the beginning of the second Acadian Renaissance (after that of the 1880s). Maillet is probably the most visible representative of a literature that since the 1970s has produced a considerable number of writers, often published by Editions d'Acadie in Moncton.

Gender

With her remarkable heroines resiliently weathering harsh circumstances, Maillet contributes to a strong tradition of women's writing in Canada. It

gains particular critical attention from the 1970s on in the work of feminist writers and critics. Many of them collaborate across linguistic divides and as translators, like Daphne Marlatt and Nicole Brossard (*Mauve*, 1985, *Character/jeu de lettres*, 1986) and the founders of the bilingual feminist journal *Tessera* (1984–), Barbara Godard, Daphne Marlatt, Kathy Mezei and Gail Scott, joined later by Susan Knutson, Louise Cotnoir and others. The Toronto feminist magazine *Fireweed* and the journal *Canadian Women Studies / Les Cahiers de la femme* start to appear in 1978 and 1980 respectively, and in 1986 Shirley Newman and Smaro Kamboureli publish the landmark collection *A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing*. Brossard co-founds the important journal *La Barre du jour* in 1965; after a stint at the feminist *Têtes de Pioche* (1976–9), she rejoins the renamed *La Nouvelle Barre du jour* in 1977 to give it a feminist orientation. Barbara Godard, a key feminist critic who translates several of Brossard's works into English, edits *Gynocritics: Feminist Approaches to Canadian and Quebec Women's Writing* (1987) as well as a selection from *Tessera*, entitled *Collaboration in the Feminine* (1994). In 2008, Godard makes a number of her essays available in *Canadian Literature at the Crossroads of Language and Culture*. Other important studies appear by Coral Ann Howells, Patricia Smart, Rudy Dorscht, Julia Emberly, Helen Buss and Jennifer Henderson.²⁵ A number of publishing houses are dedicated to women's writing, such as Sister Vision: Black Women and Women of Colour (Toronto 1985–), Press Gang (Vancouver 1970–2002), Women's Press (Toronto, 1972–) and Second Story Press (Toronto, 1988–).

Women writers have time and again defined the English Canadian tradition, beginning with Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1769) and the nineteenth-century writings of Susanna Moodie and Catherine Parr Traill. Women's perspectives have also marked postcolonial cultural nationalisms – as we have seen in particular with Atwood – and regionalisms, often challenging them internally from anti-patriarchal perspectives. Prairie feminist activist, politician and writer Nellie McClung thus already fights for women's rights before World War I, and argues for them in her essays, novels and autobiographies (*Clearing in the West*, 1935, and *The Stream Runs Fast*, 1945). Margaret Laurence subsequently inspires a generation of anglophone women writers who move women's lives and experiences to the centre, examine gender relations from feminist perspectives, and often revisit and revise history and literary genealogies. Atwood, for instance, enters into dialogue with the eponymous literary ancestor in *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970), who also appears in her historical novel *Alias Grace* (1996). With her subsequent poetry – for instance, *Power Politics* (1971) and *You Are Happy* (1974) – her essays, short

stories and many novels including *The Edible Woman* (1969), *Surfacing* (1972), *Bodily Harm* (1981), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and *Alias Grace*, Atwood becomes one of the most visible members of the generation coming of age after World War II that makes women's perspectives central to Canadian writing. Slightly preceded by Mavis Gallant and Laurence, this generation includes Alice Munro, Carol Shields, Audrey Thomas, Daphne Marlatt and Susan Swan (*The Biggest Modern Woman of the World*, 1983). It is followed by writers like Lorna Crozier, who in *A Saving Grace: The Collected Poems of Mrs Bentley* (1996) produces a feminist rereading of Sinclair Ross's canonical novel *As For Me and My House*, and Aritha van Herk (see above), as well as many ethnically and racially identified writers coming to the fore mostly from the 1980s and 1990s on (discussed below).

Alice Munro's intricate short stories and her novel *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971) use female perspectives to reveal subterranean, even gothic depths below the placid surfaces mostly of southern rural Ontario. In the title story of *Friend of My Youth* (1990), however, the Ottawa valley is the setting of incidents relayed by a chain of contradicting female perspectives that exemplify here in postmodern fashion Munro's interest in the theme of mother-daughter relations. Mavis Gallant, Canada's other outstanding short story writer, who like Munro often publishes in the *New Yorker*, is not usually seen as an explicitly feminist writer but offers an ironic vision that is amenable to feminist perspectives. Carol Shields, who begins publishing in the 1970s, gains particular attention with *The Stone Diaries* (1993); a winner of both the Governor General's Award and the Pulitzer Prize, the novel is a woman's fictive, multi-perspectival autobiography and a self-reflective meditation on the genre. *Larry's Party* (1997), Shields's examination of contemporary masculinity, is followed by *Unless* (2002), in which a novelist (who also translates her French feminist mother-in-law) attempts to understand her dropout daughter. Another treatment of the theme of mother as writer appears in Audrey Thomas's *Intertidal Life* (1984), which posits an equivalence between male dominance over women and imperial conquering of the New World.

Daphne Marlatt's often transgeneric writing intersects with many contexts. An Australian immigrant settling in British Columbia, she contributes to *TISH* (see above) in the 1960s and documents Japanese Canadian culture in *Steveston* (1974). In the 1980s Marlatt turns to feminist and lesbian politics and writing, co-founding *Tessera* and co-organizing two important conferences about women's writing, *Women and Words/Les Femmes et les mots* (1983) and *Telling It: Women and Language Across Cultures* (1989). Marlatt's novel *Ana Historic* (1988) addresses the exclusion of women from history, featuring a researcher

unearthing the life of a nineteenth-century British Columbian woman. With texts like *Touch to My Tongue* (1984) and *Taken* (1996), Marlatt also participates in a lesbian tradition that includes anglophone writers Jane Rule (*Desert of the Heart* [1964]), actor, playwright and novelist Ann-Marie MacDonald, African and Asian Canadian authors Dionne Brand, Makeda Silvera, Suzette Mayr, Sky Lee, Larissa Lai and Shani Mootoo (discussed below), and francophone writers Jovette Marchessault, Marie-Claire Blais and Nicole Brossard. Marchessault, a Montagnais-Cree sculptor, painter and perhaps first openly lesbian Québec novelist, is the author of the autobiographical trilogy *Comme une enfant de la terre* (1975, 1980, 1987) and of *Tryptique lesbien* (1980). In *La Saga des poules mouillées* (1981; trans. Linda Gaboriau, *Saga of the Wet Hens*, 1983), she pays homage to Québec's great women writers Laure Conan (Félicité Angers), Germaine Guèvremont, Gabrielle Roy and Anne Hébert, part of her many tributes to women that also include *Le Voyage magnifique d'Emily Carr* (1990). Marie-Claire Blais, a major voice in Québec literature and author of one of its best-known novels, *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* (1965), shows a lesbian world in *Les Nuits de l'underground* (1978) and *L'Âge de la solitude* (1989). Nicole Brossard offers a rich and distinguished contribution to Québécois writing and lesbian culture. After participating in the formal revolution of Québec poetry from the mid 1960s on, she turns to feminist engagement ten years later. Her texts often weave intertextual references to a community of feminist writers that she also strengthens with her anthologies, her appearance at public events, and her work for cultural and professional organizations. With over thirty volumes of poetry to date and an extensive oeuvre of innovative theory-fictions, novels and essays – a body of some fifteen works that includes *L'Amèr ou le Chapitre effrité* (1977), *Le Désert mauve* (1987), *Baroque d'aube*, (1995), *Hier* (2001) and her signature collection of essays, *La Lettre aérienne* (1988) – she is one of the most important cultural theorists and feminist writers today. Close to forty translations of these works (into English, German, Italian, Spanish, Japanese and other languages) speak eloquently to the international interest in Brossard's work.

Other important francophone feminist authors include Louky Bersianik, with her parodic treatment of Western patriarchal culture, especially the Bible, Freud, Lacan and Plato in *L'Eugélonne* (1976) and *Le Pique-nique sur L'Acropole* (1979); the poet and playwright Denise Boucher, whose iconoclastic *Les Fées ont soif* (1978; trans. Allan Brown, *The Fairies Are Thirsty*, 1982), featuring subversive monologues by the Holy Virgin, a mother and housewife, and Mary Magdalene the prostitute, is performed against the objections of the Greater Montreal Arts Council; the poet and novelist France Théoret, another

co-founder of *Les Têtes de Pioche*, who reflects on the relationship between writing and female self-expression in such works as *Une voix pour Odile* (1978) and *Nous parlerons comme on écrit* (1982); and the novelist and poet Yolande Villemaire (*La Vie en prose*, 1980, *La Constellation du cygne*, 1985).

From the 1990s on, literary gender studies increases attention to the textual construction of gender generally and to gay and lesbian writing. In addition to the lesbian authors already discussed, gay writers in Canada include Patrick Anderson, John Glassco, Scott Symons, Stan Persky, Edward Phillips, André Roy, and the playwrights Tomson Highway (see below), Brad Fraser, Sky Gilbert, Daniel MacIvor, Robert Lepage and Michel-Marc Bouchard. Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1984), a parodic rewriting of the biblical Noah story, critiques patriarchal power, knowledge, hierarchies and gender roles, becoming one of the Canadian examples used early on in postcolonial criticism.²⁶ The playwright and novelist Michel Tremblay, whose *Les Belles-Soeurs* (1968) becomes a *succès à scandale* because of the vernacular *joual* used by its economically marginalized heroines, introduces a series of queer characters that pervade the plays of his cycle following *Les Belles-Soeurs* and then novels set in his Montreal neighbourhood, beginning with the trans-vestite protagonists of *La Duchesse de Langeais* (1970) and *Hosanna* (1973). Shyam Selvadurai's gay coming-of-age story in *Funny Boy* (1994) is set in Sri Lanka around the violent events of 1983, while his historical novel *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) features a bisexual character in 1920s Ceylon. Book-length studies that combine postcolonial and gender criticism are Daniel Coleman's *Masculine Migrations: Reading The Postcolonial Male in 'New Canadian' Narratives* (1998) and Peter Dickinson's *Here Is Queer: Nationalisms, Sexualities and the Literatures of Canada* (1999).

Multiculturalism, diaspora, ethnicity and race

After the earlier prevalence of questions of national identity, other postcolonial forces emerge in 1970s English Canada and 1980s Quebec, with the issues of multiculturalism, diaspora, ethnicity and race. While many earlier authors write out of non-charter group immigration experiences (Grove, Ostenson, Salverson), their work is not singled out in this respect when Canadian and Quebec literatures are institutionalized from the 1960s on, as critics like Donna Bennett (1994), Sherry Simon and David Leahy (1994) and Winfried Siemerling (1996) have pointed out.²⁷ Similarly, Jewish Canadian authors writing in English are mostly discussed as part of the mainstream. Michael Greenstein and Norman Ravvin later dedicate books to this rich tradition,²⁸

which begins in English Canada with the Montreal poet A.M. Klein and includes Irving Layton, Henry Kreisel, Adele Wiseman, Leonard Cohen, Eli Mandel, Matt Cohen and Anne Michaels (*Fugitive Pieces*, 1996); and further in Montreal anglophone novelists Mordecai Richler (*The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, 1959, *St Urbain's Horseman*, 1971, *Salomon Gursky Was Here*, 1989), Robert Majzels and Norman Ravvin; anglophone poets David Solway, Robyn Sarah and Seymour Mayne; and francophone authors Monique Bosquo, Naïm Kattan and Régine Robin.

But if the 1960s emphasize discourses of national cultural homogeneity, they also lead to the beginnings of multiculturalism as Canadian administrative policy. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963–9) also cites the contribution of other ethnic groups and what the Commission calls their ‘collective will to exist’. In 1971 Pierre Elliott Trudeau announces a ‘Policy of Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework’, eventually followed by the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988. Canadian multiculturalism as state technology is variously critiqued for its essentializing, culturalist, and – despite its goal of more intergroup contact – segregationist tendencies.²⁹ In francophone Quebec, multiculturalism is often stamped as federal cultural colonialism that denies special status to Quebec; it thus plays here a negligible role compared to discourses of *interculture* and *transculture* (examined briefly below). Despite controversies, however, multiculturalism has had a significant impact on writing, publishing, and academic and public reception since the 1970s. The following two decades see over two dozen anthologies that document specific hyphenated cultural groups, and from 1988 to 1998 the Multiculturalism Writing and Publishing Programme supports a number of important and subsequently highly successful authors, including Dionne Brand, Fulvio Caccia, George Elliott Clarke, Cyril Dabydeen, Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, Cecil Foster, Hiromi Goto, Basil Johnston, Sky Lee, Marco Micone, Shani Mootoo, Kerri Sakamoto, Maxine Tynes, Nino Ricci and M. G. Vassanji (some of these writers are discussed below). In 1990, Marion Richmond and Linda Hutcheon’s anthology *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fictions* appears, followed in 1996 by Smaro Kamboureli’s *Making a Difference: Canadian Multicultural Literature*.

In addition, some major novels in this period highlight cultural difference, participatory inequalities and power differentials. In *The Diviners* (1974), Margaret Laurence stages the prairies with not only Scottish, Ukrainian and other settler histories but also a Métis past and present. Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan* (1981), a quickly canonical novel detailing the expropriation and internment of Canadians of Japanese descent during World War II, plays a role in the process

leading to reparation payments and an apology by the Canadian government in 1988. Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), to cite one more example, rewrites standard historiography of Toronto by refracting the city's development in the 1920s and 1930s through the perspectives of Finnish, Macedonian, Italian and other working-class immigrants and women whose lives replace those of well-known public figures as significant makers of Canadian history.

In Quebec, internal cultural difference also begins to change a culture pre-occupied with national cultural emergence with respect to France and in North America. In 1983, Régine Robin publishes *La Québécoise*, an experimental novel mixing memories of the Jewish past with multilingual language splinters and the surfaces of Montreal, claiming visibility for a multifaceted Quebec immigrant culture previously relegated to the margins of Quebec literature. The novel signals a Quebec that is linguistically and culturally heterogeneous beyond the English–French divide, as does *Vice Versa*, a trilingual journal launched the same year by writers of the Italian diaspora. *Vice Versa* becomes the main promulgator of the term *transculture* in Quebec, allowing writers from diverse backgrounds to explore transcultural and post-identitarian definitions of Quebec. Also in 1983 two of the founders, Fulvio Caccia and Antonio d'Alfonso, publish their anthology of Italian Québécois writing, *Quêtes: textes d'auteurs italo-québécois*. One year earlier, Marco Micone opens his theatre trilogy about Italian immigration with *Gens du silence* (trans. Maurizia Binda, *Voiceless People*, 1984), followed by *Addolorata* in 1984 and *Déjà l'Agonie* in 1988. That same year, the poet, novelist and critic Pierre Nepveu offers a chapter on Quebec migrant writing in his important study *L'Écologie du réel: mort et naissance de la littérature québécoise contemporaine*, followed by other researchers documenting migrant writing in Quebec.³⁰ Jacques Poulin finally draws another map of postcolonial North America in his 1984 road novel *Volkswagen Blues*. Driving an old Volkswagen bus from the Gaspésie (the point of Jacques Cartier's landfall) to San Francisco, a Quebecker symbolically named Jack Waterman and a mixed-race hitchhiker renegotiate the paths of North American exploration and follow numerous intertextual trails. Jack Waterman's search for an alternative francophone grand narrative, however, and his nostalgic vision of an erstwhile imperial Nouvelle France are successfully undermined by his travel partner's reminders of the earlier indigenous contours of the continent, and indigenous dispossession at the hands of white settler colonialism.

First Nations writing

First Nations cultures and issues of race are constitutive of postcolonial space in what is now Canada, beginning with the encounters with explorers,

travellers, missionaries and settlers mentioned earlier, and then marked by land theft, government policies of assimilation, residential schools, and interdiction of indigenous languages and customs. The portrayal of Natives in literature from Jacques Cartier to such examples as Poulin's *Volkswagen Blues* is preceded and then paralleled by indigenous expression itself, from such notational artefacts as petroglyphs, pictographs and totem poles to indigenous orature (often translated by missionaries and travellers) including myths, songs, historical accounts and political oratory, the latter exemplified by famous speakers such as Pontiac, Joseph Brant, Tecumseh, Poundmaker or Big Bear. Written texts in English appear in the eighteenth and increasingly the nineteenth century. The first indigenous author to publish a book in English is George Copway, part of a group of Ojibway missionaries who despite their conversion remain also critical of white culture and become spokespersons for indigenous rights. Copway's *The Life, History and Travels of Kah-ge-gah-bowh* (1847) is reprinted repeatedly (in 1850 as *Recollections of a Forest Life*), and in *The Traditional History and Characteristic Sketches of the Ojibway Nation* (1850) he comments on indigenous oral narratives and recounts a number of legends. In 1892, the Mohawk writer Pauline Johnson, educated in both English Romantic poetry and indigenous culture, launches a successful career with the performance of her long poem in heroic couplets, 'A Cry from an Indian Wife', in which indigenous grievances prevail over reasons for not fighting the British. Presenting indigenous and traditional Romantic material and alternating between indigenous and Western dress, Johnson performs her poetry internationally until 1909 on the stage. *The White Wampum* appears in 1895 in England, followed by further volumes of poetry and prose including *Flint and Feather* (1912) and her rendering of stories by Chief Joseph Capilano, *Legends of Vancouver* (1911).

After a relative hiatus, First Nations writing increases only from the 1970s on, a period initiated by the 1969 Canadian government 'white paper' that wants to abrogate special status for Natives (and in the United States by the 1973 events at Wounded Knee and the earlier onset of the American Indian Renaissance, signalled by Scott Momaday's 1968 novel *House Made of Dawn*). The policy recommendations of the White Paper are rejected by the Cree lawyer Harold Cardinal in his influential 1969 volume, *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians*. The numerous autobiographical testimonies of the period include Jane Willis's *Geniesh: An Indian Girlhood* (1974), Wilfred Pelletier's *No Foreign Land: The Biography of a North American Indian* (1974), Lee Maracle's *Bobby Lee: Indian Rebel* (1975) and the highly successful memoir by Maria Campbell (Métis), *Half-Breed* (1973), a signal text inspiring many

subsequent authors that relates a Saskatchewan Métis childhood, the over-coming of self-destructive habits, and a process of healing related to Métis culture.

In poetry, an early signal of the period is the anthology *I Am an Indian*, edited by Kent Gooderham in 1969, which includes poetry by the painter and writer George Clutesi, Duke Redbird and Chief Dan George. Dan George later publishes his own *My Heart Soars* (1974). Rita Joe offers her English poems with Mi'kmaq translations in *The Poems of Rita Joe* (1978), followed later by *Songs of Eskasoni: More Poems by Rita Joe* (1988). Examples of other First Nations poetry are playwright Daniel David Moses's *Delicate Bodies* (1981) and *The White Line* (1990), Mohawk lesbian writer and anthologist Beth Brant's *Mowhawk Trail* (1985) and *Food and Spirits* (1991), Joan Crate's *Pale as Real Ladies: Poems for Pauline Johnson* (1989), the Okanagan educator and novelist Jeannette Armstrong's *Breath Tracks* (1991), Chippewa Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm's *My Heart Is a Stray Bullet* (1993), Louise Halfe's *Bear Bones and Feathers* (1994) and *Blue Marrow* (1998), Marilyn Dumont's *A Really Good Brown Girl* (1996), and Armand Ruffo's *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* (1997). More anthologies of First Nations writing follow, and the growing corpus receives an increasing amount of critical attention since the 1980s.³¹

Writing in French or French translation by Quebec Natives constitutes a small but significant corpus, including the work of Jovette Marchessault (see above), Bernard Assiniwi, Wilfred Pelletier, and the texts by the Montagnais An Antane Kapeshe's, available in translation as *Je suis une maudite sauvagesse* (1976) and *Qu'as-tu fait de mon pays* (1979). Apart from Diane Boudreau's *Histoire de la littérature amérindienne au Québec: oralité et écriture* (1993), which surveys about twenty authors (including song writers and essayists), the corpus receives little critical attention before Maurizio Gatti publishes his 2006 anthology *Littérature amérindienne du Québec* (2004), presenting roughly thirty authors writing in French.

First Nations drama comes to public attention in 1986 with the extremely successful and award-winning *The Rez Sisters* by Cree pianist, composer, director and author Tomson Highway. The play revolutionizes the representations of Natives in this genre, previously defined by the Ukrainian Canadian George Ryga's dramatization of Native victimization in the city in *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* (1967). By contrast, inspired by Michel Tremblay's women in *Les Belles-Sœurs*, Highway shows a group of seven bingo-happy indigenous women; despite individual tragedy and unfulfilled hopes, they take life on the reservation enterprisingly in their own hands and successfully negotiate the big city. Humour, music, code-switching between English, Cree and Ojibway, and the

presence of the trickster Nanabush are features the play shares with the following *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* (1989), a companion piece featuring seven men on the reservation. In 2005 Highway dramatizes BC Natives' resistance to losing their fishing and other rights through the perspective of four women in *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout* (2005). Also in Highway's breakthrough year 1986, Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille presents *Jessica*, a play loosely based on Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* (1973, see above) and co-written by Campbell and the Toronto actor and playwright Linda Griffiths. The play is published later in *The Book of Jessica* (1989), together with an account of this invited yet difficult biracial collaboration and its issues of race, spirituality, white guilt and appropriation (a later text that elicits comment about indigenous-white collaboration is Rudy Wiebe and Yvonne Johnson's *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman*, 1998). The same year, The Kuna, Rappahannock, and Ashkenazi actor and playwright Monique Mojica, an actor in the *Rez Sisters* and also in *Jessica*, offers *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* at Theatre Passe Muraille, a transgeneric play about mixed race, transformation, historical reappropriation and healing. Among the many indigenous playwrights coming to the fore since the 1990s are also Daniel David Moses and Drew Hayden Taylor (Ojibwa). Moses's *Coyote City* (1990) brings the trickster into the urban present, while *Almighty Voice and His Wife* (1992) and *The Indian Medicine Shows* (1995) reclaim indigenous histories and indict white stereotypes. Drew Hayden Taylor (Ojibwa), who writes a number of sitcoms during the 1990s, offers his comic vision of native issues in *Toronto at Dreamer's Rock* (1990) and *Education is Our Right* (1990), *The Bootlegger Blues* (1991), and *Someday* (1993) and its sequel *Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth* (1998). A number of indigenous plays are anthologized by Monique Mojica and Ric Knowles in *Staging Coyote's Dream: An Anthology of First Nations Drama in English* (2003).

Beginning with Beatrice Culleton Mosionier's *In Search of April Raintree* (1983), indigenous Canadian authors writing in English also turn to the novel to stage a number of central and recurring issues. Culleton's novel juxtaposes the lives of two Winnipeg Métis sisters who are placed in separate foster homes, one emphasizing her origins but descending into a spiral of self-destruction, while the other initially rejects them only to recognize their value later. Jeannette Armstrong's 1985 novel *Slash* also thematizes a movement of spiritual return, showing a young Okanagan Native, disoriented by white school, seeking answers in the American Indian Movement of the 1960s and 1970s before revaluing his own reservation community. An Ojibway girl's difficult experience with her mother's and her community's descent into alcoholism is

rendered in Ruby Slipperjack's *Honour the Sun* (1987). Residential school life is portrayed in *Indian School Days* (1988), an autobiographical account by the Ojibway writer, storyteller and ethnologist Basil Johnston. Without bitterness, Johnston records both the impositions of the church-run school on the students and their own, independent ways of organizing their lives under these circumstances. By contrast, Tomson Highway's first novel, *The Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998), to some extent based on his own youth and describing the residential school ordeal of two Cree brothers, references traumatizing sexual abuse and the interdiction of indigenous languages and customs common in this colonizing institution. After a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1991–6), in 2006 the Canadian government announces a settlement for about 86,000 residential school survivors, and in 2008 finally apologizes for the 'sad chapter' of residential schools, compulsory and state-funded under the 1876 Indian Act and based on assumptions of the need for 'civilizing' indigenous populations.

In terms of form and technique, the impact of the oral stories of the Okanagan elder Harry Robinson is relevant, transcribed by Wendy Wickwire and published as *Write It on Your Heart* (1989), *Nature Power* (1992) and *Living by Stories* (2005). Thomas King (of Cherokee, Greek and German descent) encounters Robinson's stories after his own widely acclaimed first novel, *Medicine River* (1989), while working on his anthology *All My Relations: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction* (1990). King integrates principles of orality, for instance, in his quincennial parody of discovery narratives, 'A Coyote Columbus Story' in *One Good Story, That One* (1993), and especially in his most influential work to date, *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993). Based on various indigenous creation stories and trickster interference, the novel parodies with mordant humour Christianity and the consequences of what King has called 'anomalies such as the arrival of Europeans in North America'.³² Engaging intertextually a wide array of movies and canonical authors and texts from United States, English and Canadian literature, the text also contains thinly disguised references to the 1990 blocking of the Canadian Meech Lake constitutional accord by the Cree member of the Manitoba legislature, Elijah Harper. King's subsequent novels include *Truth and Bright Water* (1999) and, under the pen name Hartley GoodWeather, the indigenous detective novels *Dreadful Water Shows Up* (2002) and *The Red Power Murders* (2006).

A direct confrontation with European imperialism is articulated in the texts by Lee Maracle (Métis-Salish), co-editor with Sky Lee, Betsy Warland and Daphne Marlatt of the 1990 conference proceedings *Telling It: Women and Language Across Cultures*. She attacks colonialism in the essays of *I Am Woman:*

A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism (1988). The 1990 Oka crisis, in which the Canadian army moves against Mowhawk Warriors blocking a Montreal bridge to protect an indigenous burial ground against a planned golf course, features in the preface of the 1990 reissue of her *Bobbi Lee* (1975) and in her novel *Sundogs* (1992). Her other works include *Sojourner's Truth and Other Stories* (1990), a collection of poetry entitled *Bent Box* (2000), the novels *Ravensong* (1993) and *Daughters Are Forever* (2002) and the young adult fiction *Will's Garden* (2008). Other indigenous children's books include Chippewa writer Lenore Keeshig-Tobias's *Bird Talk* (1991) and *Emma and the Tree* (1996).

Among the younger prose authors, Métis oral storyteller and TV script writer Jordan Wheeler publishes *Brothers in Arms* (1989), three novellas about indigenous brothers and the issues of residential school sexual abuse, indigenous resistance and the law, and alcohol. Eden Robinson offers brilliant stories about indigenous teenage angst, cool and suffering in *Traplines* (1996). Her novel *Monkey Beach* (2000) tells a girl's coming-of-age story between white and indigenous cultures, set in the British Columbia Haisla community and Vancouver's East Side, also the setting of her subsequent novel, *Blood Sports* (2006). Joseph Boyden comes to attention with short stories in *Born with a Tooth* (2001) and his novel about the horrific experience of two Cree friends participating in World War I, *Three Day Road* (2005).

Asian diasporas in Canada

While North American indigenous cultures encounter the consequences of European empires on their own territories, other racially identified diasporas arise in Canada in the context of white settler society. Historically the most important of these in Canada is the Asian diaspora, beginning with the Chinese labour diaspora in the nineteenth century. The Canadian part of 'Gold Mountain' – the Chinese designation for the entire North American West Coast – originates with the Fraser Valley gold rush migration from California to British Columbia in 1858 and then the significant participation of Chinese immigrants in coal mining, salmon canneries, and especially the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), a condition of British Columbia's joining Canadian Confederation in 1871. Anti-Chinese legislation and disenfranchisement soon follow. The Royal Commission and the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885 result in head-taxes that reach the at the time prohibitive amount of \$500 after the 1902 Royal Commission. In 1907 anti-Asian race riots break out in Vancouver. From 1923 to 1947, the Chinese Exclusion Act forbids immigration almost entirely and withholds basic civil rights like the vote. In other displays of anti-Asian sentiment and racism, the Canadian government prevents

a shipload of Punjabi immigrants on board the ship Komagata Maru from landing in Vancouver in 1914. During World War II, the government expropriates property and enforces the internment of Canadians of Japanese descent.

Chinese Canadian writing

While scholarship has uncovered the Eurasian sisters Edith Eaton/Sui Sin Far and Winnifred Eaton Reeve/Onoto Watanna as early Chinese Canadian writers, it is with the anthology *Inalienable Rice: A Chinese & Japanese Canadian Anthology* that contemporary Asian Canadian writing in English comes to the fore in 1979. An exclusively Chinese Canadian anthology appears with Bennett Lee and Jim Wong-Chu's *Many-Mouthed Birds: Contemporary Writing by Chinese Canadians* (1991). These collections and other Chinese Canadian writing receive initial critical attention by Lien Chao,³³ who later edits with Jim Wong-Chu, also author of *Chinatown Ghosts* (1986), the 2003 fiction anthology *Strike the Wok*. In 1985, the established poet Fred Wah, of Chinese, Scottish, Irish and Swedish ancestry and a founding editor of *TISH*, thematizes his multiple identity in poems in *Waiting for Saskatchewan*, followed by stories in *Diamond Grill* (1996) and his reflections in *Faking It: Poetics and Hybridity* (2000). In 1990 one of the contributors to *Inalienable Rice*, Sky Lee, publishes *Disappearing Moon Café*, a four-generation family saga describing the struggles of Chinese Canadians in Vancouver, beginning with an 1892 trip to repatriate the bones of Chinese railroad workers for reburial in ancestral grounds. The repatriation of bones also governs Paul Yee's ghost novel for young (and not so young) adults, *The Bone Collector's Son* (2003). Set in 1907, the year of the Vancouver race riots, it shows the young protagonist negotiating traditional Chinese and Western values and belief systems. Yee, also a historian of the Chinese in Vancouver and Canada (1988, 1996, 2005),³⁴ has written other historical stories and novels trying to make Chinese Canadian culture accessible for children, including *The Curses of Third Uncle* (1986), *Tales from Gold Mountain: Stories of the Chinese in the New World* (1989), *Breakaway* (1994), *Ghost Train* (1996), *Dead Man's Gold and Other Stories* (2002) and *Bamboo* (2005). As in many texts by Lee and Yee, Vancouver is the setting of Wayson Choy's 1995 novel *The Jade Peony*, which has three children of the Chen family narrate their experience of the 1930s and 1940s. This portrait is complemented, in the sequel *All that Matters* (2004), by the perspective of their older brother, the only one to have been born in China. In *Paper Shadows: A Chinatown Childhood* (1999), Choy adds his own memoir, revealing his late discovery of his adoption. Another historical account that reveals the fate of family structures under the conditions of diaspora is Denise Chong's history of her family, *The Concubine's*

Children (1994). In her later creative non-fiction *The Girl in the Picture* (2000), Chong reconstructs the journey from Vietnam to Canada made by Kim Phúc, the girl captured in a Pulitzer-winning 1972 war photograph. The following generation of Chinese Canadian writers includes Evelyn Lau, a controversial writer who first gains attention with her autobiographical account of a teenage sex worker in *Runaway: Diary of a Street Kid* (1989). Larissa Lai connects figures from Chinese mythology with contemporary lesbian love in *When Fox Is a Thousand* (1995), and also with science fiction in *Salt Fish Girl* (2002). Together with Rita Wong, the author of the collections of poetry *monkeypuzzle* (1998) and *Forage* (2007), she publishes the collaborative long poem *Sybil Unrest* in 2008. Ying Chen, finally, is an internationally recognized Chinese Canadian author writing in French. Her first novel, *La Mémoire de l'eau* (1992), is set entirely in China, while *Les Lettres chinoises* (1993, reissued in different form in 1998) is an epistolary novel in which an immigrant to Canada debates the pro and cons of migration with his lover who has stayed behind in Shanghai. In subsequent novels such as *L'Ingratitude* (1995), *Immobile* (1998), *Querelle d'un squelette avec son double* (2003), *Le Mangeur* (2006), *Un enfant à ma porte* (2008), however, Chen tries increasingly to eliminate markers of cultural specificity; her critical essays appear in *Quatre mille marches* (2004).

Japanese Canadian writing

Japanese Canadian writing, also part of the anthology *Inalienable Rice* (1979), gains further visibility with Gerry Shikatani and David Aylward's *Paper Doors: An Anthology of Japanese Canadian Poetry* in 1981. It receives sudden recognition the same year, together with Joy Kogawa's novel *Obasan*. This work shocks many Canadians, revealing the mostly repressed expropriation and internment of approximately 22,000 Canadians during World War II, allegedly a security risk after Pearl Harbor. In a metafictional dimension, the text shows the protagonist's experience of discovering part of her family history against a strong tradition of silence in Japanese Canadian culture. As already mentioned, *Obasan* strongly influences the movement leading to symbolic redress in 1988. *Obasan* and the issues of internment, redress, writing and Japanese Canadian subjectivity are discussed in *Broken Entries: Race, Subjectivity, and Writing* (1998) by Roy Miki, one of the leaders of the redress movement. He is also the editor of Muriel Kitagawa's *This Is My Own: Letters to Wes and Other Writings on Japanese-Canadians, 1941-1948* (1985), of the important journal *West Coast Line*, and of the collected poems of Japanese Canadian artist and poet Roy Kiyooka, *Pacific Windows* (1997). Miki's own poetry includes *Saving Face: Poems Selected 1976-1988* (1991), *Surrender* (2001) and *There* (2006).

One of the novelistic responses to *Obasan* is Hiromi Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994), a portrayal of women's intergenerational relationships in a Japanese Canadian family in rural Alberta. Goto's following novel, *The Kappa Child* (2001), also thematizes gender and race, but combines a dimension of science fiction and fantasy with myth to portray the lesbian community. Kerri Sakamoto's *The Electrical Field* (1998), set in Ontario against the backdrop of a murder incident, deals again with trauma and the memory of Japanese Canadian internment during World War II. Her second novel, *One Hundred Million Hearts* (2003), delves into another aspect of historical self-discovery, narrating a third-generation Japanese Canadian woman's return to Japan where she learns of her father's hidden past as a failed Kamikaze pilot. Francophone Montreal author Aki Shimazaki publishes two novels, *Tsabaki* and *Hamaguri*, that have the Nagasaki atomic bomb as background; in *Tsubame* (1999), a Korean Japanese woman discovers her ethnic identity, effaced by her mother because of Japanese persecution. Subsequent novels by Shimazaki include *Wasurenagusa* (2002), *Hotaru* (2005) and *Mitsuba* (2006).

South Asian and Asian Caribbean writing

South Asian Canadian and Asian Caribbean Canadian writing is available in anthologies that include M. G. Vassanji's *A Meeting of Streams: South Asian Canadian Literature* (1985), Cyril Dabydeen's *A Shapely Fire* (1987) and *Another Way to Dance: Contemporary Asian Poetry from Canada and the United States* (1996), Judith Kearns and Diane McGifford's *Shakti's Words: An Anthology of South Asian Canadian Women's Poetry* (1990), Fauzia Rafiq's *Aurat Durbar: The Court Writings by South Asian Women* (1995) and Shyam Selvadurai's *Story-Wallah! A Celebration of South Asian Fiction* (2004). A number of authors also attract considerable attention individually. Bharati Mukherjee, who lives for more than a decade in Canada, publishes the novels *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971) and *Wife* (1975) during that period; citing Canadian racism and prejudice, which she renders in *Wife* and some of the stories in *Darkness* (1985), she leaves in 1980 for the United States. Michael Ondaatje arrives in Canada in 1962 from Ceylon (later Sri Lanka), gaining attention in particular with the transgeneric works *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (1970) and *Coming Through Slaughter* (1976), the latter inspired by New Orleans jazz legend Buddy Bolden. In *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), already signalled above as a key Canadian novel, Ondaatje imagines a largely unnamed history of Toronto in the 1920s and 1930s that features the lives and contributions of working-class immigrants. *The English Patient* (1992), winner of the Booker Prize and source for an award-winning film, is set in Italy at the end of World War II. Besides the enigmatic title character, it features an Indian sapper

working for the British army, Kip, who after the first atomic bomb is dropped on Japan loses faith in Western civilization, accusing it of racism with respect to Asia. In *Anil's Ghost* (2000), a Sri Lankan-born forensic anthropologist returns to her homeland at the behest of a human rights organization, delving into the terrors of the civil war. Another internationally successful and award-winning author is Rohinton Mistry, who first comes to attention with his collection of interrelated short stories set in a Bombay apartment building, *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987). *Such a Long Journey* (1991) renders the life of an ordinary Bombay Parsi family during the war between India and Pakistan in 1971. His following novel, *A Fine Balance* (1995), shows four characters from different backgrounds under the emergency measures of Indira Gandhi in 1975. In *Family Matters* (2002), a conflicted Parsi family in 1990s Bombay is challenged by an old man's Parkinson's disease, and historical dimensions of the family and the nation emerge in the process. Besides Shyam Selvadurai's already-mentioned novels set in Sri Lanka, *Funny Boy* (1994) and *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), other novels by South Asian Canadian writers include Nazneen Sadiq's *Ice Bangles* (1988), depicting the Canadian immigration experience of a woman from Pakistan, and Indian-born Ashok Mathur's satirical *Once Upon an Elephant* (1998), which sees Ganesh confuse police and the courts in Calgary, and *The Short, Happy Life of Harry Kumar* (2002), evoking the Hindu epic of the Ramayana but also dealing with contemporary issues of migration.

Finally, important Canadian writers come also from the Indian diaspora in Africa and the Caribbean. Nairobi-born novelist and editor M. G. Vassanji is the founder of the *Toronto South Asian Review* and of TSAR Publications. Portraying the Asian community in Tanzania's Dar es Salaam, Vassanji deals with migrancy, race and the reappropriation of history in the novels *The Gunny Sack* (1989) and *The Book of Secrets* (1994) and the stories of *Uhuru Street* (1992), while his novel *No New Land* (1991) depicts Tanzanian immigrants in Canada. The Indian diaspora in Kenya is the subject of his novel *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (2005). Asian Caribbean Canadian writers include Cyril Dabydeen, an editor of several anthologies (see above) who explores the mixing and predicaments of East Indian Guyanese and Canadian identities in numerous collections of poetry and short stories; his novels include *The Wizard Swami* (1985), *Dark Swirl* (1989) and *Drums of My Flesh* (2006). Trinidadian Canadian Neil Bissoondath, provoking controversy with his critique of Canadian multiculturalism in *Selling Illusions* (1994), depicts exile in short stories and novels that include *A Casual Brutality* (1988) and *The Worlds Within Her* (1998), and offers a novel inspired by violence in Sri Lanka, *The Unyielding Clamour of the Night* (2005). Also from a South Asian Trinidadian background, visual artist

and lesbian feminist writer Shani Mootoo publishes *Out on Main Street and Other Stories* (1993), *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996), a multigenerational novel about an Indian Caribbean family that critiques colonialism and thematizes queer identities, and a novel across class and race divisions, time, and the Caribbean and Canada, *He Drown She in the Sea* (2005).

African Canadian writing

African Canadian writing can be said to begin with autobiographical texts in the 1790s by three ministers, David George, Boston King and John Marrant.³⁵ The first two arrive with other black Loyalists in 1783 in Nova Scotia but leave again for Sierra Leone in 1792. Marrant arrives in 1785 and describes Nova Scotia in his *Journal* (1785–90), after having completed his popular *Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings* in London earlier. In the nineteenth century it is heavily marked by narratives of former slaves fleeing to Canada, in some cases already before the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1834. *Life of Josiah Henson* (1849), transcribed by former Boston mayor Samuel A. Eliot, details Henson's slave life, escape, underground railroad conducting, and later role in the Dawn settlement and its trade school. Henson's slave narrative becomes particularly prominent after it is connected with Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). In 1858, a longer version is issued under a new title and with a preface by Stowe by her Boston publisher, J. P. Jewett; in 1876 it even appears as *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life: An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson (Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe's 'Uncle Tom')*. African Canadian writer and scholar George Elliott Clarke, author of a book-length study of African Canadian writing, *Odysseys Home* (2002), later identifies eighteen slave narratives³⁶ – including those by Thomas Smallwood (1851) and Samuel Ringold Ward (1855) – written, transcribed, or published in Canada during the Victorian period, in addition to the hundred or more short memoirs in *The Refugee; or The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (1856), collected and transcribed by abolitionist Benjamin Drew. In the wake of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, a law that threatens fugitives and free blacks alike in the Northern United States, Canada West sees a wave of black immigrants and writing in the form of letters, pamphlets, reports, articles, editorials, travel accounts, slave narratives, poetry and at least one novel. This corpus also includes Canada's first black newspapers, *The Voice of the Fugitive* and *The Provincial Freeman*, launched by Henry Bibb and Mary Ann Shadd in 1851 and 1853 respectively; Shadd's editorials and her *A Plea for Emigration, or, Notes of Canada West* (1852); Osborne Perry Anderson's account of John Brown's raid of the United States armoury, *A Voice From Harper's Ferry*, edited by Shadd and called by W.E.B. Du Bois 'The best account of the raid by a

participant';³⁷ and the emigrationist Martin Delany's writing in his Chatham period after 1856, including *Blake, or the Huts of America* (1859 and 1861–2), featuring a protagonist preparing a slave revolt in what is probably the first black novel written in Canada.

Some of the slave narratives and other texts continue to appear later, such as the transcription of Lavina Wormeny's flight to Montreal (1861),³⁸ the accounts cited in William Still's *The Underground Railroad* (1872), Jim Henson's *Broken Shackles* (1889), or William H.H. Johnson's *The Horrors of Slavery* (1901). African Canadian writing overall, however, slows until Caribbean immigration increases from the mid 1950s on and intensifies with changes to immigration policy in 1967. Apart from the work of individual writers, a number of anthologies begin to make African Canadian writing visible in the following decades, including Liz Cromwell's *One Out of Many* (1975), Harold Head's *Canada in Us Now* (1976), Lorris Elliott's *Other Voices* (1985), Ayanna Black's *Voices: Canadian Writers of African Descent* (1992), George Elliott Clarke's *Fire on the Water: An Anthology of Black Nova Scotian Writing* (2 vols., 1991, 1992) and *Eyeing the North Star* (1997), Djanet Sears's *Testifyin': Contemporary African Canadian Drama* (2 vols., 2000, 2003), Wayne Compton's *Bluesprint: Black British Columbian Literature and Orature* (2002) and Donna Bailey Nurse's *Revival* (2006). As for Caribbean Canadian authors, short-story writer and novelist Austin Clarke arrives from Barbados in 1955; he shows the life of Caribbean Canadians in the novels of his Toronto trilogy, *The Meeting Point* (1967), *Storm of Fortune* (1971) and *The Bigger Light* (1975), in later novels like *More* (2008), and in short-story collections like *Nine Men Who Laughed* (1986) and *In this City* (1992). In his vernacular-steeped *The Polished Hoe* (2002), set in a fictive 1950s Caribbean island, we hear the life story of a woman who killed the plantation owner whose mistress she was. Poet and children's writer Claire Harris immigrates from Trinidad in 1966; beginning with *Fables from the Women's Quarters* (1984), she problematizes language and gives voice to silenced subjects, critiquing racism, sexism and the consequences of colonialism. In *She* (2008), Harris portrays a woman's multiple personality disorder. Marlene NourbeSe Philip immigrates from Tobago in 1968; apart from her novel for young adults, *Harriet's Daughter* (1988), she is best known for her sequence of poems *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* (1989), the transgeneric *Looking for Livingstone* (1991), the anti-racist essays in *Frontiers* (1992) and *Showing Grit* (1993), and the poetic self-reflection in *A Genealogy of Resistance* (1997). Her later 'narrative in poetry', *Zong!* (2008), deals with the Zong massacre, the 1781 killing of more than a hundred slaves who were thrown overboard for insurance reasons. Well-known dub poet and versatile

writer Lillian Allen arrives from Jamaica in 1969. The author of plays, texts for young readers, poetry and short fiction, she has published, for instance, *Women Do This Every Day: Selected Poems Of Lillian Allen* (1993), and has award-winning albums like *Revolutionary Tea Party* (1986) and *Conditions Critical* (1988) and the CD *Freedom* (1998) to her name. Other African Caribbean Canadian writers include the poet, short-fiction writer and anthologist Pamela Mordecai, from Jamaica, who has also written for children; Olive Senior, coming to Canada at the beginning of the 1990s via Europe, who since then has published the collections of poetry *Gardening in the Tropics* (1994), *Over the Roofs of the World* (2005) and *Shell* (2007), the short-story collection *Discerner of Hearts* (1995), and the *Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage* (2003); the poet, short-fiction writer and painter Lorna Goodison, from Jamaica, who has published numerous collections of multi-accented poetry as well as short stories, such as *Fool-fool Rose is Leaving Labour-in-Vain Savannah* (2005); St Vincent native Nigel Thomas, author of poems, short stories and the novels *Spirits In the Dark* (1987), *Behind the Face of Winter* (2001) and *Return to Arcadia* (2007), the latter about the son of a plantation owner and a raped servant, who tries to come to terms with his life and mixed race; the journalist, novelist and essayist Cecil Foster, arriving in 1979 from Barbados, whose novels *No Man in the House* (1991), *Sleep On, Beloved* (1995) and *Slammin' Tar* (1998) are joined by his examinations of racism and race in *A Place Called Heaven* (1996), *Where Race Does Not Matter* (2005) and *Blackness and Modernity* (2007); novelist, short-fiction writer and playwright André Alexis, from Trinidad, who offers surreal visions in *Despair and Other Stories of Ottawa* (1994) and his novel *Childhood* (1998), Brechtian parody and inversion in his play about Southern Ontario, *Lambton Kent* (1995), and a quirky treatment of Mulroney-era Ottawa in his novel *Asylum* (2008); and Makeda Silvera, born in Jamaica, a co-founder of Toronto feminist Sister Vision Press and author of the short story collections *Remembering G and Other Stories* (1991) and *Her Head a Village* (1994) and the novel *The Heart Does Not Bend* (2002); Silvera is also the editor of *The Other Woman: Women of Colour in Contemporary Canadian Literature* (1995) and *Piece of My Heart: A Lesbian of Colour Anthology* (1991), and has captured oral histories by Caribbean Canadian domestic workers in *Silenced* (1983).

Dionne Brand, arriving in 1970 from Trinidad and like Silvera a lesbian writer, has also contributed to the recording of oral history with *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario, 1920s–1950s* (1991). She has produced several documentaries on feminist artists and black women, children's poetry in *Earth Magic* (1979), a collection of short stories, *Sans Souci and Other Stories* (1988), and has earned a reputation as one of Canada's

foremost poets with volumes like *No Language Is Neutral* (1990), *Land to Light On* (1997), *Thirsty* (2002) and *Inventory* (2006). Her first novels are *Another Place, Not Here* (1996) and *At the Full and Change of the Moon* (1999); *What We All Long For* (2005), about Toronto hip-hop-generation immigrants from several cultures and their relation to the previous generation, has attracted particular attention and is also taught in Asian Canadian literature classes. Brand's essays collection *Bread out of Stone* (1994) is complemented by her transgeneric *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging* (2001), which engages the heritage of slavery, a theme also in *No Language Is Neutral* and her first two novels. Lawrence Hill, the author of historical accounts about African Canadians³⁹ and a memoir cum reportage on mixed race, *Black Berry, Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in Canada* (2001), integrates a neo-slave narrative (in the more narrow first-person narrator definition) towards the end of his second novel, *Any Known Blood* (1997). He chooses the form again for *The Book of Negroes* (2007), in which the narrator is abducted from Africa as a child, escapes slavery, and arrives with the loyalists in Nova Scotia, before participating in the first back-to-Africa enterprise in 1792 to Sierra Leone. Lorena Gale thematizes slavery in the French regime in her play *Angélique* (1998, publ. 2000), about the eponymous Montreal slave hanged for allegedly burning down Montreal in 1734 – the subject also of a play by Lorris Elliott and novels by Paul Fehmiu Brown and white francophone writer Micheline Bail. Gale's play opens volume 2 of the remarkable anthology *Testifyin': Contemporary African Canadian Drama* (2000 and 2003), edited by playwright and director Djanet Sears. The anthology also contains Sears's own play, *The Adventures of a Black Girl in Search of God*, about the reappropriation of black culture; her earlier, Othello-inspired *Harlem Duet* (1997) juxtaposes three historical periods, including a slave couple's failed plan of escape through the underground railroad.

Slavery in English Canada is at issue in George Elliott Clarke's verse play and opera *Beatrice Chancy* (1999). Imagining slavery in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley in 1801, it counters, like Gale's *Angélique*, any Canadian moral superiority with respect to the issue. Clarke's following operas are the multiracial jazz opera *Québécoisité* (2003) and *Trudeau: Long March, Shining Path* (2007). His *Execution Poems* (2001) and the related novel *George and Rue* (2006) reimagine his own first cousins' 1949 murder of a cab driver in New Brunswick, but much of his creative oeuvre is set in Clarke's native Nova Scotia, such as the poetry of *Saltwater Spirituals and Deeper Blues* (1983) or the verse novel *Whylah Falls* (1990). While his scholarly and archival work covers all of African Canadian writing, he retrieves black Nova Scotian voices in *Fire on the Water: An Anthology*

of *Black Nova Scotian Writing* (1991, 1992). A particularly important episode in black Nova Scotian writing is the reinscription of Africville, the black Halifax neighbourhood destroyed between 1964 and 1970, in texts like Frederick Ward's *Riverlisp* (1974), Clarke's own *Saltwater Spirituals* (1983), George Elroy Boyd's play *Consecrated Ground* (1999), several of Maxine Tynes's poems such as 'Africville Spirit' in *Woman Talking Woman* (1990), and documentary film, video, or Joe Sealy *et al.*'s jazz CD, *Africville Suite* (1996). In British Columbia, Wayne Compton recuperates black BC writing in his anthology *Bluesprint: Black British Columbian Literature and Orature* (2002), and records oral history as a member of the Hogan's Alley Memorial Project. In his creative work he samples black local history in the 'lit-hop' poetry of his *49th Parallel Psalm* (1999) and *Performance Bond* (2004). Poet and scholar Karina Vernon documents black prairies writing,⁴⁰ including Cheryl Foggo's Calgary coming-of-age novel *Pourin' Down Rain* (1990). Another contemporary black prairie writer is lesbian poet and novelist Suzette Mayr, who approaches race and gender with humour in her novels *Moon Honey* (1995), *The Widows* (1998) and *Venous Hum* (2004).

Black Quebec, though mostly the domain of francophone writers, has also been portrayed by anglophone authors and a white writer like Morley Callaghan, who imagines post-World War II whiteness against the background of black jazz and Montreal's St Antoine district (today's Little Burgundy) in *The Loved and the Lost* (1951). In anglophone black writing, Montreal is the setting of Nigel Thomas's *Behind the Face of Winter* (2001) and appears in Clarke's *George and Rue* (2006), though the most substantive treatment to date is Mairuth Sarsfield's *No Crystal Stair* (1997). Her openly multiculturalist novel opens on diasporic emotional geographies in Little Burgundy in 1942. Written from the perspective of a black widowed mother navigating a Montreal in which women regardless of colour cannot even sign their own leases, it features Montreal jazz and Oscar Peterson but also the porters and redcaps who are central to this first substantial black Montreal community, together with its Union United Church and interest in unions but also in anti-unionist Marcus Garvey (whose Montreal visit is remembered in Peterson's 2002 *A Jazz Odyssey: The Life of Oscar Peterson*).

Refugees from Duvalier oppression in Haiti mark African Québécois writing. The versatile Anthony Phelps (writing, theatre, film, radio) returns to Quebec after prison in Haiti and an earlier stay in 1964. He wins the Cuban Casa de las Americas prize with the volume of poetry *La Bélière Caraïbe* (1980), and portrays Haiti in novels like *Moins l'infini: roman haïtien* (1973), *Mémoire en colin-maillard* (1976), *Haïti, Haïti* (1985) and *La Contrainte de l'inachevé* (2006).

Arrested and tortured under Papa Doc Duvalier, the poet, novelist, scholar and journalist Gérard Etienne also arrives in Montreal in 1964 (living later in Moncton, NB, until his death in 2008) and transforms trauma into literature in *Le Nègre crucifié* (1974/1994) and *Un ambassadeur macoute à Montréal* (1979); other novels that create a Haitian Montreal are *La Pacotille* (1991) and *Vous n'êtes pas seul* (2001). Etienne has also published scholarly studies on race, Haiti and the literary portrayal of Haitian women, a subject recurring in his novels *Une femme muette* (1983) and *Au bord de la falaise* (2004). Emile Ollivier, arriving in 1965 via Paris in Quebec, also writes diaspora between the political violence of Haiti and Canadian exile, beginning with accounts of torture and Montreal exile in *Paysage de l'aveugle* (1977) and continuing with the novels *Mère-Solitude* (1983), *La Discorde aux cent voix* (1986), *Passages* (1991) and *Les Urnes scellées* (1995). His posthumous *La Brûlerie* (2004) presents the conviviality of a group of exiled Haitians in a Montreal café as a diasporic microcosm. The psychiatrist and poet Joël des Rosiers, part of the following generation, couches nostalgia and a search for identity in rich poetic language in *Métropolis Opéra* (1987), *Tribu* (1990), *Savanes* (1993), *Vétiver* (1999) and *Caïques* (2007), also publishing the essay *Théories caraïbes* (1996). Perhaps the most visible writer of that generation is Dany Laferrière, a journalist in Haiti who leaves for Montreal in 1976 after the murder of a colleague. Laferrière parodies stereotypes about black masculinity in *Comment faire l'amour à un nègre sans se fatiguer* (1985), *Eroshima* (1987) and *Cette grenade dans la main du jeune nègre est-elle une arme ou un fruit?* (1993), but also renders Haiti lyrically and autobiographically in a series of prose texts, including *L'Odeur du café* (1991), *Le Goût des jeunes filles* (1992), *Pays sans chapeau* (1996), *La Chair du maître* (1997) and its permutations in *Vers le sud* (2006), *Le Charme des après-midi sans fin* (1997), *Le Cri des oiseaux fous* (2000). Back in a Montreal setting, Laferrière offers a parody about classifying writers by national origin in *Je suis un écrivain japonais* (2008). Marie-Célie Agnant, who immigrates from Haiti in 1970, is one of the rare women in this corpus, an author of poetry, short stories, children's books, essays and three novels to date. *La Dot de Sara* (1995), drawing on oral histories in a research project on older Haitian women in Montreal, poses questions of intergenerational cultural conveyance among migrant women of colour, especially under the pressures of assimilation. *Le Livre d'Emma* (2001) deals again with the transmission of oral memory by women, but in this case thematizes slavery. The novel reaches back to the moment of abduction in Africa, and poses questions about the (im)possibilities of oral and alternative histories being heard within institutional Western contexts. Her last novel to date, *Un alligator nommé Rosa* (2007), re-examines the dictatorship of Baby Doc Duvalier.

The discussion of diasporic writing in the previous sections cannot exhaust this extensive topic. It rather presents some of the most important and currently active diasporic literatures in Canada. In addition to other African diasporas in Canada, Arabic and Middle Eastern, Latin American,⁴¹ East European, most Mediterranean and most religious diasporas have not been detailed here, although many of them are historically important (for instance, the Ukrainian or the Mennonite one) or are currently producing highly successful authors (witness Beirut-born Rawi Hage's novels *De Niro's Game*, 2006, and *Cockroach*, 2008). Finally, a literary history that fully integrates available accounts of literatures in the many 'unofficial' languages of Canada (for instance, Yiddish, Punjabi, Urdu or Icelandic)⁴² and their role in Canadian postcolonial space remains to be written.

Notes

1. Stephen Slemon, 'Unsettling the empire: resistance theory for the Second World', *World Literature Written in English*, 30.2 (1990), 30–41; Linda Hutcheon, "'Circling the downspout of empire": post-colonial and postmodern ironies', in her *Splitting Images: Contemporary Canadian Ironies* (Toronto and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 69–95; Donna Bennett, 'English Canada's postcolonial complexities', *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 51–2 (1994), 164–210; Diana Brydon, 'Introduction: reading postcoloniality, reading Canada', *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 56 (1995), 1–19; Cynthia Sugars (ed.), *Home-Work: Postcolonialism, Pedagogy and Canadian Literature* (University of Ottawa Press, 2004), and *Unhomely States: Theorizing English-Canadian Postcolonialism* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2004); Cynthia Sugars, 'Can the Canadian speak?', *Ariel*, 32.2 (2001), 115–52; Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).
2. E. D. Blodgett, *Five-Part Invention: A History of Literary History in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2003), and 'Is a history of the literatures of Canada possible?', *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 50 (1993), 1–18; Linda Hutcheon, 'Interventionist literary histories: nostalgic, pragmatic, or utopian?', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 59.4 (1998), 401–17.
3. Relevant journals include *Canadian Literature*, *Studies in Canadian Literature*, *Essays in Canadian Writing* (now defunct), *Ariel*, *Canadian Theatre Review*, *Canadian Poetry*, *Journal of Canadian Studies*, *Canadian Women's Studies/Les Cahiers de la femme*, *Topia*, *Québec Studies*, *Voix et images*, *Études françaises*. Other standard resources include the literary histories by W. H. New, *A History of Canadian Literature* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), Maurice Lemire and Denis Saint-Jacques (eds.), *La Vie littéraire au Québec*, 7 vols. (Sainte-Foy, Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1991–2005), Michel Biron et al., *Histoire de la littérature québécoise* (Montreal: Boreal, 2007) and Carl Klinck's *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English* (University of Toronto Press, 1965/1976); the annual publication surveys in *University of Toronto Quarterly*; Lemire's *Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires du Québec* (Montreal: Fides, 1978/1980), Eugene Benson and William Toye's *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, 2nd edn (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), W. H. New's *Encyclopedia of Writing in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2002), Eva-Marie

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 5. Jacques Cartier, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, intro. Ramsay Cook (University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. xli.
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 10. Hugh MacLennan, *Two Solitudes* (1945; Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), epigraph page.
 11. The Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences is available electronically at www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/2/5/h5-400-e.html.
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 15. Margaret Laurence, *Heart of a Stranger* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976), p. 2.
 16. Leonard Cohen, *Beautiful Losers* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1966), pp. 199–200.
 17. Paul-Émile Borduas, 'Refus global', in his *Écrits/Writings 1942–58* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1978), pp. 45–54.
 18. Gaston Miron, 'Un long chemin', *Parti Pris*, 2.5 (1982), 25–32.
 19. Hubert Aquin, 'Profession: écrivain', *Parti Pris*, 1 (1964), 23–31.
 20. Hubert Aquin, *Next Episode*, trans. Sheila Fishman (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2001), p. 61.

21. The essay has been translated as 'The cultural fatigue of French Canada' by Larry Shouldice, and is available both in his own *Contemporary Quebec Criticism* (University of Toronto Press, 1979) and in Anthony Purdy's *Writing Quebec: Selected Essays by Hubert Aquin* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1988).
22. Edward McCourt, *The Canadian West in Fiction* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1949); W.H. New, *Articulating West: Essays on Purpose and Form in Modern Canadian Literature* (Toronto: New Press, 1972); Laurie Ricou, *Vertical Man, Horizontal World: Man and Landscape in Canadian Prairie Fiction* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1973); Dick Harrison, *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1977); Arnold E. Davidson, *Coyote Country: Fictions of the Canadian West* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994); Alison Calder and Robert Wardhaugh (eds.), *History, Literature, and the Writing of the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2005).
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Postcolonialism and Caribbean literature

ELAINE SAVORY

To be welcomed into the comity of nations a new nation must bring something new. Otherwise it is a mere administrative convenience or necessity. The West Indians have brought something new.

C. L. R. James, *Black Jacobins*¹

C. L. R. James was fully aware that ‘the something new’ was on a far larger scale than the small size of the Caribbean region suggests possible. Caribbean people have made major interventions in economics, history, political science, medicine, law, cultural studies, sports and many fields of the arts. Caribbean literature, still under-appreciated on a global level, has been enormously innovative, despite its relatively small size, enriching not only the region and its several diasporas but the entire literary world.

Defining Caribbean

We begin from diverse representations of Caribbean culture by a few highly influential postcolonial writers. For Cuban Antonio Benítez-Rojo, the Caribbean is a ‘repeating island’, postmodern, modern, dissolving and re-determining itself by turns, inevitably and deeply linked to both the plantation and to the sea.² The region is ‘the natural and indispensable realm of marine currents, of waves, of folds and double-folds, of fluidity and sinuosity’.³ For St Lucian Derek Walcott, it is a vase once broken and made whole by patient love which glues the fragments together (by which he means elements of ancestral culture brought to the region by its diverse people). This process he describes as ‘the care and pain’ of the Antilles.⁴ But by contrast, Trinidadian V. S. Naipaul left the region rejecting his country and its then colonial culture, and writing from Britain, said Trinidad ‘was a place where things had happened and nothing showed’ and where the slave ‘has no story’.⁵ He was not alone in his generation in rejecting the local Caribbean in favour of the metropolitan, an

effect of colonialism: he once famously said that nothing was created in the Caribbean.⁶ But this chapter claims the opposite, that Caribbean culture exhibits an enduring vibrancy of invention and revision. Naipaul's country was where abandoned oil drums were utilized to create a new musical instrument, the steel pan, played solo or in bands or orchestras, able to render calypso or Chopin or bring crowds to dance for days in the streets at Carnival time.⁷

Caribbean culture is richly kinetic, but so is Caribbean geography. The region comprises not only the islands, large and small, arching down from the northwest to the southeast of the Caribbean Sea, but mainland states on the coast of South and Central America, such as Belize, Honduras, Guyana and Surinam. Diasporic communities in North America and Europe often try to cherish customs and speech patterns which connect them to the region, and buy whatever can be brought in, like flying fish and breadfruit and ackee, though as globalization intensifies, local foods and recipes may be abandoned. When in the mid twentieth century, many people migrated north from the Caribbean out of necessity, they knew it was unlikely they would come back, or be able to keep in touch with the speaking voices of home. Those voices, whether regional or diasporic, are vibrant and always evolving. The Caribbean is multilingual. There are many creole languages, bringing together the speech of colonizers and colonized, slaves and indentured labourers, as well as migrants arriving later. These have developed by a fusion of widely established languages (English, French, Spanish and Dutch) with elements of those more locally occurring (such as Hindi, Yoruba, Igbo, Portuguese and Amerindian languages).

Thus Caribbean languages are extremely diverse and constantly inventive. Kamau Brathwaite's term 'nation language' helps to remind us of the particularity of usage in each Caribbean nation or territory.⁸ Maureen Warner-Lewis's work, in *Guinea's Other Sons*, emphasizes the need to know history to understand contemporary culture. She reads Yoruba cultural survivals in Trinidad in the frame of the British ending the slave trade in 1807, after which illegally transported slaves from ships apprehended by the Royal Navy were often taken to Trinidad. She says 'most ... arrived in Trinidad not as slaves but with the legal status of immigrant indentured labourers'.⁹ Since the Yoruba in Nigeria had their own imperial culture, she argues, post-imperial confidence was carried with nineteenth-century Yoruba arrivals, of whom many were prisoners from civil wars. This confidence strengthened the Yoruba community in Trinidad. To further understand language usage in the region, Richard's Allsopp's lexicographical work is an invaluable help, though

it is only on the anglophone region, including many words with local provenance, such as ‘dat’, used by Rastafarians to express contempt for pork, as well as those widely used, such as ‘lick’, for beating; most recently the *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago* (ed. Lise Winer) has focused just on these islands.¹⁰

Creolization

That extremely disparate elements have become a culture we can call Caribbean is the result of creolization, a kinetic, multivalent set of transitions, adaptations, recreations and inventive retentions in the face of hierarchies of race, class and gender. Major writers have created their own visions of this process, such as Kamau Brathwaite (Barbadian poet, historian, dramatist, cultural essayist), Édouard Glissant (Martiniquan poet, novelist, essayist) and Wilson Harris (Guyanese poet, novelist, essayist). Brathwaite’s *Creole Society* (1971, 2005) argued that creolization involved the whole population, whereas some earlier theories had only examined the culture of slaves. For Brathwaite, ‘nothing is really fixed and monolithic, although there is white/brown/black, there are infinite possibilities within these distinctions and many ways of asserting identity’.¹¹ In *Contradictory Omens* (1973), he proposed that a European (specifically Hegelian) model of ‘dialectical “progressive” synthesis/solution’ would lead to ‘impasse’.¹² In 1994, he offered an alternative (alter/native), ‘tidelectic’ or ‘tidalectic’ (based on the multidirectional conflation and separation of waves at the edge of the sea), more appropriate for representing the Caribbean’s process of creolization: ‘how ev- / athing flows underwater & slowly un / curls this island my island...the / waves comin in / comin in / tidelect tidelect tidelectic con / nect / ing’.¹³

Glissant, in *Caribbean Discourse* (1981, trans. into English 1989), speaks of a ‘cross-cultural poetics’, because Creole is ‘literally the result of contact between different cultures and did not pre-exist this contact’: he was later supported by the novelist Patrick Chamoiseau.¹⁴ For Glissant, the Caribbean is a ‘multiple series of relationships’, and the Caribbean Sea the ‘estuary of the Americas’, in which islandness signifies openness.¹⁵ He argues that ‘the poetics of creolisation are the same as a cross-cultural poetics’, both complexly woven.¹⁶ It is not that other cultures are not cross-cultural, but their ideological vision of themselves denies it. But Glissant points out that Martiniquan Creole is still contained in a ‘destructively non-functional situation’, and ‘increasingly a language of neurosis’,¹⁷ using the language of psychoanalysis made so relevant for the discussion of racism and colonialism by Glissant’s countryman, Frantz Fanon.¹⁸

For Wilson Harris, ancestral cultures survive as buried shards in collective memory, activated now and then, and the living have within them the ghostly presence of other lives. But the present is indeed different, and place is particular. Dante is a character in Harris's novel *Carnival*, but Harris explains the difference between the universe as perceived by the Italian writer and our world in his introduction to *The Carnival Trilogy*.¹⁹ For Dante, there were secure beliefs, whereas our condition is highly multivalent:

There are stars in Dante's thirteenth-century cosmos he would never have perceived as we perceive them.

They were fixed. . . within the abyss of tradition – within the spatiality, the spectrality of tradition – the original nucleus that motivates us is so peculiar, so unidentifiable, that singularity needs plurality.²⁰

Creolization is a process (just as Ato Quayson has argued that for the post-colonial, we should replace 'postcolonializing'): this contains elements of the colonial, anti-colonial, neo-colonial and postcolonial in dynamic interaction.²¹

Colonial, anti-colonial, neo-colonial, postcolonial

The colonial is not yet entirely over in the region. Martinique, Guadeloupe and Guyane Française are part of the French offshore Caribbean and Pacific organizations called Départements d'Outre Mer (DOM). The British have the dependencies of Anguilla, Turks and Caicos, Virgins and Caymans and Montserrat. In the Dutch Caribbean, Surinam is independent, Aruba partially so, Curaçao and St Maarten favour greater control over their own affairs and St Eustacius, Saba and Bonaire are still closely tied to the Netherlands. Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands have differing kinds of semi-autonomy from the US. Indigenous peoples in the Caribbean were heavily impacted upon by European colonization. Amerindian peoples still live in Guyana and other parts of the Caribbean coast of South America, and Dominica still has a self-identified population of Carib descent, but for the most part they are absent in collective consciousness, though scholars, most notably Peter Hulme, have done important work on the interactions between Amerindians and Europeans in the Caribbean, and some Caribbean writers, such as Jean Rhys, have represented indigenous Caribbean individuals or culture.²²

Then the postcolonializing process is complicated by economic, geographic and demographic factors. Small island populations (Barbados is one of the most crowded at almost 300,000) can experience extreme vulnerability to neo-colonial arrangements simply because of economic need. Local enterprises

can be hard to sustain because of a small demographic. Even large enterprises often struggle. BWIA, established in 1940 and converted into the national airline of Trinidad and Tobago and a much loved regional carrier in 1980, collapsed under financial stresses in 2007. Many of the old colonial ties and arrangements continue (import/export patterns, airline routes, tourist clients). But at the same time, the work of creating new Caribbean identities goes on constantly. Caribbean people have long integrated the region by migrating to find work, so that many people have multiple Caribbean ancestries. Though languages are often a barrier to pan-Caribbean communication, their boundaries are also more porous than might be assumed. The University of the West Indies as well as regional economic connections through CARICOM have developed the hope of productive collectivity and of the free movement of people for work, sometimes hard in the details, but nevertheless a sustained goal. But both the boom and bust of recent global economic times have threatened Caribbean postcolonializing. Neo-colonial tourist development in the shape of new upscale gated communities or expensive villas and hotels which exclude local people from access to beaches can appeal to anxious governments needing increased tax revenues and sustained employment.

The majority of Caribbean literature grew out of the struggle against colonialism and its long aftermath. When the formal ending of colonialism was seriously anticipated in much of the Caribbean in the mid twentieth century, writers became part of nascent nation building by exploring the evolution of colonial and postcolonial identity in relation to national identity.²³ Since then, Caribbean literature has continued to explore changing political, cultural and social issues and locations, a critical resource for Caribbean people.

Literary readings of history: logo/rhythms

The Caribbean's particular creative genius may perhaps be best understood by resorting to the revision of a familiar word to signify something new, a core practice of Kamau Brathwaite, in his desire to make the reader see language afresh.²⁴ I propose, as a way of seeing the scale of the creative rethinking of the colonial, a reworking of the term 'logarithm'. This is a mathematical strategy, first developed to assist in navigation. It enables large-scale multiplication by understanding the essence of the number's power. For example, since 100 is 10 times 10, the logarithm expresses it as 10 to the power of 2. A million is 10 to the power of 6. Thus a logarithm expresses X to the power of Y. This relation, as a metaphor, emphasizes the immense effect which Caribbean individuals, leaders, thinkers and writers, have had on their culture and the world. The

Haitian Revolution was the sling shot of David against Goliath. In effect, Haitians took the ideals of the French Revolution and made them extraordinarily powerful for their own purposes. This resulted in a slave rebellion delivering a new nation, something I term (adapting logarithm to another, Caribbean-centred term) logo/rhythmic. Fracturing the term and slightly altering the spelling, as Kamau Brathwaite might, gives logo(s) and rhythm, identifying two fundamentally important aspects of Caribbean culture, the word and inventive and evolving rhythms which characterize Caribbean speech, writing and music, both of which have had influence out of all proportion to the size of the Caribbean population. The strong spirituality in many Caribbean communities located the word as reflective of ancestry and spirit (logos), even whilst the internet may be working against this now.

Caribbean logo/rhythms are thus imagined as those innovations in thought, culture and historical direction, achieved by comprehending the essence of an idea promulgated by colonial or other ancestral culture (X) and then taking it in another direction, a postcolonializing direction, to a great transformative effectiveness (the power of Y). This is in effect a paradigm shift, but that term is used so widely that it does not give a sense of the specific ways Caribbean literature and culture have been able to contribute so immensely to the modern world.

Logo/rhythmics: rethinking Caribbean history in literature

The postcolonializing process of rethinking what was received or imposed, bringing this to a transformative level at which it became infinitely more powerful in the service of freeing the colonized, began in the Caribbean as slavery and colonization were being established, with the establishment of Maroon territory. Maroons were escaped slaves, living in a community of others, often on mountain tops or in impenetrable country which they could defend by guerrilla warfare against European soldiers and militia. Richard Price's work is invaluable in understanding this history, demonstrating that Maroons were forced to innovate in every way to make a new place to live, securing and protecting freedom against all odds.²⁵

The word 'Maroon' (signifying a person, not a colour) has its origins in Spanish and French (*cimarrón*, Lit. 'living on mountaintops', from Spanish *cima* 'top, summit'; French *marron*). As Price shows, Maroons are an important part of the history of Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, Saint Domingue (Haiti), Brazil, Jamaica and the Guianas. They were in small numbers in the French Caribbean, and temporary marronage occurred on US plantations (as

when slaves visited relatives), but marronage ‘on the grand scale’ struck at the plantation system itself and forced whites to sue for peace in Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Jamaica, Hispaniola, Mexico and Surinam. Marronage dates from the establishment of European colonies in the Caribbean, for the earliest recorded was a slave (name unknown) who escaped from the Spanish in Hispaniola in 1502, thus thwarting his captors’ intent to use his labour to consolidate the colony Columbus had begun in 1501.²⁶

Jamaica is particularly important with regard to Maroons and their literary representation. By the 1660s, in exchange for a cessation of hostilities, the English granted freedom and land to early Maroons who had fought the Spanish (they held Jamaica until 1655). In 1673, there was a serious uprising in St Ann and those who led it retreated to the mountains, a pattern repeated in subsequent slave uprisings. By the end of the century, there were two large groups of Maroons, those on the leeward and those on the windward sides of the mountains. One of the most powerful of the Windward Maroons was Nanny (whose name derives from the Akan title for a powerful queen, Nana), a Jamaican obeah woman, reputedly killed in 1773 by a slave, Cuffee, loyal to the whites, who rewarded him after her death.²⁷ Her legendary leadership of the Maroons contributed greatly to the eventual peace with the British at the end of the first Maroon war (1740), which ironically involved a promise by the Maroons to return newly escaped slaves to their plantations, whereas before they had given such fugitives protection. Their success in holding back an overwhelmingly powerful force created the idea of marronage as an effective anti-colonial strategy, becoming over time not just literal but an inspiring metaphor. It is one of the earliest examples of the success of the powerless against the powerful, and Caribbean writers have utilized this history as an inspiration for the present.

The title of Michelle Cliff’s *Abeng* (1984) refers to the conch shell by which Maroons communicated with one another.²⁸ Nanny is a key presiding spirit in Cliff’s novel, ‘the magician of the revolution’, ‘who could catch a bullet between her buttocks and render the bullet harmless’, and who wears a necklace made of white men’s teeth.²⁹ Cliff repeats the story of her murder, which has strong currency in the popular imagination. But the Maroon queen is an important inspiration to the novel’s central character, Clare Savage, whose complex ancestry evokes the long history of Jamaica, and who is looking for a history which can validate her as a woman. Cliff’s Nanny can recall a warrior caste of women in Dahomey, her homeland: she is no aberration but a continuation of a proud military tradition, and a resourceful planner in relation to the production of food and concealment of weapons and hiding places.

Vic Reid took the name of the capital of the Windward Maroons as the title for a novel, *Nanny-Town* (1983), and Nanny has a strong presence here too, as Queen-Mother, who organizes the Maroons into specialist groups to cultivate useful plants or grow food.³⁰ It is she who finds the caves behind waterfalls to which the Maroons could vanish, so suggesting they had magical powers to the British soldiers searching for them.

As mentioned earlier, the Haitian Revolution is an important example of logo/rhythmic change, informed by the love of words of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Revolution's leader. He was both slave and later a manager of slaves. Despite the wish of planters that slaves not wield the power of the written word's larger dissemination, he learned to read and write, and went on to produce letters, proclamations, speeches and finally a memoir. As his biographer, Madison Smartt Bell, says, 'he controlled his own story'.³¹ Bell notes that Toussaint had particularly important exchanges with the French recorded as dramatic dialogue over which he had control, and that Toussaint's legacy was helped by a memoir written by his son, Isaac, a further extension of his textual presence.³² From the beginning, he was not only a man of action but skilled with words. His declaration is still powerful to read, not only for its message, but for its economy, and the way its meaning is helped by its careful emphases: 'I have undertaken vengeance. I want Liberty and Equality to reign in Saint Domingue'.³³

His revolution struck fear into the hearts of white planters, and delivered a profound shock to two empires. Though he was defeated as an individual (he was betrayed, captured and died in a French prison in 1803), and the French promise of 1799 to respect the liberty of black people in Haiti was ignored by Napoleon (whose first wife, Josephine, was from a white Creole slave-owning family),³⁴ his revolution remains powerful evidence of human determination to gain freedom from oppression. Though Napoleon restored slavery, plantation ideology was never again able to ignore the power of the oppressed rising up together, ironically inspired by the very ideals which changed French politics and gave the outsider Napoleon his chance at power.

But by the early twentieth century, Toussaint's logo/rhythmic impact on his world needed to be reimagined in the context of a new era of imperialism, and his story brought back to Caribbean people yearning to end colonialism, who had largely erased slaves and slavery from their collective consciousness. In 1938, C. L. R. James wrote his magisterial analysis of the Haitian Revolution.³⁵ He asked 'What was the intellectual level of these slaves?',³⁶ given planters' attempts to make them out to be ignorant and brutish. Then he offered a complex collective portrait:

Naturally there were all types of men among them, ranging from native chieftains, as was the father of Toussaint L'Ouverture, to men who had been slaves in their own country. The creole Negro was more docile than the slave that was born in Africa. Some said he was more intelligent. Others doubted there was much difference. . . .³⁷

His subtle insistence, a few pages into his book, on the characters and origins of these men denies the erasure of their individual selves suggested by the very concept of slave, and draws the reader into a gripping story of the forces which shaped and drove Toussaint and enabled Haiti to come into being. James's reading of the power of this moment brings those individual slaves into focus as logo/rhythmic players in their world.

The Haitian Revolution has also haunted Derek Walcott, whose early *Henri Christophe* (1949) portrayed the dramatic struggle between Christophe and Dessalines, the two Haitian generals left after Toussaint's capture, imprisonment and death.³⁸ In his 1970 essay, 'What the twilight says', Walcott revisited his youthful fascination with 'slave-kings, Dessalines and Christophe'. Walcott remembered how he 'was in awe of their blasphemy', but that 'he rounded off their fate with the proper penitence'. In his play, *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1967), he went on to perform his own logo/rhythmic re-evaluation of the power and nature of revolution exploring and rejecting essentialisms which he felt the 1960s Black Power movement encouraged.³⁹ Incidentally, this was to a great extent provoked by the emergence of another logo/rhythmic Caribbean figure, Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture), the Black Power leader, originally from Trinidad, who tried to tour the eastern Caribbean in 1970, though most Caribbean governments tried to prevent him from speaking, demonstrating that he was thought a threat. Walcott and Carmichael represent very different ideologies of culture, but both used the power of the word and the rhythms of Caribbean speech to enormous effect.⁴⁰

Marcus Garvey (born Jamaica, 1887), established both a visionary organization, UNIA (United Negro Improvement Association) and a newspaper, *The Negro World*, in New York in 1918, and there is much excellent scholarship on him.⁴¹ He loved books and the power of speech-making from early in his life, benefiting from a father and grandfather who loved to read, and a mentor, Robert Love, who taught him the power of oratory. He also benefited from travelling to Central America, London and New York. His iconoclastic power came largely from words, which he used to encourage a change in response to endemic racism in US culture towards people of African descent.

Paul Gilroy has pointed out that Garvey found no problem with fascism (*Against Race*), and it is certainly important to remember he was hierarchical

and often simply inverted the colonial-racist paradigm.⁴² But he defied those who exerted life-and-death control over black people and inspired millions across the African diaspora, and like Toussaint (and like the poet Claude McKay) he laid the foundations of race pride which were to inspire many families of Caribbean and African American descent growing up in the US, families like that of novelist Paule Marshall.⁴³

The importance of C. L. R. James, historian, literary and cultural critic, fiction writer and political analyst, has now been recognized.⁴⁴ Born in 1901 in Trinidad, he was a founding member of a group of literary Marxists, in the 1920s, called 'The Beacon' (including writers Albert Gomes, Alfred Mendes and Ralph de Boissière).⁴⁵ James's household valued books and learning. His father was a schoolmaster and his mother loved to read. A gifted cricketer, he taught school and began to write fiction in his twenties. In 1932, he went to England, and in the same year published a biography of an anti-colonial mayor of Port of Spain, Captain Cipriani.⁴⁶ He was greatly productive, sending back columns on his experience of London for a Port of Spain newspaper (*Letters from London*), publishing a novel, *Minty Alley* (1936), and, from 1937, writing for the British press about cricket.⁴⁷ His magisterial *Jacobins* appeared in 1938. In the US, from 1938, mostly as an illegal immigrant, he wrote for socialist newspapers. In 1952, he was imprisoned on Ellis Island for his left-wing political affiliations, but completed a highly original essay mainly on Melville, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*.⁴⁸ Back in England after deportation in 1953, he eventually wrote his classic text on West Indian cricket, *Beyond A Boundary* (completed in 1962 on a long visit to Barbados, where he had ancestry).⁴⁹ In Trinidad in the late 1950s to early 1960s, he fell out with prime minister Eric Williams, once his pupil, and so returned to Britain. Throughout his long life, in which he travelled a great deal, James continued to write about politics, history and culture, but his reading of West Indian cricket in *Boundary* (revised 1963) and his reading of the Haitian Revolution in *Jacobins* (1938, 1963) are the most known and loved of his works.

James's revisions to *Jacobins* are important. David Scott argues that James's first Toussaint is a man of action, replaced in the 1963 by a version more like Hamlet, working tortuously between thought and action, a truly tragic figure.⁵⁰ Scott reads the revisions as throwing us a challenge: new times require new questions. James was aware not only of Toussaint and Garvey but also of members of his own generation, such as fellow West Indian socialist, George Padmore, thinking always of the past along with the present and the future. He also understood, as a novelist himself, the interrelation of imaginative writing and the political moment, which was 1959, the brink of decolonization: 'what

the nation needs at the present time, and that is what the artist needs, the creation of a national consciousness', and he knew also that he felt 'Our native talent is astonishing.'⁵¹

Then *Boundary* firmly established that cricket was not just a game but a way of seeing the world, and a team was not just a team, but a productive collaboration between gifted individuals, a metonym for the Caribbean when acting at its most effective in thwarting oppressive power. Cricket was invented and exported by the British, who imagined it defined gentlemen and was not to be played importantly by the poor. It was reinvented by West Indians, building formidable teams and creating many new aspects of the game from bowling and fielding to batting strategies, which at times defeated not only the colonizer but the rest of the anglophone cricketing world. Early international West Indian players had often been poor as children, playing with a piece of dried coconut branch and a soft ball in a country lane, but they showed that colonialism, racism and class prejudice could be defeated on a playing field in ways which resounded through the corridors of power.

James read the game as always about turning the powerless into the constructively powerful, beating the colonialist English at their very own game. He said: West Indians crowding to Test bring with them the whole past history and future hopes of the islands. . .⁵² West Indian cricket, in James's view was enabled by the very challenges of the time: 'I haven't the slightest doubt that the clash of race, caste and class did not retard but stimulated West Indian cricket.'⁵³

In his arguments about cricket, James demonstrates over and over, logo/rhymically, the importance of rethinking the obvious, of not ignoring the colonial but refashioning it, transcending it in fact. He saw it as an art form (coming to think of it as he discovered literature) and at the same time a political allegory for the West Indies. He told the story of how he came to discover a connection between the British writers he read at school and the cricket he played: 'I was in my teens at school, playing cricket, reading cricket, idolizing Thackeray, Burke and Shelley, when one day I came across the following about a great cricketer of the eighteenth century.'⁵⁴ James discovered that Edmund Burke (1729–97), known not only for his political career in England but for his love of the word in speeches and writing, was mentioned in conjunction with the cricketer William Beldham, 'He took the ball as Burke did the House of Commons, between wind and water.'⁵⁵

James's work has inspired later generations. The C. L. R. James Institute for the study of cricket at the University of the West Indies at Cave Hill, founded by Hilary Beckles, has produced a range of excellent cross-disciplinary

scholarship, and developed education for both players and managers.⁵⁶ James then not only established a logo/rhythmic way of thinking about what he was handed as a colonial child, but demonstrated to his intellectual descendants, like Beckles (himself a historian, dramatist and cultural analyst), the creative processes by which the West Indies has come to be so important in the modern world. Kamau Brathwaite's 'Rites' (1969, 1973), Bruce St John's 'Cricket' (1972) and Samuel Selvon's short story 'The Cricket Match' all demonstrate the fundamental importance of cricket in anglophone Caribbean culture, in both the region and the diaspora, reinforcing James's sense that the game gives players equal chances to prove their ability and demonstrate their individual character as part of a communal enterprise.⁵⁷

One of the writers James presciently included in his discussion of literature in 1963 was Aimé Césaire (born 1913), whose major poem *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1949) James called 'the finest and most famous poem ever written about Africa' (meaning a diasporic Africa).⁵⁸ Césaire discovers in Africa the crucial link to the Caribbean's experience, expressed as Negritude, and refracted through a highly original use of French surrealism. Despite criticisms of Negritude as being essentialist and limiting (most importantly Glissant rejected it in favour of a far more inclusive creolization model for Antillean culture), Césaire's poem was a major logo/rhythmic reversal of colonialist patterns of thought and feeling about race. In addition, his *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1955) declared Europe 'indefensible', both Europe and the US barbarous, and that colonization is not civilization: the power of his declarations and the strength of his poetry lay in his learning and his international vision.⁵⁹

Frantz Fanon (1925–61), like Césaire, from Martinique, centrally concerned with the social, economic and psychiatric underpinnings and effects of racism and colonialism, utilized his medical training as a psychiatrist working in Algeria during the anti-colonial war with the French. Fanon's brilliance as a writer lies in his ability to employ not only his psychiatric training but a strongly poetic imagination, joining them to produce works far more influential than the sum of their parts, works which change perception. His *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) remains as logo/rhythmically powerful as when it first appeared, and is deservedly considered part of the literary canon of the Caribbean: 'I walk on white nails. Sheets of water threaten my soul on fire.'⁶⁰ His work requires that his readers bring together science and art, employing both in the service of the fight against racist colonialism.

Kamau Brathwaite, following Césaire by going to Africa and bringing back apprehension of African culture to the Caribbean, offered in his first poetic

trilogy, *The Arrivants* (1973), an epic of the African diaspora.⁶¹ Trained as a historian, Brathwaite weaves a strong sense of the past and its impact on the present in his work. He finds in cultural survivals from the past (the rituals of Haitian voodoo, the drum, limbo) pathways and strategies for present creative power, associated with gods marginalized by colonialism (such as Yoruba orisha, Ogun, Legba and Shango).

His work has been intensely logo/rhythmic, disclosing an Africa hidden at the colonial/colonized surface, and inventing many new terms by which we think about Caribbean culture in new and insightful ways. His language has increasingly become 'postmodern' (his iteration of the postmodern, thus both created via the computer and contradistinct from European postmodernism). But his work has also been strongly Caribbean modernist, a modernism conjugated for the region and its diasporas. Brathwaite makes English productively strange, practising the job of poets for centuries, to make language new and fresh, and in this case dislocating it from its colonial and racist past. During his long career, he has produced numerous poetry collections, autobiography and memoir, bibliographies, cultural and historical scholarship, literary criticism, drama and short fiction, increasingly producing transgeneric texts, such as *Barabajan Poems* (1994) which recreate the complexity of the Caribbean imaginary in their formal shape (including use of a wide variety of fonts, hieroglyphic symbols, line orders, margin arrangements) as much as their themes.⁶²

Derek Walcott has also through his poetry and drama profoundly reconfigured the nature of our understanding of Caribbean culture.⁶³ His work has always been rooted in the conviction that the Caribbean must look forward to an inclusive future which is expressive of all the many cultural influences which have shaped the region, something very clear in his epic poem *Omeros* (1990).⁶⁴ Like Brathwaite he is influenced by Césaire and T. S. Eliot, but Walcott also counts the French poet Saint-John Perse, born in Guadeloupe as a privileged white child, as an important influence.⁶⁵ Walcott memorably said that for him poetry is 'excavation and . . . self-discovery'.⁶⁶ Like Brathwaite, he has sought to excavate Caribbean reality in original ways, logo/rhythmically, though their individual pathways are very different.

In *Omeros*, Walcott lightly summons the ghost of Homer's stories in the names of characters and certain details (like Philoctete's wounded foot), only to revision them and giving them a new vitality as part of Caribbean culture in an imaginary island, somewhat like his own birthplace of St Lucia. Walcott's cast of characters includes not only locals like Helen, the siren, and Achille, the fisherman and boat builder, Ma Kilman, the barkeeper and self-appointed healer, but Major Plunkett, the British colonial, and his Irish wife Maud

(perhaps a playful echo of Yeats's Maude Gonne), but reference to the history of the Dutch, the French, and the English Admiral Rodney. Even the form of this poem is interestingly cosmopolitan: it is written in hexameter triplets, rhymed in chains of couplets, and so, without imitating, suggests Dante's *terza rima*, but Walcott incorporates this echo seamlessly into his own voice.

Collective logo/rhythms: the word spoken or sung

If individual genius has done much to revision Caribbean literary culture after colonialism, Caribbean popular culture, a collective in which individual inventiveness thrives, is a great river fed by many logo/rhythmic tributaries. Orature is the bedrock of Caribbean literature. During slavery and its immediate aftermath, when education was a privilege largely enjoyed by white elites, slave communities collectively rethought what they were permitted to receive from the plantocracy. As Peter Roberts points out, even amongst whites, literacy was for a long time strictly utilitarian (for keeping plantations records and tracking slaves, for example), and most slaves brought from Africa came without literacy.⁶⁷ Eventually, with the introduction of commercial printing to the region, newspapers began to become more common: Roberts provides a list of papers appearing in various Caribbean colonies such as Jamaica, Barbados, Dominica and Antigua between 1718 and 1765. The church, through the teaching of the Bible, became a source of stories which slaves adapted to their own experience of bondage and hopes of freedom. Orality, already a sophisticated cultural property of slaves coming from Africa, gave them an equally sophisticated ear for the sound of an English they were not taught formally.

In West African traditions, because of the strongly tonal nature of many of the region's languages, words and music can be interchangeable (as in drum 'language'). In the Caribbean, this inheritance was reinvented, employing constant innovation: for example, Jamaican mento, with complex African and European colonial ancestry, turned into ska and then ska turned into reggae, the last made famous worldwide by Bob Marley and his band the Wailers from the early 1970s.⁶⁸ Even during the colonial period, British military music became a tributary of syncretic new forms such as the Barbadian pipe and drum tuk band or the music of the Junkanoo festival in the Bahamas, Belize, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.⁶⁹ This extensive inventiveness is another facet of the logo/rhythmic nature of Caribbean culture.

It is important to understand that scribal literature in the Caribbean is deeply inflected by the oral. Performance is culturally vital, from the formality

of political speeches or religious rituals to the spontaneous behaviour of outdoor crowds at Carnival or cricket matches, or vendors of fish or vegetables at markets, and most Caribbean people are masters of multiple linguistic registers. The now defunct Barbadian tea-meeting was a very important space to practise oratorical skills.⁷⁰ Poetry and theatre are clearly likely to be strongly inflected with orality. Categories of oral poetry included in the useful anthology *Voice Print* (1989) give some idea of the variety: legend, tales, elegy, lament, dreadtalk, dub, sermon, prophecy, calypso, pan, parang, hosay, monologues, signifying (robber talk), praise songs, incantations, curses, satire. Then dub and rhythm poetry are famous worldwide because of expert practitioners like Mikey Smith, Mutabaruka, Linton Kwesi Johnson and Jean 'Binta' Breeze.⁷¹ But scribal fiction has also been thoughtful about transcribing the oral onto the page, especially challenging in a region where creoles have not been standardized, and are wonderfully kinetic and inventive.⁷²

Carnival, now a pan-Caribbean festival with many local variants, began as a French Creole pre-Lenten tradition in Trinidad, and then after emancipation, was revisioned by former slaves in a logo/rhythmic fashion, informing it with African traditions of festival (both sacred and secular at the same time), and setting in motion a constant reimagining of every element of the festival for new times.⁷³ Calypso, with its origins in satirical songs in West Africa which could comment on the powerful, was reinvented in Trinidad and Tobago as a source of frank topical comment on politics and culture, as well as witty sexual innuendo, delivered via a mastery of orature and music, often including verbal improvisation.⁷⁴ In Trinidad during colonialism, and throughout the Caribbean in more recent times, it was and is a very useful tool for social and political comment, made effective by the linguistic and musical skills of calypsonians. Thus the most famous of these, including the Mighty Sparrow (Slinger Francisco), Lord Kitchener (Aldwin Roberts), the Mighty Chalkdust (Hollis Liverpool) and more recently the Mighty Gabby (Anthony Carter) and David Rudder, have written highly literary calypsoes, which repay analysis even when their topics pass into obscurity.⁷⁵

The Catholic landed French aristocracy Carnival lasted from Christmas to Ash Wednesday in Trinidad. After emancipation, Carnival became predominantly the cultural expression of freed slaves, gradually becoming like a secular/sacred African festival, and eventually a secular space of authorized cultural and social disruption for a few days a year, producing a logo/rhythmic effect, inspiring not only other Caribbean regional cultures, but eventually those of the diaspora. Errol Hill, in his history of Carnival, explains how elements of plantation experience, such as burning the canes to make

harvest easier (an act of sabotage by slaves at times), together with evolving survivals from African traditions such as the Kalinda, involving stick fighting, were gradually shaped in Carnival.⁷⁶ It is a truly syncretic festival, with characters evolved from both Europe and Africa, and also elements invented in Trinidad. Then, in the twentieth century, Indo-Caribbean participation brought new forms such as 'Chutney' soca and calypso.⁷⁷ Carnival combines excellent verbal and performance arts, for the whole population, whether onstage, in a band, or in the audience.

Clearly poetry and drama can draw on Carnival for inspiration with regard to both form and theme, but it has also been of major importance in fiction, such as Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979), Robert Antoni's *Carnival*, Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place* and Willi Chen's story 'King of the Carnival' (1988).⁷⁸ These all represent Carnival as an extended metaphor for the complex spirit and continuous inventiveness of Caribbean people. In theatre, Carnival and calypso traditions have been central to scribal drama, as in Errol Hill's *Man Better Man* (1985), about stick fighting, Earl Lovelace's *Jestina's Calypso* (1984), Rawle Gibbons's *A Calypso Trilogy* (three plays, 1999) and Derek Walcott's *Pantomime*.⁷⁹

There are many forms of religion, ritual and spiritual practice which are unique to the Caribbean and its diasporas, marking another field of revisioning on a major scale, and this has been noticed and utilized in Caribbean literature. Drawing from ancestral survivals in Africa and colonial forms of Christianity, these include the Spiritual Baptists (also called Shouters and Tie-Heads), the Shango cult in Trinidad, Vodoun in Haiti, and Rastafarianism, Kumina, Myal and Pocomania in Jamaica (as well as the Nine-Night ceremony for the dead).⁸⁰

Rastafarianism, a new religion, emerged after 1930, in Jamaica, once more demonstrating the ability of Caribbean people to reassemble elements into a new whole. As Sherlock and Bennett explain, Ras Tafari, great-grandson of Ethiopian King Saheka Selassie of Shoa, in Addis Ababa, took the name Haile Selassie (Mighty of the Trinity, Lion of Judah, King of Kings), at his coronation in 1930.⁸¹ Garvey had said, just before leaving for the US, 'Look to Africa for the crowning of a Black King', and so Garvey is revered as a prophet by Rastafarians, who believe Haile Selassie was the living God. This began when Leonard Howell returned to Jamaica from military service in West Africa, and became inspired to begin talking to the poor in Kingston, but also, as Pamela and Martin Mordecai argue, Joseph Hibbert separately had the same idea, that Haile Selassie was divine.⁸² At first, followers thought he would bring black men back from exile in the West Indies, to which they were sent for some transgression, becoming lost children of the Israelites who believed Jamaica

was hell and Ethiopia heaven. But in 1966, Haile Selassie visited Jamaica and is said to have advised there should be no return to Ethiopia, until Jamaica had been saved.⁸³ Rastafarians believe, in Jah, God who is black, as well as in a returned messiah, Haile Selassie. Each person has Jah within them, which must manifest without conversion. The Bible is of God, but distorted by whites. Africans are the true Israelites.⁸⁴ Rastafarianism has been especially important in Jamaican literature, most notably in Roger Mais's *Brother Man*.⁸⁵

If Rastafarians form community, obeah is a single practitioner / consultant relationship, for a wide range of purposes, including healing, developed out of numerous African traditions brought together by slaves.⁸⁶ The British feared obeah as possibly strengthening resistance to them, thus regarded it as only dangerous and negative, and banned it in their Caribbean colonies. The Christian church was powerful in suppressing respect for obeah (deeming it witchcraft).

For many Caribbean writers, local belief systems are a powerful metonym for connection to Africa, as in the work of Paule Marshall, George Lamming and Erna Brodber.⁸⁷ In Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, though Antoinette, a white creole girl, is warned by her former nurse and current protector, Christophine, that obeah is not for *béké* (whites), she begs for a love potion for her husband, with disastrous results.⁸⁸

Ritual is of course a wonderful resource for drama. Judy Stone's chapter on ritual in West Indian theatre references a number of dramatists, Dennis Scott, Rawle Gibbons, Michael Gilkes, as well as innovative directors such as Earl Warner.⁸⁹ An important centre for this work was the Jamaica School of Drama's Caribbean Lab (in the early 1980s).⁹⁰ Caribbean dramatists have found a way to bring old custom into new relevance, and to create of it a powerful metonym for both connection to the past and rethinking of the present and future. Of the poets, Kamau Brathwaite has done the most to connect African survivals informing present culture, particularly because his native land of Barbados suffered from a British hegemony which determinedly erased Africa.⁹¹

Scribal literature

The foundations of anglophone Caribbean literature are mainly in the writing of colonial visitors and settlers who brought their own literary tradition long before they permitted it for slaves. Lady Nugent, wife to a British governor-general, lived in Jamaica 1801–7 and wrote a journal.⁹² Slave narratives are far rarer in the Caribbean than in the US, although Mary

Prince's account (1831) is a remarkable story of a struggle for freedom.⁹³ Most early West Indian fiction was very much in the tradition of British literature.⁹⁴

Nevertheless, the buying of novels, scribal poetry and published plays has always been a much smaller activity than the attendance at performance. Thus, as Trinidadian scholar Kenneth Ramchand observed in his study of the origins of West Indian fiction, most early aspirants to success in scribal literature had to leave the region to find publishing outlets (most from the anglophone Caribbean went to London).⁹⁵ They also needed to work out how to write differently from the colonial traditions of fiction they had learned. Outlets for publication were nurtured at home by small, vibrant magazines such as *Bim* (Barbados), *Kyk-Over-Al* (Guyana) and *Focus* (Jamaica), with dedicated editors (Frank Collymore, A. J. Seymour and Edna Manley respectively).⁹⁶ Many literary emigrants who contributed to Marcus Garvey's New York-based pan-African movement in the early part of the twentieth century, or followed the mid-century mass migration to Britain or North America, became distinguished writers of the diaspora, but often turned back to the region for stories, settings and voices.

Though Caribbean scribal literature (novels, plays, poems, stories) is very often deeply informed by the orality of Caribbean culture, there is a deep respect for the book, because education, despite shortcomings in terms of delivery to the whole population, has always been an avenue for the Caribbean dispossessed to reach eminence, first by winning a rare scholarship to universities overseas, or, after the mid-century, attending one of the Caribbean's own tertiary institutions, such as the University of the West Indies, founded in 1948, dedicated to reconfiguring colonial received opinion in the light of fresh scholarship and ideas.

Revisioning the present through historical fiction has been an important educational and intellectual goal for Caribbean writers. Vic Reid's *New Day* (1949) and his novel for young readers, *Sixty-Five* (1960), both depict the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica (1865).⁹⁷ George William Gordon, a mixed-race ex-slave who was successful in business and an elected member of the Jamaican Assembly, and Paul Bogle, a black small farmer and religious leader, challenged the power of the white elite, and eventually, in 1865, a violent uprising took place, led by Bogle. Ironically, Bogle was betrayed by the Maroons and handed over to the British. Reid's *New Day* tells the story of the rebellion through the eyes of an old man who was a child at the time. Reid makes clear in his preface that this is not history but fiction, but a fiction told in 1949 to remind Jamaicans of one of the key sources of their expectations that they would soon govern themselves.

Like a great deal of postcolonial literature, Caribbean literature sometimes ‘writes back’ intertextually to the English canon, transforming it in the process. Caribbean writers have revisioned *The Tempest* (Retamar, Lamming, Brathwaite), *Jane Eyre* (Jean Rhys), *Robinson Crusoe* (Derek Walcott’s *Pantomime*).⁹⁸ Guadeloupian novelist Maryse Condé, whose major work has linked Africa and the Caribbean, has also retold the story of Tituba, a West Indian slave accused during the witch hunts in Salem, Massachusetts, in the late seventeenth century (revisioning Arthur Miller’s character): in an interview Condé says she thinks of her as ‘like the legendary “Nanny of the maroons”’.⁹⁹ Condé’s Tituba was born after her African mother was raped on a slave ship by an English sailor, and grew up in Barbados, but has access to knowledge from her mother’s culture: she is a powerful character.

Scribal and oral poetry overlap a good deal, and anthologies of Caribbean poetry usually include both alongside each other. Paula Burnett’s anglophone *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse* (1986) is slightly more focused on scribal poetry, though it offers a rich selection of orature as well. Organized chronologically, from slavery time to the present, it demonstrates the innovative ways Caribbean poets have developed their craft away from imitation of English models, often designing poetic voices which can migrate from Caribbean-accented standard English to deep Creole and back again, and reference other poets across the Caribbean.¹⁰⁰ Region and diaspora are a continuum, a conversation, which is constantly evolving.¹⁰¹ It should be recognized that a relatively small number of Caribbean poets have fashioned an important new canon through their collective logo/rhythmic experiments to find new ways of expressing verbal skills and to discover new poetic forms.

The logo/rhythms of diaspora

Migration has been at the heart of Caribbean culture from the beginning. The Caribs took their canoes out to the Atlantic and settled the islands. European colonizers, indentured servants, plantation owners and managers, African slaves, Indian indentured labourers, workers and traders from China and the Middle East, all came from somewhere else to the region. The large migrations north to Europe and North America which took place in the twentieth century created what is called the ‘double diaspora’. An enormous amount of Caribbean literature deals with the experience of migration and its concomitant losses of direct connection to ancestral land, home and culture, but also the opportunities for revisioning in the new place, once more a logo/rhythmic response. Also, despite geographical separations and colonially

induced linguistic differences, the region's writers and thinkers have very often found influences and commonalities across those divisions, in a kind of intellectual travelling, as in Brathwaite's knowledge of Césaire and Guillen, and Walcott's of Césaire and Perse.¹⁰² The Caribbean imaginary has always been transnational, conscious that the defining categories of race, class and nation which were colonially induced and sustained should be constantly breached. Like any other migrant, the Caribbean writer settled in a new location makes choices of remembering origins, representing the Caribbean diaspora, or becoming a part of a literary community overseas without insisting on Caribbean affiliation, the last more likely for those born overseas in first, second or later generations.

Many of those who followed Garvey to New York became writers. Tony Martin comments that in the 1960s, those rediscovering Garvey were often surprised to find that he 'demonstrated. . . that the Black masses can be moved to an appreciation of literature and the arts on a scale not often equaled in other communities'.¹⁰³ Claude McKay (1890–1948), poet, novelist and journalist, was one of Garvey's strongest supporters in the early days, and he of course became one of the most cosmopolitan of writers and of men.¹⁰⁴ He left his native Jamaica for the US, already a published poet, and eventually settled in New York, where he joined the African Blood Brotherhood, a socialist rival to Garvey's organization. He is perhaps most famous for his strong sonnets, in which the tight cerebral form is reconfigured to both contain and express powerful anger against racism. His travels later took him to Britain, the Soviet Union, Paris, Berlin, the South of France and Morocco. He spent his last years in the US. His literary work reflects his diasporic life, depicting Jamaica, the US and France (Marseilles).

Jean Rhys left her homeland of Dominica in 1906 at the age of sixteen, and only returned once for a few weeks. She spent some formative time in Paris, but most of her life in a Britain in which she felt displaced. Her novels, such as *Voyage in the Dark* (1934) and *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), tell stories of women who are alienated in strange and difficult surroundings.¹⁰⁵ Rhys is a consummate stylist, a remarkably original Caribbean modernist, and in her work, acutely aware of the ways women have been marginalized, undervalued and injured by male power, even though she always resisted feminism.

In 1948, a ship called the *Empire Windrush* docked in Tilbury, London, carrying West Indian immigrants in search of better lives, and from that moment forward, the contribution of Caribbean people to key parts of the British economy and society at home began, ultimately leading to a major body of literature.¹⁰⁶ Garvey's generation had begun an extensive diaspora in New

York (though migration from the Caribbean to the US and vice versa had been going on since the beginning of colonization of both). Toronto has become a third major centre of the Caribbean diaspora (we might also include Boston and Miami). Writers who migrated to these centres, or were born and grew up there, have faced another logo/rhythmic challenge: how to represent a complex cultural location formally and in their subjects. Ralph de Boissière, having written first about the West Indies, moved to Australia, and began to address his new home, and Garth St Omer, moving to France, Africa, the US and Britain, naturally took migration and its discontents as his major theme.¹⁰⁷ For the francophone Caribbean, Paris was of great importance (for Césaire and Léon Damas, among others).¹⁰⁸

Seeking to find common cause, Caribbean writers in Britain founded the Caribbean Artists Movement (1966–72): their events from 1967 to 1972 are a who's who of major literary and critical talent which would eventually change Caribbean literary culture.¹⁰⁹ Topics for meetings were critical to this collective task, 'West Indian aesthetic', the language of calypso, the contribution of the West Indies to European civilization, colonialism and race, and the mapping of the new writing itself: it was a logo/rhythmic mission, designed to change the literary map of the colonial Caribbean and give entry for this new literature onto the world stage. Many of the chief players in this group were self-exiles, working away from home. The relation of diaspora to region has many shapes in the lives of important Caribbean writers. Not only self-exiles, they were also migrants who found work and stayed overseas, returning as they could, or children of immigrants, who grew up in another place, but wanted to remain connected.

Samuel Selvon left Trinidad as a young man and spent the rest of his life in England and then Canada. His fiction is groundbreaking in its use of the demotic as narrative voice. Selvon had a perfect pitch for comedy, irony and tragicomedy, often with an undertow of sadness, as in *The Housing Lark* (1965), *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), *Moses Ascending* (1975) and *Moses Migrating* (1983); but he also reinvented the tragic, writing of the impoverished Indo-Caribbean community at home in Trinidad.¹¹⁰

Though very different in voice, Austin 'Tom' Clarke (1934–), has also employed both comic and tragic in his work. He settled in Canada, from Barbados, as a young man, but he kept in touch, writing a column in a local newspaper in Barbados in Barbadian Creole. His memoir, *Growing Up Stupid under the Union Jack* (1980, 2003) demonstrates a gentle but highly effective postcolonial irony.¹¹¹ Irony is a particularly useful weapon for undermining the self-congratulatory surfaces of colonialism, and in another memoir, *Pig*

Tails and Breadfruit (1999), Clarke offers an entertaining and affectionate portrait of the centrality of food in the Barbados of his childhood.¹¹² Clarke's *The Polished Hoe*, a tragic plantation story (2002), has received a great deal of well-deserved praise.¹¹³

Paul Gilroy's ground-breaking *Black Atlantic* (1993) was more concerned with the northern shores of the Atlantic, though his concept has proven centrally important to recent Caribbean scholarship. His mother Beryl was a writer, and also a pioneering therapist for children impacted by migration. She herself was born and raised in Guyana.¹¹⁴ She worked in the London education system where she thought about the diaspora with regard to the needs of children whose cultural relocation could involve separation from family, being a victim of racism and finding a new environment difficult. One of her titles, *Boy Sandwich* (1989), came from the self-description of a troubled young man she encountered as a counsellor: she was a pioneer of Caribbean fiction informed by psychological insights, which she obtained through her work with troubled children in the Caribbean diaspora.¹¹⁵ She wrote a good deal, including a memoir of her early work experience in London, *Black Teacher* (1976), and the retelling of the eighteenth-century romance between John Gabriel Stedman and a slave, Joanna (1991).¹¹⁶

Paule Marshall's work has always been about the international consciousness of West Indians, from her first novel, *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959), about the maturation of a young girl of Barbadian parentage, living in New York City.¹¹⁷ *The Chosen Place* (1969) represents a fictional Caribbean island in which both locals and foreigners interact complexly around Carnival time, and in *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983) an African American woman journeys into her African ancestry in the Caribbean, whereas *Daughters* (1991) tells the story of a child of the diaspora, trying to find a place between the Caribbean and New York City, and *The Fisher King* (2000) is about tensions between the West Indians and African Americans in Brooklyn.¹¹⁸ Marshall's work has profoundly contributed to our awareness of the interaction between African American and Caribbean populations, as well as the search for African survivals and ancestries by those populations as a counter to white racism and an affirmation of self, ancestry and connection.

Caryl Phillips (1958–), who migrated to Britain as a baby from St Kitts, has also made journeys and diaspora his major theme. His travel memoir *The European Tribe* (1987) begins with the shocking revelation that he was never given a 'text penned by a black person, or that concerned the lives of black people' in his education in Britain.¹¹⁹ Refusing what he saw as the temptation for 'second generation' of West Indian British to 'run and hide. . . into the safe

corner of racial solidarity', his own logo/rhythmic move has been to develop an innovative and brave body of cross-cultural fiction with major characters of very different racial and cultural origins, and different genders. His disturbing *Cambridge* (1991) juxtaposes a gentle but self-deceiving Englishwoman and a slave in the Caribbean, and in *The Nature of Blood* (1997) a survivor of a Nazi concentration camp and Shakespeare's Othello (revisioned as Moorish and married to someone from home before Desdemona), are just two of the characters whose stories are interwoven.¹²⁰ In *Higher Ground* (1989), three people's stories are told, an African who assisted slave traders, a prisoner in a US jail and a Polish survivor of the Jewish ghetto, and *A State of Independence* (1986) deals with the difficulties of a man returning to his Caribbean homeland after two decades of living in Britain.¹²¹

David Dabydeen (1957–), who migrated from Guyana to Britain, is both a writer of distinguished poetry and fiction and of literary and cultural history. His poetry collection *Slave Song* (1984) has an author's preface, in which Dabydeen explains his understanding of Guyanese Creole as 'angry, crude, energetic ... It's hard to put two words together in Creole without swearing.'¹²² Dabydeen's innovative use of Creole is therefore a deliberate opposition to Guyanese literature written in what he calls Western style: he feels the need then to explain for outsider readers, so the poems are followed by translations and commentaries. His *Turner* (1994) is a long poem on the Turner painting *Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying*, prefaced by a note on the fact that British aesthete Ruskin managed to ignore the subject matter when critiquing the painting (he loved the portrayal of sea and sky and the colours of it).¹²³ Dabydeen's work (both creative and critical) has over and over again brought slavery and racism from the shadows of the collective British cultural memory, in which it has languished for centuries, to the forefront of memory.¹²⁴

Marlene NourbeSe Philip grew up in Trinidad and Tobago but settled in Toronto after higher education there. Her fiction and poetry are innovative in form and brave in content. Rootlessness, and the concomitant desire to find connection, are important themes in Caribbean literature, but in Philip's work they become concrete aspects of her style, as in her powerful first collection of poems, *She Tries Her Tongue*.¹²⁵ Her essays, *A Genealogy of Resistance* (1997), and her most recent poetry collection, *Zong!* (2008), explore painful history with an extraordinary originality. In *Zong!*, Philip takes language to the place where it entirely falters.¹²⁶ *Zong!* was a slave ship whose captain ordered slaves thrown overboard alive because he wished to claim insurance money for property lost at sea. Philip, a barrister by training, takes the words of the transcript of the

trial and separates them from syntax, juxtaposing them so that the brutal nature of slavery is evident, as well as the eloquent spaces of silenced grief.

V. S. Naipaul has been the clearest self-exile, establishing a deliberate critical distance from the region, which has meant he has been slower than other writers to clear colonialist assumptions from his work. However, a sampling from his early fiction (e.g. *The Mystic Masseur*), and non-fiction (e.g. *The Middle Passage*), from his middle-period masterpiece, *A House for Mr Biswas* (a fictional portrait of his family in Trinidad during his childhood), and from his late work, such as *Finding the Center*, or *Half a Life*, demonstrate that he is a consummate stylist and structural master, and also extremely self-aware.¹²⁷ He has never worked except as a writer, an impressive overturning of the assumption prevalent in his young life, that Caribbean people could not afford, on any level, to make that their only calling.

Jamaica Kincaid, almost as difficult to place, left Antigua for New York City as a teenager and eventually became a *New Yorker* writer and novelist. Her work thus far may be mostly divided into three phases: the serial story of a young Caribbean woman who becomes self-exiled to New York, working through issues with her mother, her country and the US, a series of fictional family narratives, and the much more recent non-fiction accounts of Kincaid's interest in gardening.¹²⁸ As shown by her acrimonious account of her homeland, Antigua, in *A Small Place*, Kincaid makes an unrelenting onslaught on colonialism and its after-effects but admits to a passion for gardening, a British colonial inheritance about which she is ruthlessly honest in her gardening and botanical work.¹²⁹

Migration is now of course often discussed in relation to transnationalism. Brent Hayes Edwards identifies also, with reference to French, US and Caribbean literary and political networks, a 'black internationalism', a reminder that though the Caribbean is still divided into linguistic regions, those divisions have always been breached by the curious and determined, those with a different, more complex sense of how the world should be configured.¹³⁰

Logo/rhythms for this time: the reading of the past for the present

David Scott reminds us, as previously mentioned here, that we need to ask questions appropriate for our time, but as times change, our questions should also. So this chapter ends with a consideration of the key areas of concern of Caribbean literature, now and in future.

Already we know that diaspora, the transnational and globalization are more central concerns than nation recently, as Curdella Forbes points out in her study of Selvon and Lamming.¹³¹ Violence has become more of a problem in the Caribbean as visible wealth coexists with abject poverty, drugs are both a quick way to make money and a slow way to cripple a life, and guns have come in to protect the drug trade. Brathwaite's multi-genre account in *Trench Town Rock* (1994) of the impact of drug-related violence, when he was attacked and almost killed, is very disturbing but important testimony (especially as it is a collage of Brathwaite's work and reports of actual crimes in Kingston).¹³² Caribbean writers have portrayed plantation violence, such as Fred Aguiar in *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997).¹³³ Both Andrew Salkey's *A Quality of Violence* (1959) and Sonny Ladoo's *This Pain My Body* (1972) identify violence as a central problem in the twentieth century.¹³⁴ But it is the way in which violence is represented that is different in much Caribbean writing, which offers not only the symptoms but a careful and complex representation of causes. The plantation, racism and poverty all visit kinds of violence, physical or emotional, on people, some of whom may perpetuate the cycle by inflicting violence on others or on themselves.

The same is true of many Caribbean depictions of suffering and illness. Edwidge Danticat, of Haitian origin, writes in the US, but her central theme is the suffering of Haitian people. *The Farming of Bones* (1998) is set in 1937, the year of riots across the Caribbean because of hard times.¹³⁵ Her recent account of her family, *Brother I'm Dying* (2007), is an indictment not only of conditions in Haiti but of the inhumanity of US immigration's treatment of the old and sick.¹³⁶ Tessa McWatt's *This Body* (2004) portrays a bombing in London, which brings to her central characters a more acute awareness of the fragility of life and its value, but also of the apparently casual way two young men, just seeming out of place, become the perpetrators of death and destruction.¹³⁷ In Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge* (2003), the story of several generations of a family with ancestral roots in India, a long presence in Trinidad and at least a partial future in Canada, a major character suffers from AIDS, a disease hidden for too long in the Caribbean because of the reluctance to discuss sexual preferences and risks of transmitted diseases openly.¹³⁸

Nalo Hopkinson's turn to science fiction and magical realism (including *Brown Girl in the Ring*, 1998, *Skin Folk* 2001, *The Salt Roads* 2003) enables her to portray violence, terror and anger as well as the possibility of healing and love in a fictional world where anything can happen, but one which draws on the dystopian aspects of Caribbean experience.¹³⁹ She has been a pioneer in Caribbean science fiction, reconfiguring the genre for the region and diaspora.

Lorna Goodison has often written poems of healing which attempt to ameliorate the legacy of long cycles of violence, as some titles suggest: *Turn Thanks* (1999), *Travelling Mercies* (2001). Her recent memoir *From Harvey River* (2007) is an acutely affectionate account of family history, the practice of turning difficulty and loss into durable love.¹⁴⁰ Goodison has a richly lyrical voice which turns to her country's need: 'For my mission this last life is certainly / this / to be the sojourner poet caroling for peace / calling lost souls to the way of Heartease'.¹⁴¹

These are all women writers, tackling a serious regional problem. They are a major new collective literary voice. This has to be framed by the logo/rhythmic moment when the women's movement (1980s in the region) realized that gender and development have to be linked, relating to a history of oppression of both genders by the plantation system, the prevalence of single-parent families in poverty, and the impact of structural adjustment programmes on Caribbean societies. The sheer range and transformational power of women's writing in the Caribbean is impressive, varied in genre (though not much present in drama and theatre), as well as in stylistic innovation and incisive themes.¹⁴² But the next transformational moment in the Caribbean, for which we shall no doubt depend on writers, has to be challenging still entrenched homophobia. Michelle Cliff, Dionne Brand and Audre Lorde, who have celebrated lesbianism, could only do so freely in the more tolerant north.¹⁴³

Finally, literature faces a great challenge in simply sustaining confidence in its own ability to engage with the enormity of present problems. David Scott reminds us:

In many parts of the once-colonized world (not least in ... the Caribbean), the bankruptcy of postcolonial regimes is palpable in the extreme ... The acute paralysis of will and sheer vacancy of imagination, the rampant corruption and vicious authoritarianism, the instrumental self-interest and showy self-congratulation are all themselves symptoms of a more profound predicament that has, at least in part, to do with the anxiety of exhaustion ... the anti-colonial utopias have gradually withered into postcolonial nightmares ...¹⁴⁴

Scott is working here exactly as James did in the 1930s. He requires us to rethink in exactly the way the Maroons, or Toussaint, or Garvey, or James, rethought the past for the purpose of illuminating the present. Scott issues us a challenge:

... it is our postcolonial *questions* and not our answers that demand our critical attention. In my view, an adequate interrogation of the present (postcolonial or otherwise) depends on identifying the *difference* between the questions that animated former presents and those that animate our own.¹⁴⁵

Scott's point is that each generation has to read history afresh, to find new paradigms which speak to today.

We can identify other challenges. As we move further into the twenty-first century, Caribbean writers move further into an increasingly globalized world. Those born and raised in the diaspora, with perhaps several generations between them and sustained regional experience, can choose to write about diaspora, region or their locality, without a particularly Caribbean focus. Those writers in the region still struggle to be professionals (making a living from writing or from teaching writing), and still mostly need to find overseas publishers. Literature also has to come to terms with cyberspace.¹⁴⁶

But whatever happens in the future, C. L. R. James's words are worth reiterating. 'Our native talent is astonishing – it continually astonishes me.'¹⁴⁷ We face new times, but James's faith still holds.

Notes

1. C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), p. 417.
2. Antonio Bénítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992).
3. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
4. Derek Walcott, 'The Antilles: fragments of epic memory', *What the Twilight Says: Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), p. 69.
5. V. S. Naipaul, *The Loss of El Dorado* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 375.
6. V. S. Naipaul, 'History is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies', *The Middle Passage* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 29.
7. Peter Manuel traces the development of pan music from the banning of drums in Carnival by the British colonial government in the early 1880s. At first sticks beaten on bamboo tubes substituted, and then any available piece of metal was beaten as well, until around 1939, when oil drum lids began to be dented in a way to produce distinct pitches. Peter Manuel, with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Laergey, *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music from Rumba to Reggae* (Philadelphia: Temple, 1995).
8. Kamau Brathwaite, 'History of the voice', *Roots* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 259–304.
9. Maureen Warner-Lewis, *Guinea's Other Sons: The African Dynamic in Trinidad Culture* (Dover: The Majority Press, 1991), p. 7.
10. Richard Allsopp (ed.), *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (1996; Mona: University of the West Indies Press, 2003), pp. 188, 346; Lise Winer (ed.), *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).
11. Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770–1820* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2005), p. 310.
12. Kamau Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens* (Mona: Savacou, 1973), p. 63.
13. Kamau Brathwaite, *Barabajan Poems* (New York: Savacou North, 1994), p. 114.

14. Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, trans. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), p. 127. See also Michael Dash *Edouard Glissant* (Cambridge University Press, 1995); Patrick Chamoiseau, *Texaco*, trans. Rose-Myriam Réjouis and Val Vinokurov (New York: Random House, 1997).
15. Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, p. 139.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
18. See Frantz Fanon, 'Colonial wars and mental disorders', *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), pp. 200–25.
19. Wilson Harris, *The Carnival Trilogy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993). *Carnival* is included here.
20. *Ibid.*, p. vii.
21. Ato Quayson, *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice or Process* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).
22. See Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean* (London: Methuen, 1986), and *Remnants of Conquest: The Island Caribs and Their Visitors, 1877–1998* (Oxford University Press, 2000); Peter Hulme and Neil L. Whitehead (eds.), *Wild Majesty: Encounters with Caribs from Columbus to the Present Day* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). See also Jean Rhys, 'Temps perdu', *Collected Short Stories* (New York: Norton, 1987), pp. 256–74.
23. See, as examples, George Lamming, *In the Castle of My Skin* (London: Michael Joseph, 1953); V.S. Naipaul, *A House for Mr Biswas* (London: André Deutsch, 1961); Roger Mais, *Brother Man* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954).
24. See, among many examples, 'Negus', *The Arrivants* (Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 222–4. Brathwaite has developed this uncoupling/recoupling of syllables to draw attention to syllabic composition, sound, meaning and different meaning.
25. Richard Price (ed.), 'Introduction', in *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 1. Not all Maroons were interested in the freedom of those left in slavery or otherwise victimized. Some worked with pirates, and it was pirates who recast 'maroon' as a verb, to signify drastic solitude, often with a sense of being punished for something. This is the colonial meaning of maroon, informing the many stories of castaways on desert islands, such as Defoe's famous *Robinson Crusoe*. Crusoe's maroon experience is an attempt to impose his will and his culture on what he perceives as an empty place and upon Friday, the black man he makes his servant. But his whole effort is to replicate what he has lost, not to reinvent, which is why his very relation with Friday and the island proves ultimately so limiting.
26. Price, *Maroon Societies*, p. 3.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 10. See also Orlando Patterson, 'Slavery and slave revolts: a sociohistorical analysis of the First Maroon War, 1665–1740', in Price (ed.), *Maroon Societies*, pp. 230–92, which reports that what is known definitely of Nanny is that she was 'chief sorcerer or *obeah* woman of the main group of Windward rebels', p. 262.
28. Michelle Cliff, *Abeng* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984). Other writers also offer terms associated with the Maroons, such as Kamau Brathwaite's reference to Palmares, the Maroon republic in Brazil. See Brathwaite, *M.R.*, 2 vols. (New York: Savacou North, 2002).
29. Cliff, *Abeng*, pp. 14, 21.
30. Vic Reid, *Nanny-Town* (Kingston: Jamaica Publishing House, 1983).
31. Madison Smartt Bell, *Toussaint Louverture* (New York: Pantheon, 2007), p. 57.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 150–1.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

34. Andrea Stuart, *The Rose of Martinique* (London: Macmillan, 2003), p. 297.
35. C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Dial, 1938).
36. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
38. Henri Christophe, *The Haitian Trilogy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002).
39. Derek Walcott, 'What the twilight says', *Dream On Monkey Mountain* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), p. 11. Also 'Dream on monkey mountain', *ibid.*, pp. 207–326.
40. For Walcott's thoughts about Black Power, see Bruce King, *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 254. See also Stokely Carmichael with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2003).
41. See Tony Martin, *Literary Garveyism: Garvey, Black Arts and the Harlem Renaissance* (Dover: The Majority Press, 1983); Amy Jacques Garvey, *Garvey and Garveyism* (New York: Macmillan, 1970); Robert A. Hill and Barbara Bair (eds.), *Marcus Garvey Life and Lessons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Rupert Lewis and Patrick Bryan (eds.), *Garvey: His Work and Impact* (Mona: University of the West Indies, 1988).
42. Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 330.
43. Paule Marshall, *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959; Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1981).
44. See Paget Henry and Paul Buhle (eds.), *C. L. R. James's Caribbean* (London: Macmillan, 1992); Kent Worcester, *C. L. R. James: A Political Biography* (Albany: State University of New York, 1996); Grant Farred (ed.), *Rethinking C. L. R. James* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); Christopher Gair (ed.), *Beyond Boundaries* (London: Pluto, 2006); Aldon Lynn Nielsen, *C. L. R. James: A Critical Introduction* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997).
45. Albert Gomes, *Through a Maze of Colour* (Port of Spain: Key Caribbean Publications, 1974), and *All Papa's Children* (East Moseley: Cairi Publishing House, 1978); Alfred Mendes, *Pitch Lake* (London: Duckworth, 1934), and *Black Fauns* (London: Duckworth, 1935); Ralph de Boissière, *Crown Jewel* (Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1952), and *Rum and Coca-Cola* (Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1956).
46. C. L. R. James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani: An Account of British Government in the West Indies* (Nelson: Coulton, 1932). New readers of James are also directed to *The C. L. R. James Reader*, ed. Anna Grimshaw (London: Allison & Busby, 1986).
47. C. L. R. James, *Letters from London*, ed. Nicholas Laughlin (Oxford: Signal, 2003), *Minty Alley* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1936), and *Cricket* (London: Allison & Busby, 1986).
48. C. L. R. James, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live in* (1953; London: Allison & Busby, 1985).
49. C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (1963; New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).
50. David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 16.
51. C. L. R. James, 'The artist in the Caribbean', *The Future in the Present* (London: Allison & Busby, 1977), p. 189.
52. James, *Boundary*, p. 225.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

56. Hilary Beckles, *An Area of Conquest: Popular Democracy and West Indies Cricket Supremacy* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1994). Beckles has edited or written widely on cricket.
57. Kamau Brathwaite, 'Rites', *The Arrivants* (Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 197–203; Bruce St John, 'Cricket', *Bumbatuk* (Bridgetown: Cedar Press, 1982), pp. 17–19; Samuel Selvon, 'The Cricket Match', in Stewart Brown and John Wickham (eds.), *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories* (Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 91–5.
58. Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, ed. Abiola Irele (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000).
59. Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1955), translated as *Discourse on Colonialism*.
60. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 126. See also *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), trans. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965); *A Dying Colonialism* (1959), trans. Haakon Chevalier (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), and *Toward the African Revolution* (1964), trans. Haakon Chavelier (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).
61. Kamau Brathwaite, *Mother Poem* (1977) *Sun Poem* (1982) and *X/Self* (1987) were revised as *Ancestors* (New York: New Directions, 2001). Since 1987, Brathwaite has increasingly developed 'video style', a highly visual presentation of words and signs on the page, which represents the rise and fall of vocal tones. His *Barabajan Poems* (New York: Savacou North, 1994) is the first of several volumes of clearly trans-generic work; see also *Golokwati* (2000; New York: Savacou North, 2002). His most recent collection, *Born to Slow Horses* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), won the Canadian Griffin Prize.
62. See above.
63. Derek Walcott, *Selected Poems*, ed. Edward Baugh (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), is the best available introduction to Walcott's poetry, as it contains selections from his earliest to his recent poetry. See also *The Bounty* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997) and *Tiepolo's Hound* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), as well as *The Prodigal* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004) and *White Egrets* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010). Walcott's drama is collected in *The Haitian Trilogy* (*Henri Christophe, Drums and Colours, The Haitian Earth*) (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), *Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays* (*The Sea at Dauphin, Ti-Jean and His Brothers, Malcochon, or The Six in the Rain, Dream on Monkey Mountain*) (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), *The Joker of Seville & O Babylon!* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), *Remembrance & Pantomime* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980) and *Three Plays* (*The Last Carnival, Beef, No Chicken, A Branch of the Blue Nile*) (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), and, in addition, *The Odyssey* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993).
64. Walcott, *Omeros* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990).
65. Saint-John Perse was the pen name of Marie René Auguste Alexis Saint-Léger (1887–1975). He lived in Guadeloupe from birth until he was eleven, then left for study in France. *Anabase* (Paris: Nouvelle Review Francaise, 1924) is perhaps his most famous poem. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1960.
66. Walcott, 'The Antilles', p. 70.
67. Peter Roberts, *From Oral to Literate Culture: Colonial Experience in the English West Indies* (Mona: University of the West Indies Press, 1997); see also Peter Roberts, *West Indians and their Language* (Cambridge University Press, 1988).

68. See Peter Manuel (with Kenneth Bilby and Michael Largey), *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music from Rumba to Reggae* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Steve Barrow and Peter Dalton, *Reggae* (London: Rough Guides, 1997), and *Music, Writing, and Cultural Unity in the Caribbean*, ed. Timothy Reiss (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005).
69. For the tuk band, see Curwen Best, *Roots to Popular Culture: Barbadian Aesthetics: Kamau Brathwaite to Hardcore Styles* (London: Macmillan, 2001), pp. 49–89.
70. Frank Collymore, poet and celebrated editor of *Bim*, has almost a full page defining tea-meeting, which was an old Barbadian tradition, up to about 1920, ‘a sort of prolonged concert’ with refreshments, and oratory, which went on all night until dawn. *Barbadian Dialect* (Barbados: The Barbados National Trust, 1955), p. 107.
71. Stewart Brown, Mervyn Morris and Gordon Rohlehr (eds.), *Voiceprint* (Burnt Mill: Longman, 1989). The poets mentioned are all represented in this anthology. See also Carolyn Cooper, *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the ‘Vulgar’ Body of Jamaican Popular Culture* (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1993).
72. So many writers have attempted this, from the earliest days of West Indian fiction, as Kenneth Ramchand describes in *The West Indian Novel and Its Background* (London: Heinemann, 1983). Also Roydon Salick (ed.), *The Comic Vision in West Indian Literature* (Port of Spain: University of the West Indies, St Augustine, n.d.).
73. See Garth L. Green and Philip Scher (eds.), *Trinidad Carnival: The Cultural Politics of a Transnational Festival* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).
74. See Gordon Rohlehr, *Calyпсо and Society in Pre-Independence Trinidad* (Port of Spain: Rohlehr, 1990).
75. See Gordon Rohlehr, *A Scuffling of Islands: Essays on Calyпсо* (San Juan: Lexicon, 2004).
76. Errol Hill, *The Trinidad Carnival* (London: New Beacon Books, 1997). See also Green and Scher, *Trinidad Carnival*.
77. For ‘chutney soca’, marking Indo-Caribbean entry into Trinidadian mainstream music, see Manuel, *Caribbean Currents*, pp. 216–20.
78. Earl Lovelace, *The Dragon Can’t Dance* (London: André Deutsch, 1979); Robert Antoni, *Carnival* (New York: Black Cat, 2005); Paule Marshall, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969; New York: Vintage, 1984); Will Chen, ‘King of the Carnival’, *King of the Carnival* (London: Hansib Publishing, 1988).
79. Errol Hill, *Man Better Man*, in *Plays for Today*, ed. Errol Hill (Burnt Mill: Longman, 1985), pp. 139–233; Earl Lovelace, *Jestina’s Calyпсо*, in *Jestina’s Calyпсо and Other Plays* (London: Heinemann, 1984), pp. 1–42; Rawle Gibbons, *A Calyпсо Trilogy* (Kingston: Ian Randall, 1999); Derek Walcott’s *Pantomime*, in *Remembrance and Pantomime* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980), pp. 89–170.
80. See George Eaton Simpson, *Religious Cults of the Caribbean: Trinidad, Jamaica and Haiti* (Rio Pedras: University of Puerto Rico, 1980). Many Caribbean writers, poets, dramatists and fiction writers have drawn on these beliefs and practices, such as Kamau Brathwaite, Derek Walcott, George Lamming, Erna Brodber, Dennis Scott and Robert Antoni.
81. Philip Sherlock and Hazel Bennett, *The Story of the Jamaican People* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1998). They cite Rex Nettleford, major in both the culture and intellectual life of Jamaica and the region, as identifying in Rastafarian belief a good deal of Jamaican history, ‘psychological withdrawal, black nationalism, apocalyptic exaltation and denunciation tied to a bold assertion of a redemptive ethic as aid to liberation and relief from suffering’, p. 395.

82. Martin Mordecai and Pamela Mordecai, *Culture and Customs of Jamaica* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 47–8.
83. Sherlock and Bennett, *Story of the Jamaican People*, p. 400.
84. Mordecai and Mordecai, *Culture and Customs of Jamaica*, pp. 47–8.
85. Roger Mais, *Brother Man* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954).
86. See Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert (eds.), *Sacred Possessions: Vodou, Santería, Obeah and the Caribbean* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997).
87. Paule Marshall, *Praisesong for the Widow* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1983); George Lamming, *Seasons of Adventure* (London: Michael Joseph 1970); Erna Brodber, *Myal* (London: New Beacon Books, 1988).
88. Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (London: André Deutsch, 1966).
89. Judy S. Stone, *Theatre* (London: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 143–60.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
91. 'Angel/Engine', *Mother Poem* (Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 97–103; also *Barabajan Poems* (New York: Savacou North, 1994), pp. 173–87 (revised version), p. 91.
92. Maria Nugent, *Lady Nugent's Journal* (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1939).
93. Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince* (1831; Mineola: Dover, 2004).
94. The University of the West Indies Press has a reprint series of early West Indian fiction, which is filling in crucial gaps in our knowledge of literature of the colonial period.
95. Kenneth Ramchand, *The West Indian Novel and Its Background* (1970; London: Heinemann, 1983).
96. Collymore and Seymour were both writers themselves. Collymore wrote poems and stories, Seymour autobiography and a great deal of poetry. Both were outstanding editors. Edna Manley, an important sculptor, was the wife of Norman Manley, prime minister of Jamaica; she facilitated resources for the arts in Jamaica.
97. Vic Reid, *New Day* (New York: Knopf, 1949); *Nanny-Town* (Kingston: Jamaica Publishing House, 1983).
98. See John Thieme, *Postcolonial Con-Texts: Writing Back to the Canon* (London: Continuum, 2001). See also Roberto Fernández Retamar, *Caliban and Other Essays*, trans. Edward Baker (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
99. For her extended work, see Maryse Condé, *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, trans. Richard Philcox (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992); *Heremakhonon*, trans. Richard Philcox (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1982), and *The Children of Segú*, trans. Linda Coverdale (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989). Condé's remark is found in the 'Afterword' to *I, Tituba* (cited above), p. 201.
100. Burnett's *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse* (London: Penguin, 1986) and also *Voiceprint*, no. 71, cover this spectrum, the latter more emphasizing the oral. See Laurence A. Breiner, *An Introduction to West Indian Poetry* (Cambridge University Press, 1998); J. Edward Chamberlin, *Come Back to Me My Language* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993). For reasons of space I cannot mention all the poets who deserve to be included here.
101. For example, Martin Carter, whose 'University of Hunger' is particularly powerful (Burnett (ed.), *Caribbean Verse*, pp. 214–15), stayed in Guyana. Dennis Scott, both poet ('Uncle Time', in Burnett (ed.), p. 301) and dramatist, eventually migrated to the US. Kamau Brathwaite left Barbados to study for his first degree, but returned to the Caribbean (Jamaica); for many years; he now lives mostly in the US. Derek

- Walcott stayed in the Caribbean for a long time, then began to commute to teach in the US.
102. I shall explore just one example here. Nicolás Guillén was born in 1902 in Cuba, which has a very rich literary tradition. He is particularly well known for his use of the *son*, a Cuban popular song with strong African ancestry; like his fellow countryman Alejo Carpentier he worked to bring African cultural elements to greater visibility in Cuban culture. Brathwaite has brought both the demotic (song and speech) and African cultural elements in his own culture of Barbados and elsewhere in the Caribbean to far greater prominence.
 103. Tony Martin, *Literary Garveyism: Garvey, Black Arts and the Harlem Renaissance* (Dover, MA: The Majority Press, 1983), p. 2.
 104. McKay was a pioneer of the use of the demotic in his poetry *Constab Ballads* (London: Watts and Co., 1912). His fiction, such as *Home to Harlem* (New York: Harper, 1928), manifests not only the richly diverse literary culture of the Harlem Renaissance but also a cosmopolitanism ahead of its time, as does *Banjo: A Story Without a Plot* (London: Harper 1929). To understand how Jamaica formed McKay, see Winston James, *Claude McKay's Jamaica and His Poetry of Rebellion* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2001).
 105. Jean Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark* (London: Constable, 1934), *Good Morning Midnight* (London: Constable, 1939). Rhys's aesthetic is deeply informed by her Caribbean origins, despite spending her adult life in Europe. See Elaine Savory, *Jean Rhys* (Cambridge University Press, 1998, repr. 2001), as well as Savory, *The Cambridge Introduction to Jean Rhys* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).
 106. See Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Hammersmith, 1998).
 107. Ralph de Boissière, *Crown Jewel* (Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1952); *Rum and Coca-Cola* (Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1956), *No Saddles for Kangaroos* (Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1964); Garth St Omer, *A Room on the Hill* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), *Shades of Grey* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), *Nor Any Country* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), *J-Black Bum and the Masqueraders* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972).
 108. Poet Léon Damas, born in Guyane (French Guyana), in 1912, met Léopold Senghor through the agency of Césaire, and the three founded the Negritude movement. See *Pigments* (Paris: Guy Lévis Mano, 1937).
 109. See Anne Walmsley, *The Caribbean Artists Movement* (London: New Beacon Books, 1992).
 110. Sam Selvon, *The Housing Lark* (London: MacGibbon & Kee 1965), *Moses Ascending* (London: Davis Poynter 1975), *Moses Migrating* (London: Longman 1983), *Turn Again Tiger* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1958), *I Hear Thunder* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1963), *The Plains of Caroni* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1970), *Those Who Eat the Cascadura* (London: Davis Poynter, 1972).
 111. Austin Clarke, *Growing up Stupid under the Union Jack* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1980).
 112. Austin Clarke, *Pigtails n' Breadfruit: A Culinary Memoir* (1999; New York: New Press, 2000).
 113. Austin Clarke, *The Polished Hoe* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2002).
 114. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
 115. Beryl Gilroy, *Boy Sandwich* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1989).

116. Beryl Gilroy, *Black Teacher* (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture, 1976); *Inkle and Yarico* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 1996).
117. Paule Marshall, *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (New York: Random House, 1959).
118. Paule Marshall, *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1969), *Praisesong for the Widow*, *The Fisher King* (New York: Scribner's 2001).
119. Caryl Phillips, *The European Tribe* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987).
120. Caryl Phillips, *Cambridge* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993), *The Nature of Blood* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997).
121. *Higher Ground* (New York: Viking, 1989), *A State of Independence* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986).
122. David Dabydeen, *Slave Song* (Mundelstrop: Dangaroo, 1984), p. 13; see also *Coolie Odyssey* (Hertford: Hansib, 1988).
123. David Dabydeen, *Turner* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994).
124. His fiction includes David Dabydeen, *The Intended* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1991). Dabydeen is also an editor and critic. See David Dabydeen and Nana Wilson-Tagoe, *A Reader's Guide to West Indian and Black British Literature* (London: Hansib, 1988).
125. Marlene NourbeSe Philip, *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* (Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island: Ragweed Press, 1989).
126. *A Genealogy of Resistance* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 1997), *Zong!* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008).
127. *The Mystic Masseur* (London: André Deutsch, 1957), *The Middle Passage* (London: André Deutsch, 1962), *Finding the Center* (London: André Deutsch, 1984), *A House for Mr Biswas* (London: André Deutsch, 1961).
128. In the first phase, *At the Bottom of the River* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984), *Annie John* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985), *Lucy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990); the second, *The Autobiography of My Mother* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), *My Brother* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), *Mr Potter* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002); the third, *My Garden (Book)* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), *Among Flowers* (Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2005).
129. Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
130. Edwards concludes his book, 'The sense of the tragic for our postcolonial time is not that we are likewise doomed, that change is futile, that in the end we are mere pawns of imperial tyranny...'; instead James's *Jacobins* teaches that 'our own struggle for alternative futures... has always to be tempered by our remembrance of his example' (all p. 221).
131. Curdella Forbes, *From Nation to Diaspora: Samuel Selvon, George Lamming and the Performance of Gender* (Mona: University of the West Indies Press, 2005).
132. *Trench Town Rock* (Providence: Lost Roads, 1994).
133. Fred D'Aguiar, *Feeding the Ghosts* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997).
134. Andrew Salkey, *A Quality of Violence* (London: Hutchinson, 1959); Sonny Ladoo, *This Pain My Body* (Toronto: Anansi House, 1972).
135. Edwidge Danticat, *The Farming of Bones* (1998; New York: Penguin, 1999).
136. *Brother, I'm Dying* (New York: Random House, 2007).
137. Tessa McWatt, *This Body* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2004).
138. Ramabai Espinet, *The Swinging Bridge* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2003).
139. Nalo Hopkinson, *Brown Girl in the Ring* (New York: Warner, 1998), *Skin Folk* (New York: Warner: 2001), *The Salt Roads* (New York: Warner, 2003).

140. *Turn Thanks* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), *Travelling Memories* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2001), *From Harvey River* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).
141. Lorna Goodison, 'Heartease: New England 1987', *Selected Poems* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 107.
142. There are important women writers before 1980: Dominica's Jean Rhys and Phyllis Allfrey (*The Orchid House*, London: Constable, 1953); Haiti's Marie Vieux Chauvet, *La Danse sur le volcan* (Paris: Plon, 1957); Puerto Rico's Loida Figueroa, *Arenales* (1961; Barcelona: Editorial Rumbos, 1966); Trinidad's Rosa Guy, *A Bird at My Window* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1966); Guadeloupe's Simone Schwarz-Bart, *Pluie et vent sur Telumée Miracel* (Paris: Seuil, 1972) and others; the majority of women writers began to publish as the women's movement became more influential in the Caribbean. Though it is impossible to include mention of all recent significant women writers, a few additional names are mentioned here: Rosario Ferré, *Sweet Diamond Dust* (New York: Ballantine, 1989); Sylvia Wynter, *The Hills of Hebron* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962); Pauline Melville, *Shape-Shifter* (London: The Women's Press, 1990); Olive Senior, *Gardening in the Tropics* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994); Pamela Mordecai, *The True Blue of Islands* (Toronto: Sandberry Press, 2005); Merle Collins, *Angel* (London: The Women's Press, 1987). See Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert and Olga Torres-Seda (eds.), *Caribbean Women Novelists* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993); Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido (eds.), *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990); Belinda Edmondson, *Making Men: Gender, Literary Authority, and Women's Writing in Caribbean Narrative* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Denise de Caires Narain, *Caribbean Women's Poetry: Making Style* (London: Routledge, 2007); Helen Scott, *Caribbean Women Writers and Globalization: Fictions of Independence* (Aldershot: Aldgate, 2006); Evelyn O'Callaghan, *Woman Version: Theoretical Approaches to West Indian Fiction by Women* (London: Macmillan, 1993).
143. Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (Watertown: Persephone Press, 1982); Dionne Brand, *Inventory* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2006).
144. David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 1, 2, 4.
145. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
146. Curwen Best, *The Politics of Caribbean Cyberculture* (New York: Palgrave, 2008).
147. C. L. R. James, 'The artist in the Caribbean', *C. L. R. James: The Future in the Present: Selected Writings* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Co, 1977), p. 130.

Postcolonialism and Arab literature

MUHSIN AL-MUSAWI

While there was an Arab revivalism in the last decades of the nineteenth century against both the Ottoman legacy and the colonial onslaught, the actual impact of the revivalists was limited to endeavours to combat colonial discourse and to consolidate the use of the Arabic language through educational institutions and the reprinting of classical texts like the ones edited by Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abdu (d. 1905). On a general and more practical level, the elite, including the military officers who were trained in Istanbul, were more receptive to a European model of a nation state with lip service to Arab culture and Islam. The absence in educational institutions – and even among writers and clerics who were dubbed as ‘religious mendicants’ by Lloyd¹ – of a thorough engagement with the sacred in one’s culture, including religious thought, and classical or Qur’ānic rhetoric, is very conspicuous. This absence clears the ground for a counter-Europeanized outlook and undertaking manifested in the pervasive elitist reception of the European Enlightenment discourse, especially its landmarks in philosophy, sociology and education, such as Herbert Spencer’s *On Education* (translated in 1908), John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty*, Darwin’s *Origin of Species* and hundreds of books in different fields of knowledge.² The Turco-Albanian Egyptian ruler Muḥammad ‘Ali had already established the School of Languages, *Madrasat al-alsun* (1835), for this purpose. His project must not be seen as limited to Egypt, because he and, especially, his son Ibrahim worked and fought for an Arab empire with a centre in Cairo, as his conquests in Arabia and Syria demonstrate.³

Although many Arab writers and scholars, along with Orientalists and Arabists, think of the contact with Europe as historically tied to late eighteenth-century colonialism, especially Napoleon’s invasion (1798–1803), these contacts were already there during the golden days of the Islamic empire (eighth to twelfth centuries), the Frankish wars and invasions of Jerusalem (the twelfth to thirteenth centuries), and the so-called *reconquista* of Muslim Spain (Andalus) and (with a difference) Sicily (between the twelfth and sixteenth

centuries). Europe made enormous use of these encounters on the economic, social and especially cultural levels. Arab and some non-Muslim historians look upon these days of renaissance as the period that enriched Europe and helped in leading it out of medievalism towards its renaissance.⁴ Although conservative Arab historians, *littérateurs* and reformists look upon these as justifications for a new rapprochement with Europe in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this line of thought began to lose ground among more serious *littérateurs* who thought of the matter in terms of power relations whereby colonial violence ensured the domination of Arab lands, a fact that explains to them also how the Arab glory dwindled and shrank to memories after the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols (1258) and the subsequent Ottoman control of Arab regions under the banner of Islam.⁵ The Ottomans were known for their ruthless misuse of their Muslim subjects, exploitation of lands and people, bureaucracy and nepotism, and dislike of the Arabic language. Indeed, the cotemporary Iraqi dramatist Yūsuf al-ʿĀnī conveys as much in his short play, 'Where the Power Lies'. There the speaker says: 'like under the Ottomans! Government offices then were completely unsupervised. Employees were always late getting to the office, and never completed any business unless they were bribed.'⁶ Certainly the colonial powers that inherited the Ottoman legacy proved to be more devastating. The French followed a destructive policy in their occupation of Algeria, 1830–1962, and Tunisia, 1881–1954. They dominated Morocco, Syria and Lebanon in the aftermath of World War I. France planned the division of Morocco with Spain in 1904, and in 1912 Morocco became a French protectorate. The British seized the routes to India and captured the port of Aden in 1839; they took over Sudan and Egypt in 1882, and occupied Palestine, Jordan and Iraq as Ottoman dominions. The Mahdi revolt in Sudan in the 1880s, which was led by Maḥmūd Aḥmad, brought about the death of the British army leader General Gordon in 1885, a fact that maddened the British; the new British General, Lord Kitchener, used brutal methods to subdue Sudan and claim it as his own. The Treaty of Versailles (28 June 1919), as run by the same occupation forces, issued the provisions for the mandates.

While twentieth-century Arab writers showed no sanguine feelings towards the Ottomans, late nineteenth-century Arab politicians and officers who received their training from them held different opinions, and for a good reason: they would be part of the ruling elite under the Ottomans and the following colonial powers, and therefore central to nation state formation. The emerging divide between Ottoman-oriented corps and British or French subordinates had a great impact not only on the formation of the new nation states but also on

ideologies that were to pass acute tests and undergo further divisions after the introduction of Marxist thought, Darwinism, compartmentalized nationalisms and Nazism. Although some writers in Egypt were strongly supportive of the notion that an Arab awakening, meaning a Europeanized worldview that aspired to a nation state on the European model, took place immediately upon contact with French thought during Napoleon's military expedition and occupation (1798–1801), others think there was no impact whatsoever. They consider that the actual change took place particularly in Egypt when the Turco-Albanian *condottiere* Muḥammad 'Alī (1805–48) made use of the vacuum left by the French in 1803 to eliminate competitors from among high-ranking Mamluk officers there and to embark thereafter on a comprehensive plan to establish a new state with an educational system based on Italian, British and especially French models.⁷ This point is worth noting because the emerging cultural change, including the model of the nation state, was soon to reach many Arab regions. The introduction of printing was not bound to this event, however, as there were already printing presses, brought by Jesuits, in Syria/Lebanon. On the other hand, the confrontation with the French expedition, whose leader, Napoleon Bonaparte, simultaneously claimed Islamic and secular thought, brought about a discursive contestation that polarized positions and enhanced more engagement with French thought.

However, by helping to dislodge the Ottomans, this French military expedition provoked religious and national animosity and opposition; it also enforced a counter-tendency to applaud the French against a decaying Ottoman system with its effete and ageing religious veneer that paid lip service to Islamic thought or practice. The mixed response is important to us because it has the epistemological components of a divide that has the uncertainties and anxieties of a modern consciousness regarding the past. Indeed, which past should both clergy and intellectuals cope with? The Ottomans did not offer much in this direction, and although the Islamic tradition was lively among scholars it lapsed into common faith, superstition and mere rituals and visitations among the peasantry.⁸ Napoleon's first communiqué upon invading Egypt tried to invest as much symbolic and cultural power as possible in its discourse of condescension, persuasion, deceit and threat in a discourse that is loaded with Islamic identity claims that went as far as declaring the French as Muslims and Napoleon, in the following communiqué, as divinely inspired and guided or Mahdī.⁹ Napoleon built his erroneous and deceitful tactic on an actual failure in the official Islamic discourse, its loss of substantial symbolic or cultural power, and its association with an effete Mamluk oligarchy and its subordinate class from among the learned.

The encounter with the French expedition as a colonial incursion led to a first-hand knowledge of colonialism, its selective offers of Europeanized modernity and its brutality and selfish interests. Its communiqué became from that point on the ur-text for colonialism, with its promises, duplicity and actual intentions; hence its significance for any reading of postcolonial Arabic literature.¹⁰ Lord Cromer's speeches, which were also to appear in his *Modern Egypt*, General Maud's communiqué to the Iraqis in 1917, and many others, followed the pattern of the Napoleonic communiqué. The first two major narratives that appeared in Egypt in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as historical surveys and eyewitness accounts by 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī (1756–1825) and Rifā'a Rāfi' al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801–73) give readers a double perspective on the French in Egypt. The former wrote a Chronicle and the latter an account of French at home in *Takhliṣ al-'ibriz fī talkhīs Bārīz* (1834; *Imam in Paris*), which initiated other narratives like that of the Tunisian Aḥmad B. Abī al-Ḍayyāf¹¹ (1804–74), who recorded his visit to France in 1846 as the chancellor in the company of the ruler, Aḥmad Bey. There one also gets the impression of a distance separating the Ottoman dominions and France, for as one of the protagonists, the Shaykh, concludes: 'These people were ahead of us in civilization which they adopted as a way of life and conduct.'¹² This selective view of France as the embodiment of culture is not the one which inspired the Tunisian Albert Memmi's pioneering reading of colonial encroachments.¹³

Al-Jabartī was not deceived by the colonial discourse, however, for he read through the communiqué and compared it to what was taking place on the ground. The ultimate representation of the French was not softened by Napoleon's social performance, including his affairs with young females, such as Shaykh al-Bakrī's daughter. French colonials' double standards, laxity, hypocrisy, brutality and destructiveness are set side by side with their interest in knowledge, science and discipline. This is the image of the French and the British that littérateurs who travelled to Paris and London, or imagined them on the basis of antecedent accounts, would sustain throughout later writings. The moral issue is foregrounded in these accounts, but the emphasis on urban planning, statecraft, judicial systems and knowledge is prioritized. The epistemological shift in discursive narratives henceforth should be seen not against an Islamic background, though Arab revivalists remind their readers of an Islamic renaissance in Baghdad in its heyday, but against an Ottoman legacy that dominated the Arab regions under the Islamic banner without actual participation in social or political growth. But no matter how revivalists tried to strike a balance between the past and the present, Islam and Europe, native elites had already collapsed backwardness, superstition and traditionalism with the past as an outworn legacy.

The problem with this evolving discourse, its enormous investment in the European Enlightenment discourse and its unrestrained celebration of reason, empiricism, science, progress and subsequent engagement with bourgeois ethics, lies in its disregard for popular tradition, beliefs and practices that constitute an Islamic legacy which works as an undercurrent beyond the reach of official jurists and state functionaries. Hisham Sharabi describes this Islam, without enough recognition of its latent potential force, as ‘the spontaneous, instinctive beliefs of the common man; an unarticulated attachment to inherited attitudes and modes of behavior and a psychology beyond the reach of certain external ideas and influences’.¹⁴ But this same popular belief is also the one decried and belittled by many from among the ‘awakening’ elite, including the Egyptians Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (d. 1973), Ibrāhīm al-Māzinī (d. 1949) and Yahyā Ḥaqqī (d. 1992); the Iraqis Jamīl Ṣidqī al-Zahāwī (d. 1935), Ma’rūf al-Ruṣāfī (d. 1945), Dhū al-Nūn Ayyūb (d. 1988) and many others. As late as 1944, Yahyā Ḥaqqī’s protagonist Ismā’īl in his *The Lamp of Umm Hashim* speaks of religion in the following terms: ‘Religion became for him [Ismā’īl] a fable that had been invented in order to keep the masses in control, while the human spirit could find no strength, and thus no happiness, unless it detached itself from crowds and from confronting them; to immerse oneself in them was a weakness spelling disaster.’¹⁵ Yahyā Ḥaqqī was not the first, because ahead of him there was the Egyptian journalist, writer and poet Ibrāhīm al-Māzinī with his short story ‘How I Became a Demon of the Jinn?’

Along with Ayyūb’s satire of the clergy in his *Duktūr Ibrāhīm* (1936–8), there was the Iraqi Kāzīm Makkī in his novel *Ṣafwān al-adīb* (1938), which was criticized by religious circles but had a good reception in the Ministry of Education. In both narratives the protagonists are intellectuals who come under the impact of new translations in literature and thought. They ultimately endorse modernity as secularism or agnosticism. The protagonist in Yahyā Ḥaqqī’s narrative becomes an eye specialist whose former British female mentor tells him to go back to the land of the blind, Egypt, to bring them light. She repeats a British designation of Egypt before occupation as the land of the blind. The British Governor Lord Cromer said this in 1907, after some twenty-four years of occupation: ‘I believe it is a fact the children of the blind are able to see.’¹⁶ Cromer speaks in this vein when even the learned Muslim Shaykhs and reformers were without hopes of change, and when there was also a search for ways to reach the level of the Anglo-Saxons in science and technology. On the doubt and despair penetrating the Islamic reform movement, Shaykh Muḥammad Riḍā reports the following that took place before Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abdu’s death in 1905:

We were at the home of the Imam [ʿAbdu] talking about what we had just heard concerning the desire of the Japanese nation to adopt the religion of Islam. Sheikh Husain al-Jisr exclaimed: ‘Now there will be hope for Islam to regain its glory.’ [Sheikh Salman (d. 1918), another disciple of ʿAbdu’s] answered: ‘leave [the Japanese] alone. I am afraid if they became Muslims like us we will corrupt them before they have a chance to reform us. . . We shall yet see the result of your hopes in this dead [Muslim] nation and the outcome of the reforms you have attempted in these corrupt [Arab] people. . . .’¹⁷

Discursive battling: history as encounter

Albert Hourani notices in his *Arabic Thought* how E. Demoulin’s book on the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons suggests that this superiority derives from ‘individual initiative’ and ‘individual welfare’, which are behind the imperial achievement.¹⁸ Edmond Demoulin’s *A quoi tient la supériorité des Anglo-Saxons?* (1896) was translated by Faṭḥī Zaghlūl as *Sirr taqaddum al-Ingīz* (1899), and followed by a book by Muḥammad ʿUmar on *Ḥāḍir al-Miṣrīyīn wa- sirr ta’khuṛihim* (1902; The Present State of the Egyptians and the Secret of Their Backwardness). While narratives convey an engagement with this issue, as in Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī’s (d. 1930) fictional works,¹⁹ there are similar engagements in narratives and poems all over the Arab world. Whenever books and publications deal with Islam or with regional or national identity, there are translators and writers who are ready to engage with these. Both the emergence of the hybrid intellectual of mixed Syrian, Tunisian, Egyptian and other lineage as well as cultural discussions of books in translation speak of a traumatic moment in identity formation in confrontation with a power that is taken to be superior on more than one level. Especially among the intelligentsia there is always a sense of littleness that can be overcome through rising to the standard of the colonial power. In Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī’s narrative, his protagonist’s experience back home corroborates Mary’s advice to rise above the masses that otherwise, in her stipulation, will bring him down to their low level, a view which the novel endorses in the same vein that led the *nahḍah* elite to neglect the masses.

Although other colonial onslaughts were no less complicated, some, like the Italians in Libya (1912) or the French in Algeria (1830), offer a dismal presence, brutal and devastating. In the first decades of the twentieth century, we come across passing representations of the encounter with the colonial, as in Najīb Maḥfūz’s *Al-Qāhira al-jadīdah* (1945; *Cairo Modern*, 2008), where a British soldier gets killed in a bar after a fight over a woman, or as in the image of the murdered soldier which haunts the protagonist in al-Ḥakīm’s *ʿUṣfūr min al-sharq* (1938; *Bird from the East*, 1967). These are not problematized enough to evoke the complexity

of the encounter with colonial authority which later novelists like the Libyan Ibrāhim al-Kūnī (b. 1948) narrate. Al-Kūnī avoids compartmentalized representations to expose the damage done by colonials to ancient history and landscape physically, morally and culturally. Through the eyes of Sufi Shaykhs or slaughtered animals and crucified peasants, we discern this damage as well as the problems inherent in Enlightenment humanism as exercised by the colonials under the rubric of universal reason. Responding to the American John Parker's mission to kill more gazelles and mouflons, Shaykh Jallūlī murmured in *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* (*The Bleeding of the Stone*) 'How can you claim . . . to belong to the religion of Christ?'²⁰ There are native collaborators who are no less avaricious and bloody, but characters assume meaning through mythical paradigms that conceptualize the colonial encounter through the older mythical archetypes of Cain and Abel. Narratives take cognizance of the encounter as a complex one with some natives as collaborators against history, culture and nature. The first generation of 'awakening' writers tends to focus on intellectualized surrogates whose anti-colonial thought makes them focus on moral issues pertaining to hypocrisy, deceit and camouflage in colonial discourse when colonial governors use brutal force against natives while depicting an innocent show of protest by natives as 'Islamic fanaticism spreading over North Africa'. The influential Egyptian intellectual Salāmah Mūsā (d. 1947) writes in his recollections of the Dinshaway (1906) massacre in this manner. He describes Cromer's discourse as a colonial strategy to 'keep us in the darkness of ignorance and in the humiliation of poverty by preventing the development of education and industry'.²¹ In narrative proper the same views appear in writings before 1967 minus the complexity that will soon distinguish writings thereafter. Moreover, in writings before 1967 we may come across narratives that have a historical framework but skip the encounter or define it in terms of knowledge and culture, as in Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's autobiography *Al-Ayyām* (*The Days*).²² Whether in acclaim, compromise, or rejection of the colonial discourse and rhetoric of empires, the intelligentsia before 1967, with the exception of poets who largely continued a tradition of confrontation, has forged a compromising discourse that reluctantly acquiesces to imperial power. Hence the difficulty in coming up with a clear-sighted sense of selfhood, identity, nationhood and moral responsibility in terms of power relations.

Defining the postcolonial in Arabic literature

The difficulty of offering more specific outlines emanates not only from the mixed formation of the intelligentsia, but also from the hybrid make-up of the nation state and the ensuing impact on literary production. To cope with

the implications of literary production in the Arab world, we may need then to discuss first the nature of the encounter with colonial powers as represented in narrative, poetry, drama, literary essays, travel accounts and translations, and venues of literary and cultural production. We need also to discuss this as a series of anxieties, for no encounter assumes a straightforward rejection and opposition or subordination and acceptance. Furthermore, we need to define the nature of postcolonial production not only in terms of temporal markers but also in keeping with the epistemological underpinnings that exemplify Macherey's roles of knowledge.²³ Furthermore, we need to look upon the whole encounter in terms of its violence in Iraq, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan and Syria, for example, where the colonial brutality and destruction was surpassed only in later periods by recent wars in Iraq in 1991 and 2003 and in Palestine and Lebanon since 1982. On the other hand, the deceptive face of the encounter, its cultural offerings that were happily received by the intelligentsia and lavishly represented in narratives, may well be read in terms of Pierre Bourdieu's 'symbolic violence', whereby the recipient is implicated in 'a relation of indebtedness', which keeps the colonized bound to a feeling of subordination that leaves him powerless, unable to reciprocate, and hence under the impression of the 'intrinsic worthiness' of the giver and provider, the white man and his burden.²⁴

A break took place in literary production furthering a shift in consciousness when the conflict took on more pronounced terms of interest, as in the 1956 combined attack on Egypt by England, Israel and France. Poetry, narrative and drama began to see further lines of demarcation in the encounter that take cognizance of economic interests and geopolitical factors. Postwar literature has a drive towards modernity that argues a political and social cause, as in the Iraqi Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb's (d. 1964) poetry. The shift does de-totalize the West, however, and it is no longer tenable to speak of a homogenous West. *Littérateurs* from the East and the West take up shared positions themselves, albeit with a lot of confusion, questioning the colonial and imperial presence as an economic and geopolitical fact. Sartre's and Camus's positions on Palestine and Algeria are a case in point. Literary production comes under different influences and even interventions from international politicized cultural powers, and the nation states are not as sanguinely accepted by writers after degenerating into coercive police states. Indeed, the scene since the late 1960s raises further questions about generic formation, wholesale borrowing of Western modes of writing. It looks into colonial temporal markers in terms of a colonial legacy that may well survive in partial practices of the postcolonial states. The return to native forms of writing since the late 1960s testifies not

only to discontent with the splintered offerings of superficial modernities, but also with the faith that has kept the intelligentsia bound to a secular age, a fact that can be traced in early literary production. Indeed, it is rare to come across an autobiography or autobiographical narrative, like Tāhā Husayn's *Ayyām* or the Moroccan 'Abd al-Majīd Ben Jallūn's *Fī al-Ṭufūlah* (1956; In Childhood) without noticing the informing secular mind that espouses independence (Morocco in 1956) while building a self-narrative that celebrates a Europeanized nation state on the ruins of a traditional culture. The implications of these concerns lie not only in their vertical and horizontal indices, but also in the nature of production itself, which at times cuts across these terms of convenience. The markers of postcolonial confrontations or modern-style secularities are not as innocent or straightforward as one may assume, according to textual or structuralist readings, for every piece of writing or speech has a cultural or symbolic value that may well elude attention otherwise. In Pierre Bourdieu's words, 'What circulates on the linguistic market is not "language" as such, but rather discourses that are stylistically marked both in their production, in so far as each speaker fashions an idiolect from the common language, and in their reception, in so far as each recipient helps to *produce* the message . . . by bringing to it everything that makes up his singular and collective experience.'²⁵

With the emergence in the 1930s of organized politics, new powers have developed among the elite that question and debate total dependency or wholesale acquisition of European achievements. Since then and with the rising bourgeoisie there has been more opportunism, social climbing, deceit, fake idealism, false banners and truisms than their like in the Western legacy. Thus the renowned Egyptian dramatist Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm (d. 1987) wrote his narratives of the 1930s to call for the 'return of the national spirit',²⁶ a call that made the leader of the 1952 revolution in Egypt Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir autograph his book *The Philosophy of the Revolution* with a note addressed to al-Ḥakīm alluding to the title of his narrative, *The Return of the Spirit* (1933). The leader admitted that he was influenced by that narrative. In al-Ḥakīm's other narrative of 1936, *Bird of the East*, he lets his Russian exile question Western materialism, while the protagonist intimates his doubts about the present East, with its fading spiritualism. On the other hand, the Iraqi Dhū al-Nūn Ayyūb presented his protagonist Dr Ibrāhīm, not only as hybrid and opportunist, but also as one who is no less corrupt than the others in the nationalist club he is subscribing to. The ardent members ask for purity of Arab blood as a condition of membership while they descend from mixed races. In other words, in the wake of postcolonial nationalism there are many anxieties, doubts and displays of

opportunism that may betray some infantilism among Arab intellectuals in search of meaning.

As they were in control of the media, the elite were able to create a professional sector with a substantial investment in the Arab cultural industry, including the academy. While there is a strong discriminatory sense of what to take or reject from Europe in a period which Ṭāhā Ḥusayn terms as 'transitional', there is more hesitation and anxiety regarding a past which is not clear enough in the minds of many with a meagre knowledge of tradition and history. This public effort and 'spirit' which Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and others speak of as the 'zeitgeist', the spirit of the age that calls for change, requires a critical judgment to effect the transition in life and culture. Critics were still limited then to elaborating on the 'rules of consumption',²⁷ not the rules of production. Indeed, the 'dean of Arabic letters', as Ṭāhā Ḥusayn was called in his lifetime, admits how his early criticisms of other littérateurs were no more than 'foolish' catering to the taste of consumers. In other matters, his 'attitude to literature was very old fashioned. I was punctilious about word forms and proper usages'.²⁸

'Transition' may be the in-between space, the one that Homi Bhabha associates with the ambivalence of power, but in the aftermath of colonialism it bears the stamp of its machinery and knowledge. Orientalism reappears among leading Arab intellectuals in the effort to apply fashionable critical and exegetical methodologies that were popular in Europe. But it also functions as 'Foucauldian disciplinary practice', one that eschews popular tradition, makes fun of religion and collapses it with superstition. It furthers cultural dependency and establishes new models for writing, expression and lifestyle. No wonder that writing the self took the form of Western models, which depart from the examples set in the Islamic/Arab tradition by al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) or Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) where the pursuit of knowledge has a disinterested motivation, knowledge as knowledge that could signify change in perspective and position but not betterment in life. The modern Arab autobiography did not make use of 'Usāmah Ibn Munqidh's (d. 1188) autobiography, which was written at a late period in his life to assess and record his experience of the Franks who occupied his city along with Jerusalem and other places. In these Arab and Islamic models the Other is tested and examined, and the Self passes through some troubles which require explanation and recognition. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's autobiography, which was to influence many narratives thereafter, might have something of Goethe's *Werther*. He wrote the introduction to the renowned littérateur Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt's translation of the book in 1920. There he spoke of the period as one of transition that questions the past and

looks forward to understand the future. Anxiety is the parameter there which amounts to no more than subservience to a Western canon and application of its ways and methods including, apart from Rousseau's *Confessions*, a restrained reading and writing of the self. Hence his *Ayyām* (Days) lays the blame on others for accumulating obstacles in the face of a genius that flowered in full only in France. There is definitely the petit bourgeois striving for knowledge and achievement, but there is also a craving for the other source of knowledge and even love. Women in France, as well as women in Egypt like Māyy Ziyadah, have a distinguished presence through their voice, which remains in his memory until put into writing. Comparable to this Heavenly bliss was its Orientalist counterpart as exemplified and enshrined in Cairo University lecture halls where Professors Carlo Alfonso Nallino (d. 1938), Santillana, Miluni and other Orientalists met his craving for knowledge as transmitted through a different tone, accent, rhetoric and method. This welcome to difference and reception of Europe as exemplified in experts and professors, who were brought in by the new elite, explains also the complexity of the encounter between *nahḍah* intellectuals, their own cultural milieu and post-war generations of writers, especially in matters of tradition, religion, desire and love. Indeed, the Iraqi Fu'ād al-Takarlī (1927–2008) lets his gender-conscious male protagonist in the *Al-Masarrāt wa-al-awjā'* (1999; Gladnesses and Pains) admit, for instance, the impact of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's autobiography *Al-Ayyām*, though he is even more existentially concerned with his own personal destiny.²⁹ National concerns are minimal in comparison to the ascending journey of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's protagonist with his self-aggrandizement that collapses one's ascending journey with the aspiration of the nation to move forward, away from its past, including tradition. The autobiographies of Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm and Ibrāhīm al-Māzinī (1890–1949) in his *Qisṣat Ḥayāh* (1943; A Life Story) and *Ibrāhīm al-Kātib* (1931; *Ibrahim the Writer*, 1976), and such sequels as Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's *Adīb* (1935; Man of Letters) and Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm's *Sijn al-'Umr* (1964; *The Prison of Life*) and *'Awdat al-rūh* (1933) convey an anxiety that also distinguishes the aspirations of the national bourgeoisie. Later autobiographies may veer away from this self-aggrandizement, as new problems, including state coercion, leave no space for self-aggrandizement. Although dedicated to the author of *Al-Ayyām*, Sayyid Qutb's autobiography, *Ṭifl min al-qaryah* (1946; *A Child from the Village*, 2004), is more grounded in tradition despite the fact that it was written before he made contact with the Muslim Brotherhood or showed signs of Islamic fervour. In the Egyptian Nawāl al-Sa'dāwī's memoirs as a doctor (1980), for instance, there is a new experiential level that collapses the social and the political in a locus that fits that the writer's vision of women's issues.³⁰

There is no search for self-aggrandizement: experience forges a human whose consciousness is little ahead of his fellow countrymen; it is not so distinguished and prioritized as in the Moroccan 'Abd al-Karīm Ghallāb's (1919–2006) *Master Alī* and the Algerian Muḥammad Dīb's *Trilogy*. Veiled and distanced, the latter narratives evolve as national allegories that need a protagonist whose mastery of the situation is always tested to prove one's leadership. In this sense they are also different from other allegorical narratives, like Najīb Maḥfūz's (d. 2006) acclaimed *Awlād Ḥaratinā* (1959; *Children of the Alley*, 1996),³¹ for the latter is an allegorical reading of the book of Genesis and the succession of prophets that stops short of claiming science as the ultimate saviour.

In general, autobiographical or national narratives before 1967 tend to be more celebratory of personal and national independence. This is not the case in subsequent literary production, when the ultimate transformation of the bourgeoisie and surrender of leadership to the intelligentsia led the petit bourgeois leadership to familiarize themselves with the defensive rules and procedures that inaugurate the formal birth of police nation states, as anticipated by Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*. The celebratory tone of the co-opted intelligentsia gives way to frustration, doubt, scrutiny and harrowing detail of suffering that ranges from dislocation by settlers to imprisonment, torture, and even murder on the hands of the national apparatus. The autobiographical narratives of the Palestinian resident of Iraq Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā (d. 1995), Al-bi'r al-'ulā (1987; *The First Well: A Bethlehem Boyhood*, 1995), Fadwā Ṭūqān's *A Mountainous Journey: A Poet's Autobiography* (1990), Murīd al-Barghūthī's *Ra'aytu Rāmallah* (1997; *I saw Ramallah*, 2003) and the Moroccan prison narratives bring other dimensions to postcolonial literary production. The autobiographical takes at times a slice of one's experience under duress and calamity, like the war on Lebanon in the 1980s when Palestinians and Lebanese were held hostage in Beirut when Israeli forces virtually occupied Lebanon. The late Palestinian poet Maḥmūd Darwīsh wrote down his own experience under Israeli shelling. There, in *Dhākirah lil-nisyan* (1986; *Memory for Forgetfulness*, 1995), past and present meet and diverge, and the word carries passion, anticipation, apprehension and an enormous capacity to encapsulate all in rich and lively prose. His *Memory for Forgetfulness* stands out as the epitome of a powerful prose written as actual experience that forges its way through a poetic mind that also stands for his nation.³² Other narratives written in a novelistic tradition, such as the Egyptian 'Abd al-Ḥakīm Qāsim's (d. 1990) *Ayyām al-insān al-sab'ah* (*The Seven Days of Man*) and the Iraqi 'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim's (d. 1991) *Al-Zahr al-shaqqī* (1987; *The Suffering Primrose*), bring into narrative a mixed discourse with roots in the rural tradition, its simple

faith and repressed suffering along with another that depicts the nation state as a monstrous being, bewildered, but brutal. Throughout there is an underlying tension that keeps literature poised between self-censorship and exposure of brutality, recognition of a justified fight for independence and the actual degeneration of the independent nation state into an repressive regime. In both cases, recent and past history makes up the background of postcolonial literature, its fight to set the record straight against counter-claims.

Claiming history

Engaged in refutation, debate and a deconstruction of colonial representations, writing as narrative can be better equipped not only to map out history, but also to expose its pitfalls. History, as both a conceptualization and colonial artifice of prioritization, has been debated by national leaders, to dispute distortion and misinformation and to redraw its markers and posts in a legitimizing antecedent repository. Every national leader has a view of history and some went so far as to ask historians to envision things after models and conceptualizations that are deemed supportive of a self-styled vision of unique national leadership, as embodied in the 'only leader' cult. Napoleon was in the mind of many, for his second communiqué upon settling in Egypt goes so far as to claim his divine role. The national leaders from among the rising bourgeoisie of the 1920s in the Arab world knew, more than the petit bourgeois officers of the 1950s onwards, that history is reserved for holders of power.³³

In its most acute encounters, history enforces its presence on national writers. Both Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm (d. 1987) in *ʿUṣfūr min al-sharq* (1934; *A Bird from the East*, 1966) and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn in *Al-Ayyām* (1932; *Stream of Days*), for example, made mention of the Versailles Peace Conference in Paris, which ratified its treaty and brought it into effect on 10 January 1920. Both writers focused on what Antonius terms its 'most discredited and dangerous features'.³⁴ True to his experience in France and infatuation with the French cultural scene, Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm draws attention to Anatole France's introduction to Victor Margueritte's *Voice of Egypt*.³⁵ Ṭāhā Ḥusayn enlists the Egyptian national leader Sa'd Zaghlūl's (1857–1927) dismay at the conference. Widely regarded as no more than a 'diplomatic fiction', as Toynbee calls the treaty, its substance and style convey the rhetoric of empire in its most indifferent and derisive tones. Ṭāhā Ḥusayn reports how the Egyptian national leader Sa'd Zaghlūl looks upon the treaty as no more than an exposition of the 'thick veils' between Egypt and representatives of the West who see other nations as pitiful subordinates. The author, who was a student in Paris, then reports the

following dialogue with Sa'd Zaghlūl which the author cannot grasp in full as a national awareness of the colonial mind as arrogant, manipulative and indifferent. The dialogue runs as follows:

'What do you study in Paris?'

'I study history.'

'Do you believe in any truthfulness of history?'

'Yes, if well-researched, carefully investigated and released from pitfalls.'

Sa'd says:

'For me, it is enough to notice this falsification and these lies circulated everywhere in the newspapers and people accepting them at face value, to affirm that it is impossible to resurrect history from fabrications. I can further affirm that no truthful account can be ridden of these. Look at what is being circulated about Egypt in Paris, and tell me how it is possible to come out with a truthful history?'³⁶

It needs no great stretch of the imagination to see that Zaghlūl, as Egypt's representative at the Peace Conference, knew full well that history is written by the empowered and the privileged. He shared with other *nahḍah* national leaders the understanding that culture and media are in the hands of the British and the French. This understanding was widespread at the time. The Iraqi poet Shaykh Muḥammad Bāqir al-Shibībī (1889–1960), who was one of the leaders of the 1920 popular uprising in Iraq, edited a revolutionary newspaper in Najaf, in 1920, that called for resistance against British occupation and justified the need for armed struggle, as 'there is no response to our just struggle in British political platforms because the British have a monopoly all over the media'. The colonial power 'has no fear of posterity', says the shaykh in the editorial for the fifth issue.³⁷

The Sudanese Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ's *Mawsim al-hijra ilā al-shamāl* (1967; *Season of Migration to the North*, 1969) follows up the journey of the protagonist Mustafa Sai'd, not only in space and time, but also within the self, as the protagonist 'wanted history to immortalize him',³⁸ a desire which Mrs Robinson supports to expose the sufferings of 'Moozie's' people 'under our colonial mandate'.³⁹ The whole incentive behind both desires is to counteract another narrative which imprints itself on the British Army General Kitchener's mind. When he addressed the Sudanese fighter Maḥmud Wad (*walad* or *wuld*: ibn) Aḥmad, Kitchener negates the fighter's identity and right to be in his land. He thinks of him as the outsider, the non-native of his own country Sudan, 'Why have *you* come to *my* country to lay waste and plunder?'⁴⁰ Echoing Frantz Fanon, the narrator draws attention to a colonial desire, not only to conquer and plunder, but also to establish in spatial and temporal terms the incidental as a permanent

fact. In Fanon's words: 'The settler makes history and is conscious of making it. And because he constantly refers to the history of *his mother country*, he clearly indicates that he himself is the extension of that mother country.'⁴¹ Kitchener repeated, then, what he was taught and what he was made to believe. Writers are aware of these markers of colonial historiography, for, as the Palestinian-Israeli writer Emile Ḥabībī's teacher in *The Secret life of Saeed* says, 'conquerors, my son, consider as true history only what they have themselves fabricated'.⁴² When Macaulay was the Governor-General of India, in 1835, he took it for granted that the 'great object of the British Government ought to be the penetration of European literature and science among the nations of India', for enforced acculturation is the way to establish a native elite that can sustain the empire while upholding its own inventory of the native's non-being prior to history proper as marked by the 'civilizational' touch of the plundering 'mother'. But the whole idea behind this invasion of natives' history is grounded in a deliberate representation of lands without people, Robinson Crusoe's islands that need cultivation and control, a disciplinary touch that needs only serfs. Even post-colonial writers, like Egyptian-British Ahdaf Soueif, in her *The Map of Love* (1999), find this terrain worth visiting as a ground for bringing fiction and history together, interrogating thereby the complexity of positions and attitudes that relate to the emergence or consolidation of nation states. One of her protagonists brings a 'trunk' of scrolls, cuttings and drawings from New York to Cairo, as if to mediate a discursive transnational route through intercultural and trans-geographical marriages. While this may signify a loss of touch with identity and nationhood, the bringing back of material is a rewriting endeavour that makes use of a regained sense of independence in the face of a heap of fabrications, projections, lies, along with a few valid interpretations that make up the history of empire. Written in English, the novel targets an English-reading public. History is brought back to set the record straight.

What politics: the grand and the micro?

More significant to our discussion is the engagement with material and economic dependency that has been leading nation states into the subservient orbit of global capital. Unless we understand the imperial endeavour as one of cultural erosion towards an ultimate control of resources and markets, we cannot discern the genealogy of power politics and the ultimate hegemony of global capital. It should not be surprising as a counter move to see the emergence of literary production of a multifarious nature which either goes back to popular tradition and Sufism, or to existentialist literature, to depict an identity crisis.

Identity crisis is real today as it never was before, and the challenge to formations and malformations has already worked its way into narrative strategies. Indeed, we have to reread Ṣun'allah Ibrāhīm's *Al-Lajnah* (1981; *The Committee*, 2001)⁴³ to come to terms with the complications in the encounter between the nation state and the post-capitalist power, their joint projects and hidden agenda, which end up not only in the victim's mistrust of the state, but also in a sense of alienation and absurdity. With its bare narrative, the novel, through the anonymous protagonist as narrator, offers a compelling reading of the protagonist's utter helplessness in the face of both the post-independence state machinery with its coercion and absurdity, and the stupendous penetration of global capital into the machinery and politics of the nation state.

In postcolonial narratives, the national issue is there, but it is mostly posited in a relational nexus whereby the need for individual freedom is highlighted and the counter-assertion of identity takes place in the most unexpected manner. The human agent assumes significance and secures a position even in the most disturbing sites. The subject is no longer a witness to events. Even as an outsider or a marginalized human being, he/she is given voice to write back, uncovering brutality and absurdity. 'I am not one of your so-called leaders,' writes Ḥabībī's protagonist Saeed in *Al-Wāqī' al-gharībah*, 'someone thought worthy of notice by an elite. What I am, my dear Sir is the office boy.'⁴⁴ The underprivileged and the marginalized may regain voice only in fantasy, in the company of 'creatures from outer space,' as Saeed is in Ḥabībī's novel.⁴⁵ But writers offer this possibility at least to uncover hegemonic systems and regimes of thought. Most often a counter-inscription takes place to assert the body and the self not only against powers of occupation as is the case in Ḥabībī's narrative, but also against a nationalist rhetoric that recycles a liberatory jargon to buy more time and thereby bypass and evade the demand for democracy. Narratives of identity take issue with ideological rhetoric in times of crisis, its deliberate use of history and its markers of liberatory jargon. Postcolonial narrative unveils this jargon, parodies it and recovers the muted and the silenced. Such is Yūsuf al-Qa'īd's reading of the village chief's rhetoric in *al-Ḥarb fi barr Miṣr* (1978; *War in the Land of Egypt*, 1986), for instance. Taking the October war of 1973 as the catalyst and subject matter, the novelist dwells on the disparity between the national issue and the corruption and exploitation that undermine national sentiment and fervour. The 'umdaḥ's (village chief) son is drafted into the army, but the father persuades a peasant to send his son instead under the name of the 'umdaḥ's son. When the peasant's son dies as a martyr, the 'umdaḥ is keen on receiving the glory too. The fight on national land is a fight for power, not only with the colonizer, the occupier, the invader,

but also against exploiters whose relationship to this land could be one of combined exploitation and disregard. The land is given voice, however, and in poetry it always speaks Arabic, as both Aḥmad Fuʿād Najm and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Abnūdī, from among the oral tradition poets in Egypt, intimate.

The land is never neutral. Whether it is bedevilled by aggressors or yearned for by the native, it has a meaning and an impact on the lives of others. In times of floods or drought, it also acts on life, and Asūf's mother in al-Kūnī's *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* (1990; *The Bleeding of the Stone*, 2001) is cut to pieces because of the flood, which scatters her flesh all over the valley, as if in another paradigm of identification and fusion between the mother and the land. The novel brings forth the naturalness of life as it unfolds through the encounter and rapprochement between human, wild life and nature. It focuses on the upheaval and crisis attending the intrusions of foreign powers with their lackeys from among the greedy natives who are given biblical and Qurʾānic connotations of greed and betrayal. Situations of such large proportions produce and invigorate their micropolitics too, but the micro works dynamically in questioning sweeping grand narratives that cannot have further substantial presence in dire circumstances.

If occupation and the assault on nature are often combined in national narratives, civil wars create further concerns and internalize conflicts and problems. Individual destinies assume an upper hand while national allegories recede in the background. In the Lebanese Ḥanān al-Shaykh's (b. 1945) *Ḥikāyat Zahra* (1980; *The Story of Zahra*, 1986) the traumatic female Zahra evolves through an experience of futility and desire, aspiration and need, and repression and exposure. Like the national ideology that makes up the recollections of her uncle, the whole issue of nationhood dwindles to a fragmented personal experience caught up in war and destruction which makes no sense in a senseless world. In the Lebanese Hudā Barakāt's *Ḥajar al-dhahk* (1990; *Stone of Laughter*, 1995), women in civil war situations settled in a newspaper building, only to 'find themselves caught in the newspaper at that time, because they were alone'.⁴⁶ The novel deals with micropolitics, intimacies, aspirations, relations and fears, in a real civil war situation in 1975–82. The irony lies in the discrepancy between the newspaper (and its building which they use), which in times of peace offers the news, the inroads of power, and the sense of assurance and knowledge, and the present situation in which all are equal in their fears and disappointments. Young helpless women are ironically empowered by their very helplessness and sense of indifference to the parameters of loss and gain. They were there to participate in life and regain human familiarity beyond restrictions and constraints: 'In order to take the high probability of

death as a pretext to get rid of the last remnants of their mothers' moral teachings, in order to show the capacity of their hearts, in circumstances such as these, to embrace the sorrows of the young men.²⁴⁷ These little ironies draw attention to poetic intimations, for they also focus on the lyrical element in one's experience, an element that eludes full representation while establishing a daring confessional mode of writing.

Confrontations

Poetry also shows a serious problematic, a disengagement with faith, but a tendency to defend Islam and the Prophet against British or French accusations, as in the poetry of the revivalists in Egypt and the Arab world at the turn of the last century. The Egyptian Aḥmad Shawqī's (d. 1932) celebrated poems on Cromer's insinuations against Islam and Egypt were once household words. So were the Iraqi Muḥammad Mahdī al-Jawāhirī's (d. 1997) poems of political confrontation, or the Tunisian Abū al-Qāsim al-Shābbī's (d. 1937) poem, 'If people once strive for life, destiny has to respond'. These, and there are hundreds of poems to this effect, make up an important legacy of anti-colonial struggle, but there is nevertheless a powerful agnostic drive that resorts only occasionally to religion to critique its seeming call to submissiveness. Occasional incantations, benedictions and outbursts of faith remain different from occasional poetry that celebrates faith or commemorates the birth of the Prophet and the death of his family. As a product of modernity, a large portion of this poetry signifies divorce from classical and postclassical rules of versification. The literary production of the *nahḍah* overwhelmingly subscribes to a secular spirit that centres on humankind, not the divine. Hence the critique of the clergy as collaborators in exploitation, a viewpoint which is widely held by the intelligentsia, as narrative accounts demonstrate. Al-Jawāhirī sees the scene as one perpetuated by reactionaries, puppet regimes, exploiters and imams. In his 'A Lullaby for the Hungry' (1951), he says: 'Sleep upon these estimable sermons / coming from the Imam / Enjoining you not to seek among / worldly things the assets of your lord / For the pleasures of the Afterlife are the wages for the humiliated and / the alleviation for the hearts thirsting for the heights.'

Single poems by Aḥmad Shawqī, for example, and a large number of other neoclassicists who have survived the onset of modernity, make up only a small portion of a secular literary production that has been growing for a long time. In the 1950s there was even a rebellious spirit that rewrote the Qur'ānic story of Nūḥ (Noah), aligning the poet's voice with Noah's son who rejects God's command to abandon a land on the eve of destruction by a God-ordained

deluge. Adūnīs's 'The New Noah' (1957) claims Noah as a persona caught at a moment of uncertainty and subsequent defiance impelling him to give up a traditional legacy of obedience: 'If time rolls back to the beginning and water immerses the face of life again, if the universe trembles and God hastens to use me: "Noah, save the living!" I will not heed his words.'⁴⁸ Years later, the Egyptian poet Amal Dunqul (d. 1983) enables the son to speak out against submissive poets and intellectuals who forsake their lands in dire circumstances or under neo-colonial occupation, invasion and subordination. In a sarcastic tone, he allows the son to muse on those who desert their homelands: 'Blessed are those who ate her bread in goodly times / and turned their backs on her in adversity.'⁴⁹ Another Egyptian poet, Ḥasan Ṭilib, published his collection *Āyat Jīm* (1992) as a contrafaction to Qur'ānic *āyāt* or chapters. This reading may not sound anti-Qur'ānic for there is a counter-tendency aimed at reconstructing historical or canonical texts so as to fit into a religion of the oppressed. 'Āyat Jīm' is not followed by the usual refrain in recitations that asks for God's protection from Satan the accursed; instead it asks for the 'people's protection against the evil Sultan'.⁵⁰ The whole spirit of the 1950s and 1960s is one of protest that finds in secular ideology and modernity viable venues for protest. Secularist writings of social and political protest may show some irreligious spirit, but they still need to engage with canonical texts through mimicry, emulation, contrafaction, reconstruction, irony, travesty and pastiche, modes and strategies which Linda Hutcheon rightly treats as common ground between postmodernism and postcolonial theory.⁵¹

Despite this tendency, one can still detect a certain subtle engagement with sites of piety, where both the Sufi lexicon and lives of Sufis become pivotal to a bifurcated poetics, one involving the use of verbal simulation and contrafactual activity that feign piety. As a poetics of rupture it makes no claim to harmony in thought or form. Language is a site of this rupture. The reliance on a Sufi lexicon and poetic matrix expands the frontiers of poetry itself and brings religious texts closer to literature. This tendency is certainly limited in its impact like modern Arabic poetry itself; it fails to reach a mass audience. Nowhere is to be heard the bard of the early twentieth century or the poet of the 1940s, when anti-colonialism summoned every classical and Qur'ānic rhetoric of struggle and fight to combat and engage with colonialism and its puppet regimes. European modernity and its secular mind have a debilitating effect on poetry and poetics. Sufism, as a poetic beyond modernity and its discontents, offers a way out. No modern Arab poet can claim an extensive and deliberate use of Sufi figures and lexicon more than the Syrian-Lebanese poet 'Alī Aḥmad Sa'īd (Adūnīs) and the Iraqi poet 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī

(d.1999). The latter's Sufi poems received a book-length study.⁵² The Sufi lexicon serves a negotiating function whereby Sufi perplexity finds a suspended abode. The poems that deserve analysis in this context are: 'Reading from the Book of al-Tawasin by al-Hallaj' ('Qirā'ah fi kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn by al-Hallāj', in *Shiraz's Moon*, 1975); 'Variations on the Suffering of Farid al-Din al-Attar' ('Maqāṭi' min 'Adhābāt Farīd al-Dīn al-'Aṭṭār', in *The Kingdom of Grain*, 1979); 'I am Born and Burn in My Love' (*Shiraz's Moon*, 1975); and 'A'isha's Mad Lover' (in *Love Poems at the Seven Gates of the World*, 1971).⁵³ These poems are no less capable of reaching the reading public than the narratives we have been discussing earlier in this study. They also convey the unease of Arab intellectuals with respect to a fervour demanding communication through shared codes that are not always the ones cherished by modernity.

Poetry has passed through periods of rhetorical confrontation, like the famous Aḥmad Shawqī's poems against the British, especially 'Farewell to Cromer', and al-Ruṣāfī's powerful indictments of the British and their local puppets, but there was soon to follow a different poem which does not build on the power of rhetoric that reaches a wider public, but works out its way musically through its textual richness, imagery and use of traditional patterns that are transposed onto current situations and affairs. Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb's (d. 1964) 'Canticle of the Rain' (1954), 'The Blind Whore' and 'The Arab Maghrib' are significant contributions that bring together and encapsulate the whole discussion of past and present and colonialism and dependency into one single traumatic moment of great textual density. On the other hand, the Palestinian Maḥmūd Darwīsh (d. 2008) resorts to condensed recollections and images of his own village and house to demonstrate the damage and violence done to a people who are left homeless, unrecognized and down-trodden. The colonial is treated in deft images as individuals who never question whose homes they are in and whose lands they occupy. Poetry takes a different direction in the Algerian liberation war. Apart from the usual classical poem with its strident call for Islamic and Arab identity and independence, the song and the anthem work out their way into narrative, like the many scattered pieces that permeate the narrative of *Nedjma* by the Algerian Kāteb Yācīne (d. 1989) which was written in remembrance of the revolution of May 1945, as the first anti-colonial uprising in Algeria that was brutally put down by the French. Through the name of the protagonist Nedjma (star), the writer creates a female presence that stands for Algeria itself in that traumatic moment when its identity, sanctity, culture, history and people were invaded and ravaged.⁵⁴ Apart from this colonial, postcolonial historical reference, *Nedjma* raises the

question of postcoloniality as a complex situation of blurred identities, mixed struggles for survival, faith in Islam and Arabism, gender and class demarcations, and the bearing of colonialism not only on national discourse but also on the hybrid formations of identity. The anecdotal is mixed with the poetic; and anthems, songs and slogans are interspersed through a narrative of struggle whose heroes are ordinary Algerians with mixed parenthood, hybrid origins, as befitting a nation under occupation for more than a century. It engages with these and provides a new style that is in keeping with the rising French 'new novel', but significantly integral to Arabic narrative tradition. Contemporaries all over the Arab world were not oblivious to a material reality that was behind the emergence of this transgeneric narrative, not only its multiple viewpoints and techniques, but also its defiance of superimposed colonialist identities. Thus, when the Iraqi Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb wrote his poem 'In the Arab Maghrib' (1956) dedicated to the Algerian fighter, 'the great Arab *mujaḥhid* Messali al-Hadj',⁵⁵ Arabism comes first, then the Islamic *jihād* (*mujaḥid*) or struggle for freedom. The Algerian struggle has a clear-cut identity that cannot be tampered with. Petit-bourgeois politics recedes in the background, at least during the time of national struggle, and intellectuals were not given the leadership for their fame and public presence as was the case in the Arab East. But knowing, like Islamist reformers of the late nineteenth century, that the nation is living in a stupor in a 'waste land', Badr Shākir al-Sayyāb aligns his voice with T. S. Eliot in his popular poem 'The Waste Land'. Following a cyclical movement, like Eliot, but with more political commitment towards regeneration and rebirth, the Arab poet has to replace symbols and icons of death and waste to reconstruct a regenerative schema within the structure of the whole poem. His early sentiments 'We are all dead / I and Muhammad and Allah. / And this is our grave: the ruins / of a dust-covered minaret'⁵⁶ are replaced in the concluding lines with a powerful rhetoric that lines up with Mesālī's struggle for a free Algeria: 'Is this the sound of the call to the dawn prayer? / Or is it the battle cry of revolutionaries / Rising up from our fortresses? / Graves went into labour to resurrect the dead in millions, / And Muhammad and his Arab god and the *Anṣār* rose up: / Verily our god is with [in] us.'⁵⁷ Loyal to his secularism, the poet is equivocal even when faithfulness to his material historical fact impels a clear-cut reading. There is a divide between the call to prayer and the revolutionary call, but they submerge in unison nevertheless, and the resurrection *nushūr* is taken from the Qur'ān, and the Prophet's supporters, *Anṣār*, are called upon, and God is no longer an Islamic omnipotence but a humanized one in liaison with national aspirations.

Demystifying the colonial referent

The poem and Yācīne's narrative are important to demonstrate also the collective and the specific even in attitudes and positions that relate to modernity, heritage, political struggle and the meaning of nationhood. One can argue that the 'The Waste Land' is no less powerful in the make-up of the poem's background than the Algerian struggle itself. It lends a frame that displaces formulaic and thematic competitors, and hence al-Sayyāb's resort to a conclusive rhetorical outburst, not only to debate the riddle at the conclusion of Eliot's poem, but also to culminate a struggle that needs clarity of purpose. The poem and Yācīne's narrative are not absent henceforth from Algerian narratives, and the navigation between Islam, Arabism and modernity will continue, especially among the writers of the 1970s and 1980s such as the Algerian Aḥlām Mosteghānemī in *Memory in the Flesh*.⁵⁸ What holds this poetic monologue together, as an outburst of 'powerful emotions', are the intertexts that have a number of functions: first, there is the reference to the Algerian shaykh, reformer and fighter, Bin Bādīs, to connect the present with an Algerian deep-rootedness in Islam and Arabism; second, there is the extensive presence of Kāteb Yācīne. His *Najdma* (1957), which was based on his long narrative poem about a mysterious woman (1948), focuses on an actual woman in his life who evolves as an icon for Algeria and the quest for a restored Algerian identity. The novel is a postcolonial text par excellence, not only because of its admixture of the temporal, the spatial and the thematic in the composition of the postcolonial, but specifically because of its deft manipulation of arabesque and geometric forms of Islamic calligraphy and art while making use of William Faulkner's narrative style and the French 'new novel'. Born into a highly literate family, and taught first in a Qur'ānic school before joining the French Language School at Setif, Kāteb Yācīne has the advantage of a comprehensive knowledge of the encounter which also explains his participation in the 1945 demonstrations in Setif which led to his imprisonment.

Aḥlām Mosteghānemī's *Memory* leads us to these intertextual intersections which unify the generation of 1954, including Muḥammad Dīb, Kāteb Yācīne, Mouloud Mammeri and Mouloud Feraoun. But Malek Haddad has a conspicuous presence in Mosteghānemī's narrative with his two novels *Je t'offrirai une gazelle* (1959; *I Present You a Gazelle*) and *Le Quai aux fleurs ne répond plus* (1961, *Nobody on the Flower Pavements Responds*) that substantiate a gift exchange, passion and loss; there is also Kazantzakis's *Zorba the Greek* with whom the protagonist identifies in outlook, practice, love, passion and ultimate release of agency through art. There are Faraghānī's popular songs that serve as ironic

interventions and comments on a bizarre situation in the post-independence state. Moreover, there is Ṭāriq B. Ziyād, who ostensibly burnt all the boats behind him to make his men feel that the only option was conquest and victory or perish and die. All these relate to a spatial referent, i.e. Constantine, the nation city whose conflation with the woman of that name only consolidates its efficacy as a symbolic but real city, whose actual presence is not given enough concreteness in the work, however. Furthermore, all these intertexts are collapsed or brought together in one way or another through Aḥlām's wedding to a newly moneyed dignitary, Sī Sālīḥ, who is not the Sālīḥ of Faraghānī's popular songs, and also through the protagonist's art exhibition in Paris. While the wedding is an ironic recapitulation, a parody, of Frantz Fanon's rural gatherings and communal links as opposed to colonial culture, the exhibition is a 'writing back', a decolonization strategy that takes the national to the heart of empire, not in search of recognition, but probably in order to enforce what has been the primary message of revolutionary thought: cultural independence and national pride.

As a critique of the nation state, *Memory* is no less significant than such narratives as the Egyptian Jamāl al-Ghīṭānī's *Zaynī Barakāt* (1970–1), which was serialized in the popular Egyptian weekly *Rūz al-Yūsuf*. The writer selects the last years of the Mamluk dynasty before the Ottoman invasion of 1517. Through a number of voices, interspersed with historical accounts and fake travelogue, the narrative exposes corrupt politics as it engenders and generates hegemony through pervasive media mechanisms. Invaders and state apparatus are not spared, and the powerful narrative drive persuades readers to compare past and present to see the vicious circle of corruption and greed.

One can say that colonization and colonial cultures have left a formative impact on consciousness, especially among the leading elite, but popular traditions, as the ones critiqued or categorically rejected by subservient writers' surrogates, suffered only recently under the onslaught of massive wars of destruction that attempt to restructure societies according to an old Orientalist paradigm of dormancy and backwardness. Imperial rhetoric only repeats what missionaries and colonial officials are represented to explain in postcolonial narratives. One of them is so disenchanted and dismayed by an aborted military coup against the puppet regime in Iraq in 1936 that he is made to say in Ayyūb's *Duktūr Ibrāhīm*, 'The Iraqis prove that they do not deserve the independence offered to them. They were offered the utmost independence and self-rule, but they went on plundering what they were entrusted with, killing each other for profits and rewards.'⁵⁹ The same will be rephrased in the 1960s in the Sudanese Tayyib Ṣālīḥ's popular text, *Season of Migration to the North*, where the British

judiciary treats the protagonist as an intelligent person who proves incapable of rising up to a British standard. In these texts, and despite the time span between them, there is definitely a binding colonial referent, but this colonial referent plays also on subordination and subservience in Ayyūb's text, and opposition and revolt, albeit in structured ironies, in *Season*. One can go further to prove the historicity of postcoloniality whenever there is a narrative application of a bourgeois epic structure where middle-class politics and aspiration enforce a chronological structure that engages ambitions, gains, failures and expectations. Many Arabic novels fall within the tradition of the *Bildungsroman* as journeys of education and expectation.

In these two narratives there are also other elemental strategies that direct attention to a deliberate decolonizing narrative process. Although the obvious engagements with colonial rhetoric, and the whole rhetoric of empire, rest on a covert recognition of its textual and material existence in one's life and culture, there is nevertheless the effort to outdo it, master it and frame it within a national rhetoric. Embedding and inclusion evolve as strategic means of defusing and control. It amounts to parodying the Orientalization of the East in Ṣāliḥ's *Season of Migration to the North*, where the protagonist establishes his imaginary East in the heart of London, while, by the same token, he imports the image of Britain as a learning centre in the form of the re-enacted London room in his Sudanese village. Both images play on this traffic of representation. The engagement with the colonial referent has to assume a different dimension and depth. Issues that were bypassed or summarily dealt with have to undergo problematization. Colonial representations have to be questioned on their own ground or in their own location, the imperial centre. The once alluring metropolis is divested of its glamour to meet the stereotype as it has been envisioned and proclaimed, but with an invigorated and knowledgeable will as deemed and launched by postcolonial writers. Hence *Season* is the postcolonial growth par excellence: imaged to play out its game on a metropolitan terrain of shock, anxiety and ultimate disavowal. To the dismay of the colonial mind as represented by Mr Maxwell in *Season*, the colonized people poke fun at the empire. He repeats the same imperial view that colonies are still underage, unprepared for self-rule.⁶⁰ Colonial historiography never acknowledges the culture or the people of the colonized nation, for such recognition implies and accepts the failure of colonialism. Between negation of the colony and recognition of its rebellious elite, colonial desire undergoes its neurosis between hatred and love.

But the native elite are not one and the same. Early representations show them as subordinates or effete. Internalizing E. Demoulin's book, *A quoi tient*

la supériorité des Anglo-Saxons?, which explains that ‘individual initiative’ and ‘individual welfare’ were behind British imperial achievement, Ayyūb’s Dr Ibrāhīm believes that it is due to people like his father-in-law, Mr Westfield, the British missionary and colonial agent, that the British made their successful conquests. ‘I think it is for these people like him that this small nation has reached this important position in the world’, says Ibrāhīm.⁶¹ Accepting British hegemony and subscribing to the ideology of the colonizer, Dr Ibrāhīm is prototypical of Fanon’s native elites who exhaust their energy and resourcefulness to fuse, assimilate and, ultimately, give up their native skin. His future wife Jeanie is not disturbed by his zeal for assimilation. Her father shouts with glee, upon listening to his spoken English, ‘Oh, whoever sees you thinks that you are born and grown in this land [England]. But for your brown skin I would never have thought of you as an Arab.’⁶² Had he been a Fanon or a Césaire,⁶³ Ayyūb’s fictional construct could have reacted differently. But being a prototype for Fanon’s native elites, he directs his anger at his own family, society, culture and tradition.⁶⁴ This repudiation of origin, ethnicity, race and culture is the other side of disavowal. In this palpable transaction, one side should suffer repudiation.

Ayyūb offers the opposite of Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ’s protagonist. Ṣāliḥ’s *Season of Migration to the North* takes the protagonist to the heart of the empire as a native intellectual who is armed with all the knowledge the empire can offer, not only to demonstrate it with a mastery that unsettles the court, but also to expose and undermine misrepresentations of ‘Easterners’ as dubious, sensuous and ruthless. Although he leaves Iraq in disappointment, Ayyūb’s protagonist is a prototype for Frantz Fanon’s native elite, pure and simple, for he receives his education with a purpose to believe in the empire, serve it and internalize its lessons of selfishness. Narratives that come later focus on the same attitude. Mary in the Egyptian Yaḥyā Ḥaqqī’s *The Lamp of Umm Hashim* repeats the lessons of the empire to the native elite: to ignore for good any communal sense and survive as an individual who should enjoy the moment and make use of it as an instance of individual identity. Even when education takes the form of philosophy, as in the learning experience of the anonymous protagonist in *Al-Ḥayy al-Lātīnī* (1953; *Latin Quarter*), the narrative of the Lebanese writer and founder of the influential *Al-Ādāb* monthly in 1953, Dr Suhayl Idrīs (d. 2008), does not suggest a fulfilling educational journey. There is subservience to existentialist philosophy that makes the protagonist expect his Lebanese fiancée to act like the women he has seen in Paris. Only through his personal commitment to a Sartrean brand of existentialism and his alignment with a literature of engagement, did the author attempt to take into account the needs

of his Arab culture beyond cultural dependency. This dependency undergoes interrogation in narratives of exile and imprisonment, as in 'Abd al-Rahmān Munīf's *Sharq al-Mutawassit* (1975; East of the Mediterranean) where the protagonist receives treatment from a French physician who has also suffered imprisonment and torture.⁶⁵ His lesson to the protagonist Rajab is to fight back regardless of threats. In line with leftist ideology Rajab raises no questions regarding nationality or identity of one sort or another. What counts and brings him closer to the physician is the common struggle against fascism. Health treatment evolves as another term for psychological and ideological adjustment. Taking place in another metropolitan centre, but divested of its colonial connotations, treatment is another learning experience and travel or exile and dislocation become tropes for hybrid forms of interaction. In other words, as individual instances these examples set another paradigm beyond the limits of temporal and national markers.

Exile emerges as the ultimate state of being, an attitude which is no less dear to Arab existentialists whose narratives and poetry convey an acute consciousness of one's individual freedom. The short story is the arena for this playing out of responsibility and abnegation that centres always on one's readings of Sartre and Camus. Such are the writings of the Iraqis Fu'ād al-Takarlī (d. 2008) and 'Abd al-Malik Nūrī (d. 1995), the Egyptians Yūsuf Idrīs (d. 1991) and Yūsuf al-Shārūnī, and the Syrian Zakariyyah Tāmir. Existentialism has to slide into a commitment of some sort. In Palestinian narratives Ghassān Kanafānī's *Men in the Sun* depicts the harrowing experience of uprooted Palestinians in search of a place to live and work, to end up suffocated and dead in a bizarre situation of borders, heartlessness, neglect and absurdity.⁶⁶ The scene is tragic, but it builds on parody and ridicules the whole nationalist thought that has been used by the nation state to cheat the masses. In *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-fated Pessoptimist*,⁶⁷ Emile Ḥabībī deals with the dilemma of accepting life under occupation, to pass through coercion, manipulation, torture, and also distrust and fear of one's fellow Palestinians. There is hope in the next generation, but the stark brutality, fantasy, hilarity and stylistic mix makes this narrative an outstanding text in Palestinian production that signifies another terrain in postcolonial theory whereby old colonialist powers collaborate with global capital to uproot cultures and nations, and create further wars and destructive encounters. The enormous and subtle use of traditional narrative strategies functions against the effort to undermine indigenous culture and erosion of identity. Every sentence operates as counter-response to re-establish one's roots in one's own culture and land. The postcolonial and postmodernist strategies may not need to go far from tradition itself, for in Arabic literary

tradition the popular and the belletristic often meet, offering us samples of the most entertaining and captivating production that was perhaps meeting the taste of the newly emerging urban classes.

As the colonial power has an ideology of its own, colonized people have to identify their own too. Yet there is more than one ideology for the nationals, and hegemonic discourse within these nations has to revive some patriarchal norms to empower itself against competition and challenge. Every colonized nation, including its contested terrains, has ideological platforms and parties that may exceed in number, but not in effectiveness and functionality, those of the colonizing power. Each one monopolizes force for gain, but it is the strategy of the empowered to declare mastery and to make it clear to the powerless that they are bound and entitled to conquer. As the Israeli officer tells Saeed, in *The Secret Life of Saeed*, they have the latest equipment 'to monitor your every movement, even what you whisper in your dreams'.⁶⁸ Enlightenment narrative and its *nahḍah* legacy in Arabic cannot cope with this or its other versions of coercion. The whole legacy of modernity collapses, and its rationalism and scientism appear as no more than names for domination, discipline and control. Only through fantasy, humour, hilarity and sarcasm can writers cope with these situations. Ṣun'allāh Ibrāhīm's *Al-Lajnah* (1981; *The Committee*, 2001) lets the anonymous protagonist elaborate on how the Coca-Cola bottle stands for this civilization: 'We will not find, your honors, among all that I have mentioned, anything that embodies the civilization of this century or its accomplishments, let alone its future, like this svelte little bottle, which is just the right size to fit up anyone's ass', he says, insinuating how the bottle is used to torture prisoners of conscience.⁶⁹ Sarcasm could grow into hilarity had not the author brought it under control within the intertextual parameters of newspaper articles, which increase the amount of satire and poke fun at president Sādāt of Egypt (1970–81) and his open-door or market economy. Using the bottle and its connotations further, he hints at the implications of monopolized economies: 'If Coca-Cola has been so influential in the greatest and richest country in the world, you can imagine how dominant it is in third world countries, especially in our poor little country.'⁷⁰ On a different level, and with a tragic view of things that come under the new onslaught on nature and culture, one has to visualize and imagine the whole site of attrition and erosion of the mouflon in the Libyan Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī's *Bleeding of the Stone*. The mouflon that evolves as symbolic of native culture is consumed to extinction due to the greed and brutality of the native Cain and the transcendental vision of the American John Parker, who is obsessed with longevity. The mouflon establishes itself as a symbol of love and life, charm and

identity in the mind of the nomad Asuf. 'In this beast was the magic of a woman and the innocence of a child, the resolution of a man and the nobility of a horseman, the shyness of a maiden, the gracefulness of a bird, and the secret of the broad expanses.'⁷¹ In other words, narrative challenges loss by further inscription and focalization of desert life and its landmarks. No less subversive are Shī'ite rituals, which tend also to decentre the logicity and linearity of urban time, as in 'Azīz al-Sayyid Jāsim's *Al-Zahr al-shaqqī* (1987; Suffering Primrose) where the nation state appears as stark apparatus of coercion that runs counter to the basic structures of feeling.

Postmodernist poetics

While there is enough symbolism and folklore in tradition and culture to invite a consistent narrative growth in literature, there is little use of the Arab narrative legacy, as it appears in the *Thousand and One Nights*. Najīb Maḥfūz's *Layālī alflaylah* (1977; *Arabian Nights and Days*, 1995) comes to mind as the best example of the combined richness of tradition and its relevance to the present. It differs from early attempts in that it encapsulates the whole collection to further a politics of reform. In a poetics of density and humour, tragedy and magic, it enables the reader to see the possibility of change in rulers to embrace the freedom and welfare of the underprivileged and the downtrodden.. The tales are released from their bondage to a European legacy, and are given a new life as native cultural products of deep thought and rich tradition. There is no metafictional strategy to distance the narrative, as in Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's and Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm's joint venture in their reconstruction of the tales in *The Enchanted Palace* (1936?). The work makes use of the frame tale to empower Scheherazade and Shahrayar and give them voices against contemporary authors. Metafiction henceforth would appear as an engagement with the postcolonial and post-modern. In this respect, multivoiced narratives may well develop a narrative space of mythical, theological, political and national concerns to cope with material reality. As an example we can cite Ilyās Khūrī's *Mamlakat al-ghurabā'* (1993; *The Kingdom of Strangers*, 1996). It is a narrative of many tales and engagements. It includes factual encounters and details. It plays on these, however, to uncover the dilemma of living in a present of lies and fabrications that strive to deprive people of their right in a homeland and peaceful life. The narrative plays on the written, in order to defamiliarize and, at the same time, uncover the present scene of occupation and violence. It brings the oppressed together, regardless of religion and ethnicity, but it obliquely targets the source of evil. The oppressed identify with Jesus, and the writer or another

of his informants is face to face with him, telling the Messiah that he is 'Just the one writing this story'.

'He turned and asked me, 'What story?'

'Your story, Master,' I said.

'But it is written,' He said.

'I am writing it because it is written,' I said. 'We always write what has been written. If it were not written, we would not write it.'⁷²

Aside from the deployment of the metafictional to draw attention to the narrative art itself, the writer undermines the oppressor's mythical pretext and discourse of ancient legitimacy and originary root. Playing on the past participle 'written', or *maktūb*, the writer undermines theological metaphysics and its investment in the preordained. On the other hand, the act of rewriting is a revisionist endeavour with a vested interest in upholding the cause of social justice against centuries of distortion and manipulation of religion. A counter-text is resurrected to dislodge the enforced one. Narratives usually take issue with authoritarian texts in an attempt to disentangle life and thought from both the unitary and the neo-colonialist, widening thereby the prospects of understanding and the spectrum for dialogue. Tropes of ambivalence and strategies of parody and pastiche in metafiction may account for the upsurge of fragmented narratives whose authors, like the Egyptian Copt Idwār al-Kharrāt,⁷³ for instance, inscribe their personal experience of imprisonment and torture in an ensemble of textual terrains of memoirs, facts and heteroglossia that may well escape censorship.

These strategies of indirection, fragmentation, modes of pastiche and parody are one way of coping with a complex reality. It is good to remember, however, their limited circulation and reception. Another alternative is to give up writing, at least for some time, as Najīb Maḥfūz did in the mid 1950s. He acknowledged the problems involved in representations that fall beyond the scope and the prism of specific consciousness and concern. Speaking to the Egyptian critic and journalist Fu'ād Durwārah, the novelist made the following statement: 'The 1952 Revolution broke out and my desire to write about these remaining themes [the realistic phase] was smothered.' He added: 'The decline of the old way of life obliterated my wish to criticize it. It seemed to me that my career as a writer was over, that I had nothing more to say. I publicly announced this feeling and was sincere about it.'⁷⁴

To use a Foucauldian notion, a certain frame of mind could face the impasse of identification with a specific class and its concomitant limited consciousness, for, to apply to Maḥfūz's world, the 'bourgeoisie, in attempting to

recount its own ascension, ‘encountered, in the calendar of its victory, the historical density of institutions, the specific gravity of habits and beliefs, the violence of struggles, the alternation of success and failure’.⁷⁵ The case is more complicated when a specific segment, the Egyptian national bourgeoisie in this case, took upon itself the double role of radical transformation and authentication of ways of life, or leftist modernity and traditional Arab fervour.

It is only when the author questions the status quo, undermining its holdings in society, family and state that things take a different direction, usually pursued through greater dialogization and absorption of many voices. In Maḥfūz’s *Al-Liṣ wa-al-kilāb* (1961; *The Thief and the Dogs*, 1984), the protagonist’s linear progression from faith to disillusionment, and from love to murder, gains richness from the play on the inwardness of the hero, his repugnance at treachery among his early radical mentors and associates like his wife. But in *Thartharah fawqa al-Nīl* (1966; *Chatter on the Nile*; *Adrift on the Nile*, 1993), frustration at social and political evil is pushed to its other extreme, and life looks and sounds a site of impotence and failure. Every night a group of pseudo-intellectuals gather in a mood of ennui, exchanging sex freely and smoking hashish, while dabbling in every political issue with no serious concern. This narrative predates the 1967 defeat of the nation state.

Thereafter, literature, especially poetry, are more confrontational, satiric and aggressively engaged in polemics or counter-narratives of oblique criticism. On many occasions, protagonists are not at home with orthodoxy, its official discourses and historical reconstructions, nor are they pleased with the nationalist rhetoric since its glaring 1967 defeat. In these narratives female and male writers share an agenda against the post-independence police state, like the Bahraini writer Fawziyyah Rashīd in her *Taḥawwulāt al-Fāris* (1990; *Transformations of the Knight*), and Jamāl al-Ghīṭānī’s *Khiṭaṭ* or, more significantly, in his *Tajalliyāt* (1983; *Epiphanies*).⁷⁶

Postcolonial representations of European women

Postcolonial literatures are not tied to a political or ideological site, for there are always other faces to the encounter which distinguish each specific consciousness. Whenever this state of consciousness repeats itself, it directs attention to the make-up of a cultural and intellectual trend. The representations of British or French women in Arabic narratives are a case in point. These betray a complex of attachment and revulsion, love and fear, subordination and revolt. Whether we read Suzy Dubon in Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm’s *Bird of the East* (1936), Jenny in the Iraqi Dhū al-Nūn Ayyūb’s *Duktūr Ibrāhīm* (1936–8), or Yahyā

Ḥaqqī's Mary in *The Lamp of Umm Hashim* (1944), we may find some truth in Homi Bhabha's otherwise liberal application of ambivalence of power in colonial texts as transposed and internalized in the literary production of the colonized. 'The colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and differences.'⁷⁷ This transposition and transference is better exemplified in native texts as a terrain of anxiety where subordination is not dislodged by an effort to establish selfhood. Each text culminates either in a legitimation of the colonial referent or submission to a hoary tradition. Only when the national issue, the patriotic struggle, takes precedence, especially in women's veiled or overt autobiographies, like *The Open Door* by Latifah al-Zayyat⁷⁸ or *The Mountainous Journey* by the Palestinian Fadwa Tuqan, does the colonial paradigm give way to other social and cultural issues. The historical reference is significant only to a certain extent, however, because soon after the Algerian liberation movement and the powerful appearance of the patriotic franco-phone narrative in the 1950s, and the stupendous impact of the 1952 revolution in Egypt on the political scene in the Arab and the third world countries, there emerges a literature of many concerns that still deserve to appear under postcoloniality. The colonial referent often works jointly with an Islamic referent that has larger overtones than early Arabism of the *nahḍah* generation and its preoccupation with the enlightenment discourse. It derives more power and presence soon after 1967, for Islam evolves beyond the failures of nation-state heroism or its European models. Maḥfūz, for one, decidedly goes back to popular traditions, marginal groups, and the experience of the riff-raff, especially in his *Epic of the Harafish* (1977)⁷⁹ which was written with an obvious positive expectation of an overriding Islam on the street.⁸⁰

The return of the sacred

If the whole narrative and literary drive until 1967 was significantly influenced by the enlightenment discourse, with little space for Islam or Islamic subjects, the nation state and its grand narratives of pan-Arab nationalism, European liberalism, or traditional patriarchy, were soon after challenged and found lacking in substance and merit. The emergence of the Islamic subject as the most dynamic literary agent is worth discussing, not only as reminiscent of ancient Islamic discourse against the crusades and their like, but also as a decolonizing strategy that questions the normative humanist model. Sufi poetry starts to multiply and narrative switches back to autobiography when authors became aware of Islamic faith as the dominant, albeit repressed, force in their lives. The

fascination with the European model that distinguishes early autobiography gives way to another that takes pride in a rustic life of faith and ritual. Social fringes become the subject matter of fiction, as in Najīb Maḥfūz's *Epic of the Harafish* (sometimes translated as 'Epic of the Rif-raff'). His protagonist's career is reminiscent of the Prophet's as an orphan. Ashur's life is more intimately entangled in the life of an alley, and yet his growing impact and leadership unfold through beneficial action and compassion that turn him into a folk-hero despite the antagonisms of thugs and opportunists. In other words, Najīb Maḥfūz cannot move beyond his career as a writer who is essentially the product of a *nahḍah*-mixed secularism and Islamism in confrontation with European modernity, a process that is perhaps accommodative within the parameters of Mahdism (the return of the rightly guided saviour among Shī'ites) and reason. Under the fervour of the surging Iranian revolution, Maḥfūz focused on the charisma of heroes and saints. The nation state is discarded, and a new formation spills out of the *takiyyah* as if to echo the simmering Iranian revolution that developed between 1973 and 1979 under the leadership of Imam al-Khomeini (the Shah was deposed on 16 January 1979). The insistent melodies of the Persian hymns only intensify the need for this kind of correspondence. Within the context of the kind of religious thought that Najīb Maḥfūz is espousing in this narrative, the appearance of the shaykh heralds the end of the period of occultation, whereby it is now possible to 'walk down the alley bestowing his light and give each young man a bamboo club and a mulberry fruit', Greek and European models of the epic seem to recede.

We should recall at this juncture that Maḥfūz's farewell to the Shahrays of the nation state occurs in *Layālī Alf Laylah* (1982), while his allegorical critique of the notion of homeland occurs in *Rihlat Ibn Fattūmah* (1983). However, his 1977 narrative, *The Epic of the Harafish*, heralds a peaceful revolution, one that will of necessity lapse, just like national revolutions, into expressions of disappointment and criticism. This work reveals other narrative qualities, in that it reworks two paradigmatic structures of Ibn Khaldūn's thought: first, the gradual fragmentation and collapse of dynasties due to affluence and the concomitant disintegration of solidarity; second, a wish for the return of an expected Mahdī, a radical shift at the end of an epoch that merits epic treatment in an Arab/Islamic context.⁸¹

Of no less significance is 'Alā al-Aswānī's *Imārat Ya'qūbiyān* (2004; *The Yacoubian Building*, 2006) where Islam occupies a large narrative space and influences its otherwise skeletal drama.⁸² The author's loyalty to his own semi-leftist discourse has to find a way to negotiate with the narrative

requirements of Islamist discourse and his own knowledge of the political polarization involved in the power struggles around oil, markets and Israel. He is aware of the rising Islamic fervour which has been on the increase ever since 1967, something that Najīb Maḥfūz realized long ago. Now the shaykh in this narrative has to lead his audience to internalize this in full in order to meet the demands of the next stage in the struggle for Islam as represented in the sermon. It is now the task of Muslims, says the shaykh, to bring *jihād* 'back to the minds and hearts of the Muslims'.⁸³ America and Israel, he argues, are terrified, along with 'our traitorous rulers'. The reason is 'the great Islamic Awakening that gains greater momentum and whose power becomes more exigent in our country day by day'. In the context of other sermons written in times of trouble, conquest, and war, this sermon can point to the meaning of 'Islamic Awakening'.

This sermon makes a deliberate paradigmatic and semantic shift that turns away from a history of ideas, nation-state rule, secular ideology and even literary production. The phrase 'Islamic Awakening' is intended to counter the other awakening, the Arab *nahḍah*, which since the 1960s has completely lost its old glitter. In a deft transposition of compound lexical association, the shaykh replaces the term 'Arab' with 'Islamic', and thereby sets the tone for an Islamic discourse that is gradually dislodging the Arab *nahḍah* as usually discussed, historicized and more generally established as the landmark of Arab modernity. The emphasis on this awakening is also a retrospective reminder that is founded on a lengthy history of Friday speeches and sermons, going back perhaps as far as Ibn Zakī al-Dimashqī's famous sermon in celebration of Salāh al-Dīn's (Saladin) (d. 4 March 1193 CE) recapture of the city of Jerusalem from the Franks (which he entered on 4 March 1187 CE; Friday 27th Rajab 583 AH, after eighty years of occupation). However, the difference between the two lies elsewhere. Ibn Zakī had no reason to call for an Islamic state which was avowedly there, with a caliph centred in Baghdad (at least until the Mongol invasion and destruction of the caliphal capital city in 1258). Now, however, the shaykh has to proclaim its possible rebirth: 'By God, I see that the Islamic state lies in your hands and that it has been reborn mighty and proud!'⁸⁴ The rebirth will be as thunderous as any great achievement, he argues. It means a new era in the history of the region and of Islam: 'Our time-serving, traitorous rulers, servants of the Crusader West, will meet their just fates at your pure hands.'⁸⁵ Dispensing with Nāssir as the symbolic instigator of nationalist ideology and implicating the nation state apparatus in corruption and its ideology of coercion, the author now manipulates the sermon to the full in order to place the whole phenomenon in a regional and global context.

Drawing on examples from Islamic history and reclaiming rhetorical devices from the Qur'ān, Shaykh Muhammad Shakir can now be sure that his listeners associate the nation state's coercive authority with regional systems that serve imperialists. The sermon speaks for Arab nationalness only as part of an Islamic revival and not the other way around as has normally been the case in *nahḍah* or nationalist rhetoric.

As usual with Islamist discourse, it does not minimize the enormous sacrifices needed for the cause. The author is careful to relate this to the starting point whereby this life is described as transitory, fleeting and brief. He adds God's words on martyrdom: 'Count not those who were slain in God's way as dead, but rather living with their Lord.'⁸⁶ In these heated gatherings, the possibility of provoking immediate demonstrations and violence is also present in the minds of Islamist preachers who ask for caution and patience,⁸⁷ in order not to fall into the trap of the police state until 'the right time'.⁸⁸ On the other hand, this atmosphere is certainly conducive to the cause of enlisting and recruiting new members of the Brothers. The sermon touches on the current constitution of the nation state, which is no more, says the shaykh, than a reproduction of French laws and constitution.

Targeting the nation state, its formation and model, and associating it with Europe, America and Israel, the sermon signifies a change in narrative and literary poetics and politics. It bids farewell to Europe, and claims a new stage in the fight for Islamic awakening. It culminates in a postcolonial discourse, but it strips it out of its ambivalence and appropriation and sets it on a path that invites further engagements. With this, postcolonial literary production witnesses and meets new dimensions, challenges and attending questions.

This outspoken sermon cannot displace other questions that may lose some significance during massive wars like the occupation of Iraq, for example, where attendant poverty, insecurity, deliberate violence, and unemployment led to serious problems that cut across basic beliefs and lifestyles. Prostitution, suicide, theft and corruption, which were relatively unknown for the Iraqis, have evolved as the most harrowing aspects of life in urban centres. Hence the existentialist ambivalence that distinguished writings since the 1950s may spread thin among other concerns and fates. As the damage is so widespread, individual fate becomes minimal in the face of large-scale destruction and eruption. This minimality does not negate its presence, especially when writers retrieve social history in their novels of social life, as they were doing once. In *The Long Way Back* (1980), by Fu'ād al-Takarlı, for example, the woman's sense of victimization takes a direction which is central to the novel. She says of her

situation and life after being raped, 'It is process of flux and overlap, where walls and frontiers don't exist, only bridges for crossing and recrossing. And I had to think where I stood in all this.' The gravity of her situation beckons to the gravity of similar fates that are now on a large scale. In situations of occupation, massive attacks and shows of violence, chaos is meant to disrupt social systems and to threaten individuals and communities. There will be more questions and certainly more writings that would find in postcolonial inroads possible venues of narrative and poetic expression to deal with multifaceted and complex realities. Postcolonial writing has more issues to engage with and further challenges to meet.

Notes

1. British and French colonizers were pleased to proclaim, in Lord Cromer's terms, the 'regeneration' of colonies beyond the reach of 'religious mendicants', as Lloyd calls traditional institutions. See Evelyn B. Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1915), vol. 2, pp. 556-7; George A. Lloyd, *Egypt since Cromer*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1933), vol. 1, pp. 165-6.
2. The influential littérateur Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (1888-1956) mentions among his readings: Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Taine, Rousseau and many others. See J. Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), p. 235.
3. See Georges Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (1938), 5th edn (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965), pp. 26-35, 37-43, 50-60.
4. See Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Discovery of India and the East, 1680-1880* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
5. The Ottomans had a great legacy in their centre, Istanbul, which fascinated Europe, as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters from Constantinople to her contacts in eighteenth-century England demonstrate. On these letters, see Muhsin al-Musawi, *Scheherazade in England* (Washington, DC: Three Continents, 1981).
6. In Salama K. Jayyusi (ed.), *Short Arabic Plays: An Anthology* (New York: Interlink Books, 2003), pp. 4-19, here p. 17.
7. For a survey of positions, including ones by Orientalists and Arabists, see Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt* pp. 10-12.
8. See, for example, how this continued until some time in the twentieth century in Sayyid Quṭb's autobiography, *Ṭifl min al-qaryah* (1946), trans. John Colvert and William Shepard as *A Child from the Village* (University of Syracuse Press, 2004), pp. 1-6.
9. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Jabartī in 'Ajā'ib al-Āthār, trans. S. Moreh, as *Al-Jabartī's Chronicle of the First Seven Months of the French Occupation of Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), pp. 40-2, 119-21.
10. See Muhsin al-Musawi, *Islam on the Street: The Religious Dynamic in Modern Arabic Literary Production* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).
11. Aḥmad B. Abi al-Ḍayyāf, *Ithāf ahl al-Zamān bi-akhbār Tūnis wa-ahd al-amān* (Tunis: Al-Dār Tūnisiyyah lil-Nashr, 1976), vol. 2, pp. 115, 116.
12. Ibid. vol. 2, pp. 115, 116.

13. Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957; Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).
14. Hisham Sharabi, 'Islam and modernization in the Arab world', in J. H. Thompson and E. R. O. Reischauer (eds.), *Modernization in the Arab World* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand, 1966), pp. 26–36.
15. Yahyā Ḥaqqī *The Lamp of Umm Hashim* (1944; American University in Cairo Press, 2004), p. 67.
16. Cited from *The Times* (London), 6 May 1907, in Husayn Kadhīm, 'The poetics of postcolonialism: two poems by Ahmad Shawqī', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 28 (1997), 179–215, here 193. See also the full speech, as delivered on 4 May, 1907, pp. 209–15.
17. Cited in Sharabi, 'Islam and modernization in the Arab world', p. 35.
18. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 181.
19. See Brugman, *An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt* pp. 70–1.
20. Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī, *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* (London: Riyād al-Rayyis, 1990), trans. M. Jayyusi and C. Tingley as *The Bleeding of the Stone* (New York: Interlink Books, 2001), p. 111.
21. Salāmah Mūsā, *Tarbiyat* (1958), trans. L. O. Schuman as *The Education of Salamah Musa* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), pp. 32, 27, respectively.
22. Taha Hussein, *The Days: His Autobiography in Three Parts*, trans. E. H. Baxton, Hilary Wayment and Kenneth Cragg (first part 1932; American University in Cairo Press, 1997).
23. See Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production* (1966), trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge, 1978), pp. 44–5, 87–91.
24. Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson, ed. and intro. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 24–5.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
26. Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm, 'Awdat al-rūḥ (Cairo: Maṭb'at al-raghā'ib, 1933), trans. Williams M. Hutchins as *Return of the Spirit* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1990). On the point see Muhsin al-Musawi, *Arabic Poetry: Trajectories of Modernity and Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 22 and n. 70.
27. See Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, pp. 44–5, 87–91.
28. Hussein, *The Days*, p. 265.
29. See al-Musawi, *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel*, p. 180.
30. Nawāl al-Sa'dāwī, *Mudhakkirat tabibah* (1980), trans. Catherine Cobham as *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1989).
31. Najīb Maḥfūz, *Awlād Ḥāratinā* (1959), trans. Peter Theroux as *Children of the Alley* (New York: Anchor Books, 1996).
32. Mahmud Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness: August, Beirut, 1982*, trans. Ibrahim Mahawi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
33. See Muhsin al-Musawi on Ṭahā Ḥusayn and Sa'd Zaghlūl in *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 62–3.
34. See Hussein, *The Days*, p. 489; Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm, 'Uṣfūr min al-Sharq (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 1988), trans. Bayly Winder as *Bird of the East* (Beirut: Khayyāt, 1966), p. 62.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 62–3.
36. Hussein, *The Days*, pp. 489–90.
37. See Muhsin al-Musawi, *Reading Iraq: Culture and Power in Conflict* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006).
38. Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ, *Mawṣim al-hijra ilā al-shamāl* (Beirut: Dār al-'Awdah, 1967), trans. Denys Johnson-Davies as *Season of Migration to the North* (London: Heinemann, 1969), p. 154.

39. See *Season*, p. 148. For an extensive study see Muhsin al-Musawi, *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 195–204.
40. Salih, *Season*, p. 94; emphasis added.
41. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove, 1965), p. 51.
42. Emile Ḥabībī, *Al-Waqā'ī' al-gharībah fī-ikhtijā'* Sa'īd Abī al-Naḥs al-mutashā'il (1971; Jerusalem: Manshūrāt Ṣalāḥ al-dīn, 1977), trans. Salma K. al-Jayyusi and Trevor LeGassick as *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-fated Pessoptimist: A Palestinian Who Became a Citizen of Israel* (New York: Vantage, 1982; Interlink Books, 2001). Citations in the text are from this translation, p. 25.
43. See Muhsin al-Musawi, 'Engaging globalism in modern Arabic literature', *MLQ*, 62.2 (June 2007), pp. 305–31.
44. Ḥabībī, *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-fated Pessoptimist*, p. 3.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
46. Hudā Barakāt, *Ḥajar al-dhaḥk* (1990), trans. Sophie Bennett as *Stone of Laughter* (New York: Interlink, 1995), p. 38.
47. *Ibid.*
48. John M. Asfour, *When the Words Burn: An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry, 1945–1987* (Dunvegan, ON: Cormorant, 1988).
49. Amal Dunqul, 'A special interview with Noah's son', trans. Fatma Moussa-Mahmud, 'Changing techniques in modern Arabic poetry', in J.R. Smart (ed.), *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Language and Literature* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996), pp. 61–74, at 73–4.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
51. Linda Hutcheon, 'Circling the downspout of empire: postcolonialism and post-modernism', reprinted in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.), *Postcolonial Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 130–5, here p. 132, also *The Politics of Post-Modernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 66, 68, 74, 101. See also Linda Hutcheon, 'Historiographic metafiction: parody and the intertextuality of history', in Patrick O'Donnell and Robert Con Davis (eds.), *Intertextuality and Contemporary American Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 3–32.
52. Aziz al-Sayyid Jāsim, *Al-Taṣawwuf wa-al-Itizām fī Shi'r 'Abd al-Waḥḥāb al-Bayātī* (Sufism and Engagement in 'Abd al-Waḥḥāb al-Bayātī's Poetry) (Baghdad: Al-Thaqāfiyyah, 1990).
53. References are to 'Abd al-Waḥḥāb al-Bayātī, *Love, Death, and Exile*, trans. Bassam K. Frangieh (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990).
54. See Kāteb Yacine, *Nedjma* (1956), trans. from the French by Richard Howard (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press/Caraf Books, 1991), pp. viii–ix.
55. Published in *Al-Ādāb* (Beirut), March 1956, pp. 6–7. See also Huseein Kadhīm, *Poetics of Anticolonialism in the Arabic Qasidah* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 131–72. Kadhīm's translation is used.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
58. See Aḥlām Mosteghanemi, *Memory in the Flesh* (1985), trans. Baria A. Sreih, rev. Peter Clark (American University in Cairo Press, 2003).
59. Dhū al-Nūn Ayyūb, *Duktūr Ibrāhīm* (Baghdad: Wizārat al-thaqāfah, 1973), p. 204.
60. Saleh, *Season* p. 93.
61. Ayyūb, *Duktūr Ibrāhīm*, p. 105.

62. Ibid., p. 103.
63. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove, 1967), pp. 38–9.
64. Ayyūb, *Duktūr Ibrāhīm*, p. 98.
65. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Munif, *Sharq al-Mutawassiṭ* (Beirut: Ṭāral-Ṣalī’a, 1975; Baghdad edition, 1977).
66. Ghassān Kanafānī, *Rijā lfi al-shams* (1963), repr. in *Al-āthār al-kāmilah* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī’a, 1972); trans. Hilary Kilpatrick as *Men in the Sun* (London: Heinemann, 1978; Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1978).
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69. Ṣun‘allāh Ibrāhīm’s *Al-Lajnah* (1981), trans. Mary St Germain and Charlene Constable as *See The Committee: A Novel* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001), pp. 18–19.
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78. Laṭīfah al-Zayyāt, *Al-Bāb al-maftūū* (Cairo: Al-Maktabah al-Anglū-Miṣriyyah, 1960), trans. Marilyn Booth as *The Open Door* (American University in Cairo Press, 2000). Citations from this translation are in the text.
79. Najīb Maḥfūz’s *Maḥamat al-harāfish* (1977), trans. Catherine Cobham as *The Epic of the Harafish* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995).
80. See the present author’s book under the same title, *Islam on the Street: The Religious Dynamic in Literary Production* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).
81. See ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 165, 166, 258.
82. ‘Alā’ al-Aswānī, *‘Imārat Ya‘qūbiyyān* (2004), trans. Humphrey Davies as *The Yacoubian Building* by Alaa al-Aswany (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006).
83. Ibid., p. 96.
84. Ibid., p. 97.
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86. Qur’ānic verse, 3: 169, quoted in *The Yacoubian Building*, p. 98.
87. *The Yacoubian Building*, pp. 98–100.
88. Ibid., p. 100.

Postcolonialism and postcolonial writing in Latin America

10(a) Postcolonialism and Latin American writing, 1492–1850

FRANCISCO A. ORTEGA

Postcolonial theory and the *Indies*

This chapter explores Latin American discursive production responding to and accompanying European colonization in America. The time frame starts with pre-European Native narratives and concludes with formal political emancipation and the early foundations of the national states in the mid nineteenth century. I will focus on texts produced in Spanish and Portuguese, two of three major imperial languages of the subcontinent. The literature produced under the influence of French domination, including Haiti, will be addressed by other authors in this volume. Any survey of Latin America must not forget that indigenous cultures did not disappear at the moment of European arrival. They continued – and still continue – to produce culturally specific products, some of which address colonial circumstances. However, the literature produced in indigenous languages during this period constitutes an entirely different subject and can only be treated circumstantially in this chapter. Without being exhaustive, the chapter will nonetheless provide an introduction to the cultural history of the period by highlighting the significance of a number of key texts. These few texts are both representative and allow me to advance the argument that the American colonial experience inaugurates four motifs fundamental to our postcolonial present.

Though postcolonial theory is a useful prism through which Latin American history can be examined, our twenty-first-century postcolonial moment has difficulties comprehending both the modalities of subjugation and domination and the logics of rebellion, resistance and accommodation that characterize the American colonial experience since the late fifteenth century. Partly, this is because contemporary postcolonial thought theorizes and responds to the economic and political schisms produced by the development of modern capitalism

and political liberalism, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British and French colonial experiences and the twentieth-century Asian and African decolonization processes, the onset of the modern state, the emergence of national identities, and the struggles for national liberation throughout the Third World.

As a result, postcolonial theory tends to regard such early American experience as the prehistory of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonialism, just as the early modern period (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) is commonly viewed as the prehistory of true modernity. My understanding of postcolonialism, on the other hand, insists on the need to examine the American colonial experience on its own terms; not just as a prelude to contemporary modalities of subjection, subjugation and resistance.

Furthermore, I argue for the relevance of colonial Latin America for postcolonial thinking. It is relevant not only because much of what was rehearsed in other postcolonial spaces in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had been tried and refined in a systematic way for over 300 years in the Americas – creating a template for later imperial designs in terms of language policy, discursive production (genres such as colonial reports and travel writing, figures such as the imperial scholar, institutions such as schools for Natives), discriminatory practices, the circulation of stereotypes (primitivism), etc. – but also because as a response to such imposition a rich and vibrant language theorizing resistance developed, a legacy that will help us rethink the necessary politics for a postcolonial globality.

It should be clear that Latin America is a colonial construct; prior to 1492 neither ‘America’ nor ‘Latin America’ existed. In fact, up to the eighteenth century, English and French speakers often referred to the western hemisphere as America; however, Spaniards addressed their possessions as *the Indies* and Portugal simply as Brazil. In the early nineteenth century both Portuguese and Spanish empires broke down and over the next century gave way to twenty new countries in the western hemisphere. In the meantime France sought to challenge British influence around the world and renewed its own imperial designs. As a way to find support among the newly independent states, French intellectuals floated the idea of a shared ‘Latinity’. Euro-Creole (or White American) leaders found the idea appealing as it allowed them to define their own racially and culturally heterogeneous communities as homogenous and European based while gaining legitimacy and acceptance on the stage of nations.¹

Pre-European indigenous cultures

Driven by dynastic and religious dreams of expansion and by the allure of vast treasures, the arrival of Europeans in America by the end of the fifteenth century

had disastrous consequences for the indigenous people. Demographers have estimated the indigenous population to be around 100 million people by 1492; the consequences of the invasion were so dramatic that barely sixty years after Columbus's landing there were almost no indigenous people left in the Caribbean and by the end of the sixteenth century approximately 80 per cent of the population had disappeared, making it the 'greatest demographic disaster in the history of the world'.²

Accounts and testimonies by the first conquistadors and friars afford us glimpses of pre-European indigenous societies. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, a young lieutenant in Hernán Cortés's invading army, was dazzled by the splendour of Tenochtitlan, the Mexican capital. Díaz del Castillo vividly described his impressions in *The True History of the Conquest of New Spain* (1576), when the magnificent Moctezuma welcomed them into his city in 1519:

we saw so many cities and villages built in the water and other great towns on dry land and that straight and level causeway going towards Mexico, we were amazed and said that it was like the enchantments they tell of in the legend of Amadis, on account of the great towers and cues and buildings rising from the water, and all built of masonry. And some of our soldiers even asked whether the things that we saw were not a dream? . . . I do not know how to describe it, seeing things as we did that had never been heard of or seen before, not even dreamed about.³

His famous descriptions, including the great marketplace of Tlatelolco, reveal a splendour unmatched anywhere else in Europe. However, the city was thoroughly destroyed in the 1521 assault and barely ten years later, the centre (where the Main Temple and Moctezumas's palace once stood) was reconstructed in the Spanish style.

In addition to the wreckage wrought by conquest, two interrelated reasons contributed to the great loss of Native knowledge: an imperialistic language policy and a strict monitoring of Native cultural production systems. To begin with, Spanish colonialism was keenly aware that 'language has been the companion of empire; and it followed empire in such manner that together they began, they grew, and they flourished, and afterwards, together, they both fell' – as Antonio de Nebrija, the renowned Spanish humanist, wrote the very same year Columbus sailed the ocean blue.⁴ Such understanding of the connection between imperial expansion and language was at the foundation of language policies that promoted Spanish – as well as other strategic devices related to alphabetic writing (genres, lexicon, clerics, institutions, etc.) – as the means to represent and regulate representation within colonial circumstances.

These language policies had devastating effects on Native notation systems – such as painted books or codices, glyphs, *quipus* (Andean knots), images and

textiles – and the supporting apparatus that gave them social meaning, such as orality, genres, network of elders and speech codes.⁵ These systems sustained rich literary traditions – such as sacred Andean poetry – which combined lyrics with music and dance within elaborate rituals. However, as Europeans realized the connection between codices and American spiritual beliefs and world-views, they became the object of surveillance and suspicion. The bishop of Yucatan, Fray Diego de Landa, ordered the destruction of all extant Mayan codices in 1562 because, he wrote, such a ‘large number of books ... contained nothing in which there were not to be seen superstition and lies of the devil’⁶. As a result, we have very few surviving pre-conquest indigenous narratives.

Sometimes, the lasting fame of an author – as with Nezahualcoyotl (1402–72), Lord of Texcoco, who, despite excelling as a warrior, lawgiver and architect, is best remembered as a poet – would surface on post-conquest accounts and sometimes – as with Andean sacred and amorous poetry – the oral tradition kept alive motifs and entire pieces that were later transliterated into alphabetic writing. However, much of what we now know of pre-conquest cultures was and continues to be reinterpreted through European alphabetic writing. The critic Angel Rama calls this self-proclaimed civilizing complex the ‘Lettered City’ – the embodiment of the bureaucratic institution in all of its labyrinthine manifestations, including the web of domination, subordination and collaboration that constituted its dynamics; it was the political enclave in charge of regulating and monitoring social relations and productions within the Iberian empires; the host of all legal institutions and the force that worked towards legitimizing and justifying the colonial project.⁷

Both the narrative and the history of the manuscript of the *Popol Vuh*, the sacred narrative of the Mayas and one of the greatest creation stories, illustrate this point. The *Popol Vuh* is primarily an ensemble of Mayan creation myths – ‘Hushed and empty is the womb of the sky ... These, then, are the first words ...’ – the mythical deeds of the hero twins and the origins of the Quiché (K’iche’) people. The language, imagery and narrative patterns evince its Mayan roots and scholars agree it is one of the few surviving texts, and certainly the most important, that provides access to pre-European invasion indigenous cultures.⁸ In addition, we know the *Popol Vuh* existed prior to the arrival of Spaniards in the form of a pre-European codex zealously kept by indigenous priests.

However, our contemporary version was produced in the mid sixteenth century. Scholars surmise that the sacred narrative was transliterated by a Mayan priest schooled in alphabetic writing or a scribe who took it down from various Mayan priests about 1550s. The manuscript lay dormant in Chichicastenango, Guatemala, for over a century until a local priest, Francisco Ximénez,

found it, transcribed it and translated it into Spanish. Ximénez's manuscript was lost again until it was discovered in Guatemala by an Austrian doctor, who then published the Spanish version in 1857. Four years later the French anthropologist Charles-Étienne Brasseur de Bourbourg published the Quiché version in Paris, under the title *Popol Vuh*.

The manuscript explicitly bears the traces of its colonial setting. Interlaced with the sacred account, the anonymous author has inserted a history of the various kings and priests, their deeds and fame, and the genealogical lists of the surviving members of noble families up to the mid sixteenth century, the chronicle of their heroic resistance to the Spanish invasion and the destruction of their capital, Uxatlán. Furthermore, the creation story includes a few thematic and structural similarities to the Bible (as with the opening line, the passage about the deluge or the first creation of men out of mud – revealingly enough, destroyed by the gods because of their lack of intelligence) that might indicate the already powerful presence of the Catholic Church by the time the account was written.

The Lettered City and modern colonial globality

As seen, the Lettered City engulfed and subordinated all other signifying systems, and constituted the grounds on which the colonial machine operated. Nevertheless, the Lettered City was not monolithic. In 1928 Miguel Angel Asturias, a young Guatemalan writer studying in Paris, translated the *Popol Vuh* into Spanish. He shared with contemporaries José María Argüedas and Alejo Carpentier a penchant for surrealism and the ethnographic impulse, which Marcos Natali documents (see Chapter 10(b) in this volume). While continuing the colonial mediating role, the ethnographic impulse found a way to communicate traumatic losses inflicted by history to contemporary audiences.

It is, thus, within the fold of the Lettered City, as the expression of its power, a site for negotiation and a deferred promise, that the four motifs that are relevant for postcolonial contemporary theory and political intervention emerge: the questions of modernity, coloniality, globality and the failure of modern colonial globality. The four motifs constitute the colonial matrix to which our postcolonial present returns time and again.⁹ In what follows I briefly discuss each one of these.

Modernity

My point of departure will not be that modernity made possible the conquest and colonization of America. Rather, I will submit that the invasion, subjugation and permanent occupation of America was fundamental in generating the

structural conditions and symbolic resources for the implementation of the modern world system.

If – as Stephen Greenblatt argues – the emergence of print culture at the end of the fifteenth century made available new and versatile modes of self-presentation which were themselves modes of self-fashioning,¹⁰ the so-called discovery of America enabled such representation as an autonomous, reasoning and virtuous subject. It was a collective European subject that achieved identity by opposing itself to off-shore naked barbarians, a mastering subject granted the privilege of conquering uncharted, uncivilized and pagan territories; by contrast, Natives became blank surfaces on which these dreams, aspirations and anxieties could be freely inscribed. It was a *phantasy* best staged by the first and most copious body of writing associated with the American enterprise, the letters and accounts of discovery.

Pêro Vaz de Caminha, an official on the Portuguese India-bound fleet commanded by Pedro Álvares Cabral, reports to the king Dom Manuel I on the unexpected landing in Brazil. The letter grammatically conjoins the king as ruler with the newly found territories in a natural act of unfolding sovereignty, ‘give account of the finding of these, your lands . . .’.¹¹ In such a paradoxical juncture, the narrator acts as a favoured vassal who conveys important knowledge about the location, nature and present status of the new domain (whether its inhabitants are political or wild, or the land is fit for cultivation and colonization), is the privileged witness of the ruler’s unfolding sovereignty, and, by virtue of the account, performs the act of unfolding. The autoptic quality of these narratives displayed and performed for audiences in Europe the ceremonies of possession and self-assertion required by modernity.¹²

One might say the history of discursive colonization in America begins with Christopher Columbus’s fanciful recording of his Caribbean voyages (1492, 1493, 1498 and 1502). Strongly influenced by biblical scripture, Columbus’s discourse is foundational in several ways. In the 1493 ‘Letter to Luis de Santángel’, the Catholic monarch’s finance minister, Columbus informs his reader that the lands he has found are ‘most fertile to an excessive degree, and this extremely so . . . and plenty of rivers so good and great that it is a marvel’.¹³ The idea of America as a marvellous and copious land inaugurates a literary treatment that proved enduring and found a postcolonial development in the techniques of so-called marvellous realism.

However, it was to be his depiction of Natives that secured him a place in colonial literary history. According to his *Diary*, on 12 October 1492, upon reaching the island of Guanahani, Columbus approached the islanders who gathered around the newcomers:

I gave some of them red hats and glass beads that they put round their necks, and many other things of little value, with which they were very pleased and became so friendly that it was a wonder to see . . . They go as naked as their mothers bore them, even the women . . . They were well built, with handsome bodies and fine features . . . They do not carry arms and do not know of them because I showed them some swords and they grasped them by the blade and cut themselves out of ignorance . . . They ought to make good slaves for they are of quick intelligence . . . and I believe that they could very easily become Christians, for it seemed to me that they had no religion of their own.¹⁴

His description of nudity plays a determining role in ascribing an identity to Native Caribbeans. It sets them apart from Europeans, inaugurating a time-honoured technique of colonial anthropology by temporally and spatially severing observers from Natives, and detaching the observing from the observation. The denial of coevalness would in time become an essential rhetorical strategy when depicting American life. Later historians of indigenous cultures – whether sympathetic like Pedro Cieza de Leon, Bernardino de Sahagún and Simão de Vasconcelos or disapproving like Fernández de Oviedo, Sarmiento de Gamboa and Gabriel Soares de Souza – followed the same rhetorical strategy.

However, nudity's meanings are not fixed and it is constructed here in multiple and, perhaps, even contradictory ways. In this and other passages, the islanders' nakedness signifies at once the innocence before the Fall and the savagery of utter degradation; it indicates their status as untainted by civilization and absolute deformation by their lack of culture. Native bodies are simultaneously feminized, passively welcoming the desiring gaze of Europeans, and converted into natural slaves, inviting the forceful determination of the conquistadors. It is precisely this proliferation of diverging meanings that proves to be so enduring and effective in characterizing Europe's fundamental Other.

Furthermore, the proliferation of Edenic motifs is also tied to the exasperating absence of gold. The day after landing, Columbus writes:

I watched intently and tried to find out if there was any gold and I saw that some of them wore a small piece hanging from a hole in the nose. By sign language I gathered that to the south, or rounding the southern end of the island, there was a king who had great quantities of it in large pots. I tried to get them to go there but I subsequently saw that they were not interested in going.

As gold does not appear, Columbus changes strategy and announces he is close to the Garden of Eden, progressively subordinating the material absence of gold to the spiritual presence of Paradise. The perils and storms, the appearance of aggressive warriors, all of that signals the hurdles this errant sinner

must overcome in his pilgrimage to the sacred place. If Columbus's performance did not always succeed in impressing the Catholic monarchs, it would at least awaken the millenarian spirit of his European audience.

In some ways Hernán Cortés, conqueror of Mexico, continued in the same tradition and fulfils its masterful realization. Like Caminha and Columbus, Cortés's accounts are letters to the king describing the new land, its inhabitants and wealth, while eulogizing his deeds and devotion to the Crown. And, like his forerunners, he capitalizes on the image of a bountiful land peopled by able and well-disposed vassals. However, unlike Columbus and Caminha, Cortés's four letters (1519–26) detail the first great encounter with a non-European civilization and, thus, face different rhetorical problems. The economy of description and restrained characterizations suggest that a more calculated type of writing is at work.

His 'Second Letter' (1520), the most famous and most frequently published, was written after his initial defeat and expulsion from Tenochtitlan. It describes his journey to the fabled city, the adoption of Malinche, a noble Native woman given as a slave by Mayan traders who acted as his interpreter, the careful assembling of powerful allies by promises and intimidation, the entry into the city of Mexico and the 'Night of Sorrows', when Spaniards were driven out of the city by Mexican warriors. Despite his actual state of defeat, Cortés presents himself as the ideal prince, courageous and prudent, the courtier who won for the king, as he put it, an 'empire' in the New World equal in merit to that of Germany, and who lost it only because of the treachery of former allies. Furthermore, it is written from the position of reconquest: 'I assure Your Majesty that until I have achieved this I shall not rest, nor leave untried any way or means open to me, ignoring all the hardships, dangers and expense that this may cost me.'¹⁵

In the decades that followed, numerous conquistadors sought to record their feats and establish their reputation. However, by the end of the sixteenth century, the Crown began to favour more state-centred narratives and promoted histories (as opposed to chronicles or eye-witness accounts). Partly as a response to vociferous claims by the descendants of the conquistadors and partly to counter the Black Legend – the propagandistic effort by Spain's European rivals – the enterprise finds a decisive realization in the monumental *General History of the Deeds of the Castilians on the Islands and Mainland of the Ocean Sea* (1601–15) by royal chronicler Antonio de Herrera y Tordecillas. The account is mostly a rewriting of the earlier chronicles, though expurgated of anything unfavourable to the Crown; its narrative teleology and omniscience more appropriately embody the imperial project and gave a definite and, for the most part, untroubling version of the conquest.

Coloniality

I will call coloniality the underside or traumatic moment of modernity. Those who suffered the conquest and colonization of the Americas experienced these processes as brutal interruptions of their social routines that irrevocably altered their sense of community. Some Europeans were acutely aware of such a tragic impact. Pre-eminent among them was Bartolomé de las Casas, whose *A Brief Account of the Devastation of the Indies* (1542) was widely read throughout Europe and caused outrage among Spaniards. Las Casas was certainly not against the Spanish conquest; he believed it was divinely ordained and Spanish claims to America were just and deserving. Rather, he was adamantly against the methods employed by the conquistadors, which he credited with wiping out the entire indigenous Caribbean population and predisposing those few survivors to an anti-Christian bias. Las Casas seizes on the image of the innocent Native and develops it to the utmost degree.

And of all the infinite universe of humanity, these people are the most guileless, the most devoid of wickedness and duplicity, the most obedient and faithful to their native masters and to the Spanish Christians whom they serve. They are by nature the most humble, patient, and peaceable, holding no grudges, free from embroilments, neither excitable nor quarrelsome. These people are the most devoid of rancours, hatreds, or desire for vengeance of any people in the world. And because they are so weak and complaisant, they are less able to endure heavy labour and soon die of no matter what malady . . . They are also poor people, for they not only possess little but have no desire to possess worldly goods. For this reason they are not arrogant, embittered, or greedy. Their repasts are such that the food of the holy fathers in the desert can scarcely be more parsimonious, scanty, and poor. As to their dress, they are generally naked, with only their pudenda covered somewhat . . . They are very clean in their persons, with alert, intelligent minds, docile and open to doctrine, very apt to receive our holy Catholic faith, to be endowed with virtuous customs, and to behave in a godly fashion.¹⁶

Nudity is here a sure sign of sinless Natives, their ignorance of weapons a clear indication of a docile disposition and amiable inclination. Yet in Las Casas's exposé indigenous Caribbeans are simply pliable bodies on which Europeans imprint their sins:

. . . into this land of meek outcasts there came some Spaniards who immediately behaved like ravening wild beasts, wolves, tigers, or lions that had been starved for many days. And Spaniards have behaved in no other way during the past forty years . . . for they are still acting like ravening beasts, killing, terrorizing, afflicting, torturing, and destroying the native peoples, doing all

this with the strangest and most varied new methods of cruelty, never seen or heard of before, and to such a degree that this Island of Hispaniola once so populous . . . has now a population of barely two hundred persons.¹⁷

Las Casas's denunciations were hardly effective, but they echoed throughout Europe and were the basis for the Black Legend mentioned earlier.

However, it is certainly in the large (though until recently largely unnoticed) body of writing Miguel León-Portilla has called the 'voices of the vanquished' that one finds the most telling testimonies of the brutal violence of such coloniality.¹⁸ The enormity of the traumatic episode brought forth a symbolic collapse best evidenced in the inability to use local symbolic resources in order to mourn within the frame of existing political and cultural institutions – a situation further aggravated by the banning of local deities and the forceful imposition of a new religious order. Cultural frames of reference and representation were inadequate to render the events intelligible so that, as Nathan Wachtel argues, the 'traumatism of the conquest is best defined by a kind of "dispossession", a plummeting of the traditional universe'.¹⁹ The following fragment of a post-conquest Nahuatl *icnocuicatl* (song of sorrow) from the Valley of Mexico allows us to glimpse the gap between the harrowing experience of conquest and the position and terms the symbolic order provided in which to experience it:

Broken spears lie in the roads;
[hair is torn in] grief.
The houses are roofless now, and their walls
are red with blood.

Worms are swarming in the streets and plazas,
and the walks are splattered with gore.
The water has turned red, as if it were dyed,
and when we drink it,
it has the taste of brine.

We . . . pounded our hands in despair
against the adobe walls,
for our inheritance, our city, is lost and dead.
The shields of our warriors were its defense,
but they could not save it.

We have chewed dry twigs and salt grasses;
we have filled our mouths with dust and bits of adobe;
we have eaten lizards, rats and worms.²⁰

This *icnocuicatl* (1524) is part of the *Manuscrito de Tlatelolco* (1528), an account composed by surviving scribes of Tlatelolco, a city state that fought alongside

Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Texcoco and Tlacopan against the Spanish invasion of central Mexico. However, unlike Netzahualcoyotl's sober tone and contemplative mood, this *icnocuicatl* conveys a profound feeling of despair and helplessness. The imagery of extinction ('The water has turned red ... / it has the taste of brine') might best be described as registering the breakdown of symbolic systems associated with authority, education, family and the life-cycle. The traditional lyrical techniques of parallelism and juxtaposition of two different concepts to create a third one (thus 'broken spears' and 'torn hairs' begets the image of vanquished soldiers) intensify to convey the sense of utter defeat and humiliation. The dominance of the passive voice ('hair is torn', 'the houses are roofless'), except when inscribing acts of sheer helplessness ('We ... pounded our hands in despair'), sets the stage for a world upside down, in which worms swarm in the streets and the roads are splattered with blood. The point of view of the poetic voice marks the moment of exile from their beloved city: 'for our inheritance, our city, is lost and dead. / The shields of our warriors were its defense, / but they could not save it.'

Symbolic collapse might best be grasped as a total crisis of signification. Survivors are brought together by the radical impoverishment of their symbolic resources – foremost among them, language – and by the need to figure out a process of collective reconstitution. The account enacts this impoverishment by switching from the rhetorical conventions of the *xiuhpohualli*, annals or 'book of the years', to those of the *icnocuicatl*, that is to say, from historical account to lyrical expression. This is perhaps most exacerbated in the last stanza, where a series of declarative statements bring to a close the *icnocuicatl*: 'We have chewed dry twigs and salt grasses; / we have filled our mouths with dust and bits of adobe; / we have eaten lizards, rats and worms.' The succession of exasperated events does not correspond to the sequential or temporal logic proper of the annals, but to lamentations frequent in the *icnocuicatl*.

In a properly postcolonial mode, memory and remembrance become important political resources and powerful discursive strategies. In the Peruvian and Bolivian Andes, 400 years after the conquest, poets still recited a soulful elegy remembering the death of Atahualpa, the reigning Inca at the time of the Spanish arrival: 'Destroyed under a strange empire ...; perplexed, misled, denied our memory, forlorn; departed the shade that protects; we weep ...'²¹ Unlike Las Casas's meek Native, remembrance brings about its own agency and the poem ends with the promise of future returns: '[Inca,] open those eyes that used to wound us like lucky arrows; open your magnanimous hands; and with that fortified vision sends us away.' It is only from such commitment to remember that we can understand twenty-first-century Native politics.

Globality

A third motif emerges when modern totality became thinkable as an integrated and continuous whole. Thus, travellers and historians, like Jesuit Joseph de Acosta, write that ‘we have established that here in the southern hemisphere we have heavens and that they overspread us just as those of Europe and Asia and Africa do’.²² Such achieved globality organized the radical heterogeneity of the world into a whole which set in motion the early capitalist world system; it ripped the world apart and stitched it back together into a colonial globality, and constituted the colonial as the obverse of the modern and the modern at the expense of humanity in the colonial.²³

However, modern globality invokes a moral ground so as not to be imagined as a mere function of financial or imperial might. Above all, it is a moral realm, conceived as being imbued with reason and upheld on behalf of God. Thus we see a proliferation of staged conviviality during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, allegorical paintings, atlases and plays, such as Mexican Juana Inés de la Cruz’s *Soirée of Four Nations* (1692) in which Africans, Native Mexicans, Spaniards and Europeans sing and dance in praise of the Viceroy and his family and the Virgin Mary. The promise of a plurinational globality in which divergent social logics coexist under a unified ethical standard and under a coherent and reciprocal system of representations betrays the fact that, even within the logic of early modern capitalism, there existed the longing for a globality that was not driven by greed and domination.

Another of Sor Juana’s short plays, the *loa* accompanying her *Divine Narcissus* (1688), stages the Mexican conquest as the characters America and Occident meet in battle with Christian Religion and Conquistador Zeal. Predictably, America and Occident are defeated and when Zeal is ready to put them to death, Religion asks Zeal not to kill America, ‘I need her alive. . . . Your role was to conquer / by force; mine to subdue her / by reason and gentle persuasion.’ America defiantly claims ‘As a captive, I mourn / my lost freedom, yet my free will / with still greater liberty / will adore my gods!’ Christian Religion proceeds to ask America about her supreme deity, the God of the Seeds, ‘who fertilizes / the fields so that they bear fruit / a god to whom the heavens bow down, / a god the rain obeys, / and finally he is the one / who cleanses our sins, to then / become the food he offers us.’²⁴ Startled by the uncanny resemblance with the Christian Eucharist, Religion undertakes to show America that the Aztec god is but a poor mimesis of the Christian one. Religion’s argument persuades America and both she and Occident embrace the new religion and the new king. European-achieved globality completed and supplemented God’s work.

Like imperial histories and religious allegory, the epic imagined globality; unlike them, the epic was more likely to record the heroics of their enemies, if only to dignify European victories. The Renaissance epic gained new favour in the sixteenth century, where it is said to reach its peak by poeticizing Spanish and Portuguese exploits. Luis de Camões's the *Lusiadas* (1572) and the three volumes of Alonso de Ercilla's *La Araucana* (1569, 1578 and 1589) rapidly accomplished classic status in the metropolis and the colonies. If Camões charted the expansion of the Portuguese empire over East Africa and the South Indian continent, Ercilla's three-volume epic poem recounts the Spanish conquest in southern Chile. In an eye-witness account of the punitive expeditions to crush the rebellious Araucanian, Ercilla tells of the 'valour, the bold feats / of brave Spaniards, / who made the untamed Araucan / bend beneath their yoke'.²⁵ Ercilla's opening lines famously evoke Virgil's *Aeneid* and – just as Aeneas founded a new Troy in Rome – Ercilla heralds the Spanish arrival in Chile as the auspicious destiny of a world empire.

However, despite his best efforts, as soldier and poet, the Mapuche tenaciously resisted and Ercilla's promise to deliver the final conquest is deferred until a second and then third volume. By then the epic imperial overtones have given way to a less teleological narrative, with various episodes in which the Mapuche show themselves brave and heroic and the Spaniards exceed the limits of legitimate warfare and humanitarian treatment. Thus emerge *La Araucana*'s most spirited heroes – Lautaro, Caupolicán, Tucapel, Rengo and Galbarino – while no Spaniard ever rises to that status.

Halfway through the second volume, Ercilla is led to the cave of Fitón, an old Indian sorcerer. There, Fitón takes him around the world and shows him 'of the Universe the great plan, / from North to South, from East to West, / and whatever fits the sea and the air embraces, / rivers, mountains, lagoons, seas, lands, / made famous by nature and wars' (cantos xxiii–xxvii). The journey ends with a view of the contemporary battle of Lepanto, where Christians famously defeated the Ottoman fleet in 1571 and consolidated the modern world system. Imperial globality is once again invoked and the conquest of Chile would seem just a matter of time.

However, as announced in the previous canto, such global homogenous imaginings are inhabited by less peaceful and harmonious spaces. Interspaced with the descent into Fitón's cave, we learn the fate of Galbarino, a famous Mapuche captain who had been captured by the Spaniards and had his hands cut off. Galbarino is freed and returns to the Mapuche council that is deliberating on a possible peace treaty with the Spaniards. Galbarino denounces their cruelties and excites them to war. He heroically leads an Indian squadron into

battle, but is defeated and captured again. This time he is sentenced to death. On hearing the sentence, the poet intercedes for his life but Galbarino angrily reveals his mutilated arms, declares his hatred of Spaniards and proceeds to hang himself (canto xxvi). Contrary to imperial expectations, his death signals the renewal of resistance.

Fascinatingly, Ercilla's epic of imperial failure became Chile's national poem during the nineteenth century. This nationalist appropriation suggests there are important continuities between colonial and postcolonial Latin America, best evinced in the fierce military offensive launched by the Chilean and Argentinian governments during the late nineteenth century to finally defeat the Mapuche and integrate them into the two countries.

Failed colonial globality

A postcolonial approach underscores not just the discovery and invention of new worlds by Europeans, but the de-centring principle by which totality is not exhausted by the centre. We have seen how the moral imagination of the conquest inevitably led to ambivalence. Furthermore, modern colonial globality is rigged with misunderstandings, disappointments and failures. Shipwrecks, natural disasters and rebellions challenged the belief that conquest and salvation were natural destinies and staged the anxieties associated with colonialism. Alongside the literature of empire, there proliferated chronicles that deviated from the celebratory paradigm and emphasized the failures instead.²⁶ Cabeza de Vaca's journey over the course of eight years, from Florida, where he was shipwrecked, to Mexico City, where he finally arrived in 1536, exemplifies this literature about the trials of empire. In *The Narrative* (1542) Cabeza de Vaca tells of how he and his three companions, among whom was Estevanico or Mustafa Zemmouri, an enslaved Moroccan Berber, were initially held captive by Native American groups. Later they earned their freedom as healing men, and used their new Native knowledge to journey through North America. By the time they reached Spanish territories, they were taken for indigenous and were initially rejected by Europeans.

It is within this context of failure and misunderstandings that I want to explore the writings of *mestizo* authors such as Peruvian Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616). Heralded as the first American writer, Garcilaso, the son of an Inca princess and a Spanish captain, has been represented as symbolizing the fusion or reconciliation of the two warring races. The *Royal Commentaries* (part I 1609; part II 1616) arguably exemplifies this harmonious blend. The first part of the book is dedicated to the Indians of Peru and tells the story of his mother's ancestors, the royal Incas; the second part is dedicated to the Spanish

conquistadors and tells of their 'heroic deeds' in Peru. The supposition guiding Garcilaso's task is that a great deal of violence has ensued because of a lack of good translators.

Garcilaso's aim is to comment on and correct Spanish chroniclers and to tell, as an Indian,²⁷ of the true history of the Incas. His having 'suckled the Inca language and culture in [his] mother's milk' (1: xix) gives him a definite advantage over other chroniclers and scholars. That is certainly what Garcilaso claims in the story of a gold stone which was found in Cuzco. In book 8, chapter xxiv, Garcilaso tells of a fabulous stone with streaks of gold which the Indians called *huaca*. On this occasion, Garcilaso pre-empts the word of religious connotations by stating that in this context *huaca* means worthy of admiration because of either its extraordinary beauty or its extreme ugliness. With satisfaction he then points out that the Spaniards had similarly taken the stone as a marvellous object. As the sole mediator between the two worlds, Garcilaso concludes that 'I looked at the stone with the eyes of the Spaniards and of the Indians' in what seems a satisfying gesture of interpretative closure.

However, what at first sight seems like a successful reconciliation of two adversarial languages becomes something else once we realize that in performing the equation Garcilaso has had to render the originals opaque. The word *huaca* has not only lost its original religious meaning, but now floats aimlessly somewhere between the beautiful and the ugly; marvellous expresses an attitude of amazement before an extraordinary object, but it does not necessarily register a particular response. While Garcilaso insists that both Indians and Spaniards admired the stone, we readers never find out the content or actual reasons for the admiration. This rhetorical gesture, in fact, provides very little information and does not satisfy Garcilaso's original promise to 'tell better of the things of this land' (Preface). In that context, rather than a communicative advantage, the ability to look at the 'admirable object' from both perspectives points to the dilemma at the heart of Garcilaso's enterprise. If he is to render both linguistic systems equal – and he must in order to constitute himself into an author – he has to find a place where they become translatable into each other and might meet in harmony. However, as Garcilaso endeavours to produce an adequate translation, he repeatedly inscribes the impossibility of such task. That is to say, the utterance fails in its communicative intent by providing no real intelligible meaning for the reader.

Remarkably, the *Commentaries* not only proposes to remedy the initial historical mistranslation by staging an ideal translation; it also signifies – and thus repeats – the crisis of knowledge by enacting it. It is of course a condition constitutive of the colonial enterprise. A contemporary of Garcilaso, the

Peruvian indigenous chronicler Guamán Poma de Ayala (1536–1616), writes an extraordinary *Letter to the King* (c. 1615) in order to inform the king of Spain of the deplorable situation in the kingdom of Peru and to instruct him on how to remedy the ills caused by colonial government. The 1188-page-long manuscript with 398 hand-painted pictures is divided into three sections – an account of Andean history and customs; a history of the Spanish conquest; and a sustained critique of colonial administration with advice on how to implement correctives.

Guamán Poma imagines his letter as a direct dialogue between the king, who asks, and the author, who responds. The fictional dialogue allows Guamán Poma to inform in detail how Andeans have been abused, beaten, robbed, degraded and killed by colonial administrators, ecclesiastical officers and entrepreneurs. Equally, the author calls for harsh punishment for those offending officers, recommends replacing Spaniards with Andean authorities and elevating the latter to their pre-conquest dignity, and suggests returning the land back to the Natives and removing levies. As the manuscript progresses, his initial impetus is subdued by frequent expressions of anguish – such as ‘the world is upside down’ and ‘there is no remedy’ – and, as he journeys to Lima to hand his chronicle to the emissary who committed to take it to the king, he bursts out in despair by remarking that all of it ‘is a sign that there is no God and there is no king’.²⁸

Political independence and the postcolonial liberal state, 1750–1850

Towards the end of the eighteenth century a growing restlessness gradually redefined the colonial context and by the second decade of the nineteenth century resulted in the political independence of most Latin American countries. The transformations that took place throughout the continent were both a response to external factors (i.e. the Enlightenment, Spanish administrative, military and fiscal reforms, and the Napoleonic invasion of Spain and Portugal in 1808) and internal ones (widespread social discontent, the appearance of local presses and the emergence of an important political and economic elite) and eventually led to the declaration of formal political independence from Spain and Portugal. The former Spanish possessions broke into twenty American countries during the course of the next century, while Portuguese American territories gave way to Brazil.

Certainly, the period witnessed an early – if limited – move towards colonial critique and decolonization. One might see this gesture in one of the most outstanding narrative pieces of the period, *The Mangy Parrot* (1816) by Mexican

journalist Joaquín de Lizardi. Credited with being the first Spanish American novel, the narrative – published in weekly instalments – chronicles the misadventures of a young rogue, son of an upper-middle-class family, driven by hunger and necessity. His adventures – as monk, barber, physician, apothecary, beggar and finally secretary to an officer in Manila – take readers through the streets and alleys of Mexico City, where they meet a wide variety of characters and social types. This opening of the social landscape, however, is countered by the novel's structure as a morality tale which demonstrates that a life based on cheating and deception leads to ruin and condemnation.

Much more daring were some of the poetic treatments by Uruguayan Bartolomé Hidalgo (1788–1822) and Peruvian Mariano Melgar (1790–1815). Both were ardent patriots; Hidalgo inaugurated gaucho poetry, poetic compositions that were based on the language of South American cowboys and dealt with their customs. Melgar, a more difficult author to classify, composed *yaravies*, ancient Andean compositions that used music. His poetry is mostly amorous and his career as a poet was truncated when he was only 24 as he was shot after being captured by troops loyal to the king of Spain.

However, those openings played against the sentiment of some of the most illustrious leaders of the revolutions. In his famous 'Reply of a South American to a Gentleman of Jamaica' (1815), Simón Bolívar (1783–1830) lucidly writes

we are, moreover, neither Indian nor European, but a species midway between the legitimate proprietors of this country and the Spanish usurpers. In short, though Americans by birth we derive our rights from Europe, and we have to assert these rights against the rights of the natives, and at the same time we must defend ourselves against the invaders. This places us in a most extraordinary and involved situation.²⁹

Clearly, political independence did not mean a break with the four motifs, even though nationalist historiography has argued otherwise. Thus, if the language of citizenship (modernity) was understood to be universal (globality), it was however severely restricted (coloniality). The themes of a failed modern colonial globality can be seen reworked within a liberal context and in the creation of nation states and national identities.

If the sixteenth century witnessed a reorganization of the world through a European consciousness, the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw the emergence of a local intelligentsia, generally white Americans, that sought to perpetuate their pre-eminence by limiting access to political citizenship based on class, ethnic and gender limitations. Fearful of their 'compatriots', intellectuals

such as Argentinians Esteban Echevarría and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento imagined a nation devoured by uncouth masses hopelessly plummeting into barbarism. In his novella *The Slaughterhouse* (1838), Echevarría depicts an idealistic young man from Buenos Aires's upper class who is assaulted and killed by the primitive crowd working at the abattoir. Echevarría posits a civilization–barbarism dichotomy that Sarmiento will popularize in his vastly influential *Facundo, Civilization and Barbarism* (1845), the two terms on which the national question has spun in Latin America.³⁰

However, we must contrast these texts with other accounts, such as Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda's *Sab* (1842) and Juan Francisco Manzano's *Autobiography of a Slave* (1837). In these texts, alternative ways of imagining the nation are explored. These two narratives are by Cubans and take place on the island, which, with Puerto Rico, was the only Spanish American territory still under colonial jurisdiction at the time. Both narratives take place in a context of harsh repression and great control over blacks. Let us recall that in 1791 there was a massive slave uprising that led to the destruction of the plantation system – the backbone of Caribbean economies – and the establishment of Haiti as an independent black republic in 1804. Furthermore, the wars of independence in continental Spanish America and several uprisings by Afro-Cubans (including one led in 1812 by José Antonio Aponte, which spread throughout the island, and another one in 1843) created a climate of fear and hysteria.

Sab, the main character in Avellaneda's novel, is a noble slave, son of a Congo princess, who is brought up in the house of Carlota, daughter of an insolvent landowner from Camaguey, Cuba. Carlota falls in love with Enrique Otway, the son of a wealthy merchant from La Habana, who cares mostly about money and leisure. *Sab*, in the meantime, is madly in love with Carlota and dies burdened by his secret love. When *Sab* dies, Carlota, already disappointed with Enrique, realizes the mulatto was truly her great love. The novel closes with her melancholic visit to *Sab*'s grave.

The novel is peopled with confusing identities: Enrique Otway is a wealthy handsome man who fulfils social expectations. However, he is a great disappointment as it becomes evident he and his father are only interested in Carlota's hacienda and her social status. Similarly, *Sab* is a confusing character. He appears to be neither black nor white; his skin colour is yellowish; his condition does not correspond to his clothes; he is both docile and threatening. Soon we discover he is a noble soul within an enslaved body. Furthermore, *Sab* is adopted by Martina, an indigenous woman descendant of Chief Camaguey, the last of the original Natives in the island. As a sum of black, white and Native American, *Sab* is truly Cuban, as opposed to Enrique, whose foreign name betrays him.

Carlota's inability to see through appearances dooms her happiness. Her melancholy corresponds to her incapacity to recognize actual historical possibilities. The novel does its best to teach the reader to navigate amidst such confusions and discern true character from pretence. The narrative point of view remains close to Sab and invites intense identification with the character: Sab is next to us, we occupy his space, his tragedy is ours, his desires are ours. Hopefully, we will not deny conviviality and will allow ourselves to fall in love with Sab. Not surprisingly, the novel was banned in Cuba and was only published in 1937, well after independence.

In spite of all the possible similarities between *Sab* and Francisco Manzano's *Autobiography*, they are radically different political and aesthetic projects. Manzano began his autobiography around 1836 in order to repay his benefactor, influential abolitionist Cuban Domingo del Monte, for helping him secure his freedom. Once finished, the narrative underwent several corrections and was handed over to Richard Madden, the British envoy to the Caribbean. Madden translated it into English and published it in London in 1840. Once again, we find the Lettered City mediating colonial subaltern writing.

If freedom, like writing, is not the kind of social practice reserved for slaves, then how to write the story of oneself *as slave*? How to write about one's own life if one does not even own one's life? Keenly aware of such dilemmas, Manzano writes to Del Monte 'when you read my story remember that I am a slave and slaves are dead in the eyes of their master.'³¹ This assertion proved so true that the second part of Manzano's autobiography was destroyed, probably by those close to his old master.

Models did not come by easily, which might explain why some scholars have seen nothing but narrative disorder, confusions, contradictions and silences in this text. However, instead of seeing a lack of skills, I suggest we must recognize the daunting task facing Manzano. He must choose his words carefully; whatever he says can be used against him. It is not enough – it is not even important – that what he writes is true. As he writes in a letter to Del Monte, history is 'an inflated protocol of lies'.³² In this case, writing is but a perilous search for authorship and freedom. In 1844, as colonial authorities reacted with rage to La Escalera's slave uprising, Francisco Manzano and other Afro-Cuban intellectuals were arrested and some – like the poet Plácido – executed.

Instead of representing historical accuracy, Manzano portrays himself as a sensitive (verging on excessive submission) and inquisitive young man. He tells us he learnt to read, write and draw at a very early age, and even surpassed his teachers and role models. Whenever forbidden from writing or reading, he would practise in the darkness of his room or hide away where no one would

see him. He became a storyteller, and art-maker, probably in the belief that for a slave to be able to represent his life meant to own it, to fashion it, to become the subject of his own narration. The slave's passion for knowledge drives the narrative and the account becomes a novel of learning, a *Bildungsroman*. That Manzano cannot overcome the social barriers and difficulties is precisely what morally condemns slavery.

For whatever its limitations, Manzano's *Autobiography* and *Sab* must be seen as marking a first postcolonial moment in Latin America. Many of those authors who published during the second half of the nineteenth century – such as Ecuadorian Juan Montalvo (1832–89), Argentinians Horacio Mendizábal (1847–71) and José Hernández (1836–84), Colombian Candelario Obeso (1840–84), French-Peruvian Flora Tristan (1803–44) and Afro-Brazilian authors Maria Firmina dos Reis (1825–1917), Luís Gama (1830–82), João da Cruz e Souza (1861–98) and, most notably, Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis (1839–1908) – continued to expose the hypocrisies, contradictions and violence of nineteenth-century Latin America. Indeed, one could argue that the first postcolonial moment culminates with José Martí (1853–95), the great Cuban hero of independence whose writings, theoretical import and political commitment inaugurate a second moment.

Notes

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6. Diego de Landa, 'Relación de las cosas de Yucatán', ed. Alfred Tozzer, *Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology*, vol. xviii (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1941), p. 169.
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16. Bartolomé de Las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account*, trans. Herma Briffault (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), pp. 28-9.
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18. Miguel León-Portilla (ed.), *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962).
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10(b) Postcolonial writing in Latin America, 1850–2000

MARCOS P. NATALI

That we lack histories of the Latin American literature produced in the last 150 years would not be an easy argument to make. The period saw a succession of attempts involved in the selection, organization, hierarchization, and narration of the region's literature, from a wide range of theoretical perspectives and with different geographical categories as the organizing principle, the individual national literary histories eventually giving way to accounts which were regional or continental in scale. (Among them there is even, of course, since 1996, a *Cambridge History of Latin American Literature*.) For yet another Latin American literary history to be written, and for its existence to be justifiable amidst the abundance of accounts in existence – some possessing breadth and profundity this chapter cannot hope to reach – the qualifier *postcolonial* would have to insert some sort of newness into the available historical and critical narratives. In this sense, a properly postcolonial history of literary production from Latin America would ideally involve a double move, considering the history of literary history in Latin America and, at the same time, the history of the notion of the postcolonial.

One would then have to consider the possible effects of a formula that, through situating in proximity the words 'postcolonial' and 'Latin America', provokes the mutual contamination of the two terms and, perhaps, the disturbance of their histories. The questions to be pondered would therefore be: how would a *postcolonial* Latin American literary history differ from other histories of the region's literature? But also: in what sense, aside from the peculiarity of its content, might a *Latin American* postcolonial literary history be different from postcolonial histories organized around other geographic contours?

This chapter will sketch some possible answers to these questions, in the process recounting briefly and in summary form the story of a few instances in the Latin American literary production of the past century and a half. The entry is therefore a retrospective and inevitably partial look at the literature of the period, in an attempt to read it beside and against certain theoretical and political concerns developed in the postcolonial criticism of recent decades. Postcolonial theory is thus understood here, in consonance with the meaning with which postcolonialism became known in the English-speaking tradition, as the intellectual production arising from the decolonization of African and Asian colonies in the twentieth century. When placed next to the reflections linked to the African and Asian cases, where the preoccupation with the relationship between colonialism and its aftermath – that is to say, its continuation and possible negation – has a central place, the Latin American intellectual production of the period appears as something of an oddity, and one of the goals of this chapter will be to consider the implications of this situation.

*The uneasy place of Latin America in postcolonial studies, and
vice versa*

To begin, a story about the reception of postcolonial criticism in Latin America. In a review of the Spanish-language translation of Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), published as *El lugar de la cultura* in Buenos Aires in 2002, Beatriz Sarlo, arguably Argentina's most influential cultural critic in the past decades and among the most prominent in all of Latin America, lamented the absence in the book of references to Latin America.¹ She was, of course, correct in her assessment, which in a sense could be faulted only for its timidity: the verdict could very well be extended to include, in addition to Bhabha, most of the recent production linked in one way or another to what is generally called postcolonial theory. Indeed, when the studies are not 'Indocentric', to use the term with which Sarlo brands Bhabha's 'disdainful regionalist aristocratism' (also her words), they tend to circle around axes situated in Africa or South or Southeast Asia. Surely Bhabha's silence regarding what Sarlo calls the 'Latin American library of illustrious names and essayists', who, she is quick to point out, *preceded* him, could similarly be charged to the accounts of other prominent postcolonial critics, all of whom also overlooked the work of – to mention a few names in Sarlo's regional library – Mexican poet Octavio Paz (1914–98), Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier (1904–80), Uruguayan literary critic Ángel Rama (1926–83), Peruvian critic Antonio Cornejo Polar

(1936–97), and the Brazilians Mário de Andrade (writer, 1893–1945) and Roberto Schwarz (literary critic, b.1938).

To add insult to injury, when references to Latin America *do* appear in works by prominent postcolonial critics, they tend to be characterized by a certain dissonance. Note, for instance, the tone in the following excerpt from an essay by Gayatri Spivak, in the course of a refutation of the thesis that Latin American magical realist literature could serve as a paradigm for Third World literary production:

There is, after all, a reason why Latin America qualifies as the norm of ‘the Third World’ for the United States, even as India used to be the authentic margin for the British . . . Latin America has *not* participated in decolonization. Certainly this formal conduct of magical realism can be said to allegorize, in the strictest possible sense, a socius and a political configuration where ‘decolonization’ cannot be narrativized. What are the implications of pedagogic gestures that monumentalize *this* style as the right Third World style?²

In the pages following this fragment, the elaboration of the argument will, in Spivak’s own assessment, make the notion of Latin America as paradigm ‘tremble’. What is proposed as an alternative, interestingly, is precisely called a ‘postcolonial’ locus of enunciation, that place in which the speaker is at once native and insufficiently so, leading to an ‘impossible “no” to a structure, which one critiques, yet inhabits intimately’, that is, to ‘the everyday here and now named “post-coloniality”’.³

In her reading of Bhabha, Sarlo’s response to Latin America’s place in this discussion, wavering between silence and occasional discord, is not unusual in its ambivalence: she at once commends *The Location of Culture* for its illuminating analyses and theoretical ingenuity and bemoans the absence of references to the Latin American tradition, insisting that many issues raised by Bhabha and his generation of postcolonial critics were standard fare in the history of the Latin American literature and criticism of the twentieth century. Yet the question left unanswered, it seems, is this: why *should* Bhabha or, for that matter, any other postcolonial critic, include references to Latin American literature and culture in their studies? Or yet, to be a bit more precise: why would this unfamiliarity with Latin America be a graver offence than the noteworthy absence, in the Latin American library described by Sarlo, of serious engagement with African or Asian criticism or culture? After all, of the names identified in Ato Quayson’s introduction to this volume as central for the development of colonial discourse analysis and postcolonial criticism – Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, Frantz Fanon, C. L. R. James, George Lamming,

V. S. Naipaul, Edward Said – only Fanon and Said could be said to have had a reasonably noticeable presence in twentieth-century Latin American criticism, and even in their case the impact seems to have been significantly slighter than that noticeable in most of the other intellectual traditions examined in the chapters in this volume.

Indeed, in this juxtaposition the absences and silences might be seen as a commonality. Thus, if historian Dipesh Chakrabarty has remarked on the asymmetry of ignorance defining the non-West's relation to European history⁴ – non-Western historians may not return Europe's gesture of ignoring their work, at the risk of having that work derided; a good historian must know French history no matter what his area of expertise – in the specific case under consideration – the relationship between Latin America and Africa or Asia – there would in comparison seem to be some reason for celebration: the ignorance here seems to have been very much symmetrical!

There are, of course, specific deviations from the norm, and there is a noteworthy current exception to this rule of mutual ignorance: some recent work produced in or around the United States academy. There – in the case of Latin Americanists, in the work of Alberto Moreiras, Walter D'Mignolo, the Latin American subaltern studies group, etc. – cross-fertilization has at times occurred and appears to grow, of which the existence of a chapter on Latin American literature in a volume on postcolonial literature might be proof. As far as Latin American studies is concerned, the politics of this recent exchange seems at one level to be different from previous appropriations of Asian or African cultural elements by Latin American literature, as seen in the Orientalism of turn-of-the-century poetry – in the work of Nicaraguan Rubén Darío (1867–1916), for example – or in the exoticist impulses of some early twentieth-century Latin American vanguards. Yet there may be a sense in which the difference might not be that great after all, since the reference to the latest postcolonial critic may also function as a sign of up-to-datedness, that is, as a means of association with a prestigious cosmopolitan discourse, just as the exoticism of earlier Latin American literature had resulted in part from the desire for insertion in European culture.

My feeling is that Sarlo would not be overjoyed with this recent wave of postcolonialist *and* Latin Americanist academic production either, but, in any case, the issues raised in the brief account of her reply to *The Location of Culture* outlined above may serve as a point of departure for the discussion which will be undertaken here. Significantly, the tension noticeable in Sarlo's critique could serve as a type of case study of many concerns central to postcolonial criticism, including the various political aspects involved in the circulation of

knowledge and issues linked to mediation, translation, representation and cultural difference. And if we consider that there is at least some truth to Arif Dirlik's answer to the question 'When exactly does the "postcolonial" begin?' – his wry reply is: 'When Third World intellectuals have arrived in First World academe'⁵ – or if we accept that it is one of the possible genealogies of postcolonialism, a recognition which should not be reason for dismissal of the critical tradition, as if a secret original sin had been revealed, then the reasoning sketched recently by critics Mabel Moraña and Carlos Jáuregui begins to make sense. For them, it is, paradoxically, the very 'postcolonial condition' of Latin American countries that is the motive for the less than enthusiastic reception of postcolonial studies in the region.

Many centuries of economic dependence, political turbulence, and cultural penetration more than justify the suspicion provoked in peripheral regions of the Western world by paradigms elaborated in major European and North American centers. Latin American history can in effect be read as the account of innumerable instances of absorption, resistance, negotiation, and adaptation of epistemological models that, created in and for other cultural realities, almost always ignored the region's specificity and particularities: its inalienable ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and economic diversity . . . In this fashion, postcolonialism has been seen, on many occasions, as a new type of 'colonization by theory'.⁶

This it very well may be, on one level, given the history of the spread of postcolonial studies and their arrival, via the North American academy, in Latin America. Yet surely our suspicion should not be any slighter before nationalistic or regionalist undertones in defences of local 'particularities', even when these are tempered by the clause that identifies as its 'specificity' the region's 'inalienable diversity'.

In any case, the remarkable aspect of the story is surely also the fact that epistemological models elaborated far from Latin America, without its history or culture in mind, at times seem eerily familiar, or that they often *do* turn out to be useful for thinking anew apparently parochial problems, and that the literature and criticism produced elsewhere *do* permit unexpected dialogues with local production. Of course, even in these instances, for reflections of this sort to be at all worthwhile the matter of cultural translation must be present on many levels – among them, in this case, the question of the translation of the term 'postcolonial' itself. How many postcolonialisms are there, and what does the 'post' mean in each case? And is there any 'post' to speak of in the Latin American case?

Be that as it may, if the claim of the historical priority of a Latin American *post*coloniality is dubious,⁷ and unwittingly reproduces well-worn European affirmations of originality, albeit this time advocating first rights to something

like a theory of hybridity, the recognition of the existence of correspondences and productive contrasts is a sign that the dialogue between the different critical and literary traditions can in fact be fruitful. In fact, the dissonance itself may be productive, as can be the tense places of postcolonial theory in Latin America and of Latin America in postcolonial theory.

In implicit agreement with Spivak's idea of Latin America as the place in which the narration of decolonization is not possible, anthropologist Jorge Klor de Alva suggested exactly that the

close identification of the postindependence national cultures with their European templates and the different global circumstances of their immediate postindependence period, make evident that the Americas, in contrast to many Asian and, later, African societies, did not need to undergo an experience of decolonization . . . The above conditions lead me to assert that it is misguided to present the preindependence, *non-Indian* sectors as colonized; it is inconsistent to explain the wars of independence as anticolonial struggles; and it is misleading to characterize the Americas, following the civil wars of separation, as composed of postcolonial states. In short, the Americas, as former parts of empires which, after a series of civil wars, separated themselves politically and economically, but not culturally or socially, from their metropolises, cannot be characterized as either another Asia or Africa; Mexico is not another version of India, Brazil is not one more type of Indonesia.⁸

Disregarding for a moment the question of whether independence in other parts of the world could in fact be said to have represented cultural and social separation from the metropole, it seems clear that Klor de Alva's caveats are themselves necessary only because of the recent displacement provoked by (non-Latin American) postcolonial studies. Only because the term 'decolonization' was resignified, after the historical experience of African and Asian nations in the twentieth century, did it become necessary to return to the Latin American case and inquire about the status of its independent societies, from the nineteenth century onwards. What one would find, in such an inquiry, are processes of independence from the Portuguese and Spanish metropolises whose timeline is located around the early nineteenth century and whose movements had as protagonists largely descendants of the Iberian colonizers. Despite the wide range of destinies reserved to the indigenous populations of the continent – ranging from decimation, near decimation, displacement, isolation and large-scale fusions of various sorts to autochthonous survival as a significant portion of the general population, in different equilibriums in relation to African and European populations – it is undeniable that in no Spanish or Portuguese colony could the indigenous be said to have been the protagonists of the struggles for

independence. Accordingly, indigenous people did not, in any of these cases, move into positions of political power following independence, among other reasons because with the transition to ‘self-government’ posts did not actually become vacant, the heirs and beneficiaries of three centuries of colonization remaining in the newly independent nations, now as newly minted nationalist heroes. Only if this type of configuration is not, or is no longer, the paradigm for postcolonialism are Klor de Alva’s statements required.

The example makes clear the potential of the Latin American/postcolonial approximation. Ranajit Guha, after recounting how the South Asian Subaltern Studies project ‘has been summoned to stand trial by comparison and has been found wanting as measure or model for studies based on very different regional material’, proposes, in place of comparison, the notion of ‘convergence’, ‘with its characteristic movements of inclining, approaching, and approximating’ and its reliance ‘on reciprocity as the very condition of its possibility’.⁹ ‘[T]o converge’, Guha continues, ‘implies our being alongside others in an extended world and seeing ourselves in the light emitted by them. It is a light that illuminates differences between regional experiences no less than their agreements.’¹⁰ The shift resulting from a gesture of this sort is largely welcome, and would invite the consideration in each Latin American country of the consequences of illumination by the postcolonial light.

We would therefore have to consider, in each case, the advantages and disadvantages of thinking of Latin America through the category of the *post-colonial*, even a postcolonial which has not yet come into being, and of thinking of the present as following and therefore not entirely beyond the colonial, a present which is the ruins of the colonial. In some regions of the continent, it might be particularly difficult to defend the colonial as the privileged epistemological category for defining historical experience as opposed to slavery, recalling that in many Latin American countries the legalized institution of slavery survived the end of colonial status, often for decades. For countries such as Cuba and Brazil, which abolished slavery in 1889 and 1888 respectively, it is arguably more precise to describe the current situation as one of post-slavery, which would also mean that these are in a sense still-slave-societies. In this case the ethical priority of a literary history might have to be the various authors and literary movements occupied with the aftermath of slavery and focused on the experience of black populations in Latin America, such as the poet Nicolás Guillén (Cuba, 1902–1989) and novelist Manuel Zapata Olivella (Colombia, 1920–2004). These would be instances in which thinking through a postcolonial paradigm might be counterproductive – unless, of course, slavery were to be considered an integral part of coloniality.

If peculiarities emerge always from the comparison – it could not be otherwise – a change in the contrasting element suffices to displace the definition of particularism. The conclusion that Mexico is not India could be a starting point leading to unexpected turns of thought, as the Mexico that emerges as not-India – the peculiar Mexico that emerges from the light emitted by India – is not exactly the Mexico that is, for instance, not-France. In one shape or another, what is at stake in these convergences is the status of an event – decolonization – which is defined by postcolonial theory as epistemologically central.¹¹ Depending on the historical circumstances of the American, African and Asian colonies, the event comes into being in different ways – which is to say also that it fails to happen in each case in different ways and to different degrees, each historical experience being imperfect and incomplete in its particular fashion.

Here especially the historical particularities of the different regions of Latin America, customarily divided into the Andes, the southern cone, the Caribbean, Brazil and Mesoamerica, would have to be constantly highlighted, as would be the difference in the weight held in each region by indigenous, African and European populations and cultural practices. In contrast with largely non-indigenous countries such as Cuba or Argentina, it would be something different to speak of the importance of stressing the absence of decolonization in countries such as Guatemala, Bolivia or Peru, where to this day indigenous peoples make up a majority of the population.

If we were to think, following Derrida, that ‘what *happens* – in other words, the unique event whose trace one would like to keep alive – is also the very desire that what does not happen should happen, and is thus a “story” in which the event already crosses within itself the archive of the “real” and the archive of “fiction”’;¹² if, in other words, we were to think of every event as crossed by what could have been, the interest for Latin American studies of the encounter with Asian and African postcolonial studies might come precisely from the prospect of an expansion of our horizon of past possibilities, an increase in the events crossing our archives, in a destabilization of what Michel-Rolph Trouillot, after François Furet, called the ‘second illusion of truth’ – that is, the idea that ‘what happened is what must have happened’.¹³

Towards a postcolonial Latin American literary history

If the point of departure is the idea that Latin American decolonization could have happened, or could have happened otherwise, we may return to the archive of Latin American literature from a different perspective, seeking to

include in it absent loci of enunciation and with the aim of determining how the resignification of the terms *postcolonial* and *decolonization* could alter the narrative structure of Latin American literary histories. (If something may be said about the movement in the opposite direction – from the Latin American model to Asia or Africa – perhaps even the Brazilian version of the narrative of independence may have something to contribute. In comparison – in any comparison! – the Brazilian experience appears as a sort of caricature, and one originating in a particularly tasteless pen: in a plot entirely lacking in subtlety, history reserved for Brazil an independence announced and led by the son of the Portuguese Empire’s monarch. And yet, if the ethnic or, in the case of the Brazilian farce, the *genetic* factor is not the only one considered, perhaps the Brazilian case, and by extension other, less extreme Latin American models, may not seem so exotic or different from, say, the Indian scenario, where the filiation of nationalist leaders to the metropole surely existed on some level.) Such considerations might very well lead to a rereading of the very idea of a Latin American literature, whose unveiling or construction was the proclaimed task of numerous literary movements in the past century and a half, as of the literary histories that registered them. Circling around the notion of a perceived Latin American exceptionalism, these debates often departed from some version of the question famously formulated by Mexican poet Octavio Paz in 1961: ‘Does a Spanish-American literature exist?’¹⁴ The focus in these discussions historically tended to fall on the first element of the equation – the adjective ‘Spanish-American’ (or Latin American, in its more wide-ranging version, which includes the Portuguese-language literature of the continent yet usually, in practice if not in name, not francophone American literature). Does a specifically *Latin American* literature exist? – the question generally goes, frequently assuming the unproblematic existence of literature.

The answers vary, but it might not be unfair to say that in most literary histories of the period the tendency was to see regional or national literature as an object of desire, a project worthy of defence in one form or another. Thus, Paz’s specific answer to the question is that there *is* such an entity as Spanish-American literature, thereafter defined by the Mexican poet as literature written in Spanish in America. For the discussion being developed in this chapter, a move such as the following is laden with significance: Paz will resolve the problem of discursive practices in indigenous languages through claiming that ‘their literature, typically spoken, is a chapter in the *history* of American civilizations’.¹⁵

The preoccupation regarding the existence of national, regional or continental literary identities has recently lost energy and does not carry the weight

it had in the period of literature's close association with nation-state formation. The formula that automatically linked a discursive practice – literature – to a national or regional category – Chile, Venezuela, Peru, the Andes, Latin America – has gradually waned, as the confluence of aesthetic and political projects has come under increased scrutiny. In retrospect, in many critical discourses literature did not function much differently from the figure of the nation in nationalist discourses: a type of empty signifier into which, it was believed, content of various sorts and origins could be placed. The premise was the universality of literature, so that it was considered possible to be at once literary *and* local (as developmentalist nationalism believed it possible to be both modern and local¹⁶). This was, for critic Idelber Avelar, what ultimately characterized the dream of aesthetic modernizers: to satisfy both their will to modernity and their desire for localism.¹⁷

If a shift has indeed recently occurred, it opens up space for the examination of the neglected other side of the equation – the concept of literature – with the question possibly moving from an inquiry into the existence of a *Latin American* literature to one focusing on the possible existence of literature *in* Latin America. Does literature *already* exist, does it *still* exist, did it ever exist, is it still to come? Or yet: is it desirable that a Latin American – or Uruguayan or Guatemalan or Brazilian – literature exist?

In this debate the act of returning to the discursive practices of the past through something like a postcolonial lens could lead to the denaturalization of the very notion of the literary. In terms of the escape route offered by Octavio Paz's argument regarding indigenous discourse – the ambivalent 'it is literature, but *oral* literature', coupled with the admonishment that its proper place of study is history – the difference in perspective would require a pause precisely at the point which Paz and others cross with haste. In this sense, the interesting theoretical and political question would always have to do with the *idea* of literature, and therefore with literature's relation to what is *not* literature.¹⁸

Literature as assimilation

The overwhelmingly positive representations of the expansion of literature in Latin American literary histories have much to do with the configuration outlined above, as evidenced in the figures created by literary historians and writers for depicting the spread of the literary: transculturation (Ángel Rama), super-regionalism (Antonio Candido, Brazil, b.1918), anthropophagy (the Brazilian Modernists of the 1920s), *lo real-maravilloso* (the marvellous real) (Carpentier). Despite significant differences, common to all of these tropes

was the conviction, more or less euphoric in each case, of the possibility of a successful inscription of the regional element in literary discourse through the fabrication of a literature that would be at once local and cosmopolitan. They also share a disregard for the possible costs – for subaltern or non-literary culture – of assimilation by the literary. Meanwhile, literature remains the agent and *telos* of most literary histories, the desirability of literature itself rarely being a question.

The history of the use of the image of the barbarian and the cannibal in the Latin American tradition would be a case in point. In a series of works produced near the end of the nineteenth century – for instance, in José Hernández's *Martín Fierro* (Argentina, 1879), Euclides da Cunha's *Os sertões* (Brazil, 1902) or José Enrique Rodó's *Ariel* (Uruguay, 1900), and even in the earlier *Facundo* by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (Argentina, 1845) – the opposition between civilization and barbarism was a fundamental organizing principle. Although ambivalent in different ways, these works tended to fall on the side of the civilized, formulating to varying degrees their anxiety regarding the uncultured. These early references would later be reworked, with the difference that in many twentieth-century literary manifestations the dualism would be not rejected, but inverted in its valorization. Thus, the avant-garde artistic movement which would become known in 1920s Brazil as '*antropofagia*' (anthropophagy) appropriated the image of the cannibal, associated depreciatively with Brazil and its indigenous population since colonial times, to mark its difference regarding the European vanguards of the period. If the contradiction was that the European primitivism of the period was the stimulus for the renewed interest in marginalized local elements, an additional twist in the movement's self-representation would insist that the peculiarity of the Brazilian condition was that the 'barbarian' was 'ours'.¹⁹ The first person evidently did not refer here to Indians themselves, or to descendants of any, but functioned very much like the seemingly inclusive nationalist pronoun which seeks in a conciliatory and synthetic model the union of disparate elements in the name of a collective interest. If in the formulation of the movement's works and manifestoes the object to be assimilated – 'devoured' – in order for a national culture to be created was European civilization, the strident definition of Europe as adversary concealed the fact that in the process local subaltern culture also was to be digested. With the peculiarity of this suppression, the hybridity resulting from the encounter could be celebrated precisely as a victory of the local (subaltern).

A couple of decades later, Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier would reproduce in another key the gesture of the Brazilian Modernists, in a text written after a

1943 trip to Haiti and subsequently published as the prologue to the novel *El reino de este mundo* (1949; *The Kingdom of This World*). In it Carpentier opposes the representations of the extraordinary in European artistic traditions – surrealism, the fantastic, magical realism – to the ‘marvellous reality’ of Latin America. If in the former wonder had to be provoked through the artist’s intervention, either through unexpected juxtapositions or the augmentation of reality, in Latin America the marvellous was said to ‘emanate freely’ from reality itself – hence Carpentier’s insistence on the expression ‘the marvellous real’, identified furthermore as a heritage belonging to the entire continent.

Similar gestures would not be uncommon in the literary production of the following decades, some of which is linked by critics to the labels marvellous or magical realism. The subgenre is generally said to include such disparate novels as *Hombres de maíz* (1949; *Men of Maize*) by Miguel Ángel Asturias (Guatemala, 1899–1974), *Cien años de soledad* (1967; *One Hundred Years of Solitude*) by Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia, b.1928), and, more problematically, *Pedro Páramo* (1955) by Juan Rufo (Mexico, 1918–86) and *Grande sertão: veredas* (1956; *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*) by João Guimarães Rosa (Brazil, 1908–57), along with the aforementioned *El reino de este mundo*. (Some of these authors would be read productively by postcolonial Asian and African novelists.) Amidst the assortment of critical studies, one possible reading of marvellous realism would be this: in the light of growing discomfort with religion among Latin American intellectuals, and amidst the undeniable persistence of religious practices in daily life and in ‘popular culture’, the religious was translated into the safer terrain of literature, from which, neutralized as fiction, aspects of subaltern experience could be recodified as representative of regional identity. The move, at the same time, allowed literature to be portrayed as the continuation of oral, non-literary cultural practices, rather than their annulment.

A short story by García Márquez, one of the genre’s most prominent authors, gives literary form to a common understanding of the movement between the local and the imported, between peripheral culture and European models. In ‘El ahogado más hermoso del mundo’ (‘The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World’), the foreign element in need of absorption appears in the shape of a stranger’s corpse, as it, larger, stronger, and more beautiful than any body ever seen, washes up on the shores of a Caribbean village. Here, as in the self-representation of marvellous realism, the appearance of an unfamiliar yet prestigious body stimulates local creativity, so that the village is reformed, both materially and symbolically, as its inhabitants attempt to elevate it to the newcomer’s stature. As with much of the production associated with marvellous

realism – parts of García Márquez’s novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* may be read in this light – the underlying wager seems to be that in the local’s relationship with the foreign it is the former that will prevail, with its vernacularization of the unfamiliar. Once the encounter is narrated as the dissolution of the external element by a native community – it is significant that the scarce internal tension existing in the short story’s village is quickly resolved – it can be celebrated as the triumph of the local, although, to tell the story with rather different vocabulary, historically there did not seem to be much choice regarding the adoption of modernization. Furthermore, as recent critical readings of the ideas of transculturation and marvellous realism have argued, the consolidation of regional identity will be simultaneous with Latin America’s insertion in the global market.²⁰ By the end of the story, the village, with its improved architecture and self-esteem, will be recognized even by outsiders, as a ship floats by. Ambivalently, however, the recognition will involve a modification of the village’s name, as the ship’s captain calls the village by the dead man’s name. This closing contradiction contrasts with the celebratory tone of many of García Márquez’s critical texts, as well as some by fellow novelists Carlos Fuentes (Mexico, b. 1928) and Julio Cortázar (born in Belgium to Argentine parents, 1914–84), who occasionally described the literature of the period as the unveiling of an authentic cultural identity.

The fantastic, the genre in which some of the stories by Fuentes and Cortázar are often classified, may likewise be read as an attempt to account for unresolved cultural tensions, as befits a genre traditionally occupied with the presence of the other in the same, commonly through figures such as the ghost. In the short stories ‘Axolotl’ (*Final del juego*, 1956), by Cortázar, and ‘Chac Mool’ (*Los días enmascarados*, 1954), by Fuentes, the cause for estrangement is not strictly a spectre, being linked instead to indigenous beings, and to the strange being of the indigenous.

‘Axolotl’ is narrated by a man who, after overcoming his initial apprehension, describes his increasing fascination with certain amphibian specimens exhibited in an aquarium in Paris’s *Jardin des Plantes*. The ‘ethnographic’ inquiry into their nature, a central impulse in the construction of the magical realist novels of Asturias and Carpentier, is here frustrated, as is the philological search for the meaning of the Nahuatl word which gives the animals their name and the story its title. The narrator will ponder the question of the possible humanity of these beings, recalling early colonial debates about the nature of indigenous peoples, and the issue will here again be consumption and assimilation – to the guard’s observation that the narrator appeared to be ‘eating’ the axolotls ‘with [his] eyes’, he remarks that it was they, with their ‘cannibalism of

gold', who were 'slowly devouring' him. The narration's pronouns will repeatedly shift from the first to the third person, with the subject/object split becoming increasingly unstable, even as the narrator depicts the bind between them as 'infinitely lost'.

The encounter with the Chac Mool of Fuentes's short story is also set in motion by the fascination of a narrator, in this case a collector of 'pre-Hispanic art' in search of a statue representing the title's Mayan deity. In contrast to the European fantastic of the nineteenth century, the strangeness is here explicitly linked to local history, with the projection of the indigenous element to the past. As in Cortázar's 'Axolotl', the indigenous is not quite human, yet in this case a progressive inversion will annul the possibility of coexistence or recognition between the indigenous and the non-indigenous: the statue, in order to be 'humanized', will feed off of the narrator. Its rise is his fall. The story will partially blame the narrator for his fate, since it was his unhealthy fixation on the past and his initial attraction to the statue, whose threat he underestimated, which will lead to its resurrection – and his death. There is no space, the story suggests, for the existence of both the national and the indigenous subjects. In the end, the options offered the indigene are the objectified existence of an idol or, after presentification, the grotesque figure of the imperfectly modernized Indian.

If in 'Axolotl' the outcome of the conflict is ambiguous, culminating in uncertainty regarding the boundaries of each of its actors, and if 'Chac Mool' narrates as tragedy and murder (of the non-Indian) the mere existence of the Indian, a third story, Mexican author Elena Garro's (1916–98) 'La culpa es de los tlaxcaltecas' (*La Semana de Colores*, 1964) ('Blame the Tlaxcaltecs'), will tell the chronicle of a woman faced with two parallel temporalities – one, in the twentieth century, in which she marries into the Mexican elite, another in which she is an indigenous warrior's partner during the sixteenth-century battles which would lead to the conquest of Tenochtitlan, later Mexico City, by the Spanish. Here too, as in Fuentes, the past – or what is coded as the past – threatens to return, yet the possibility is in the end embraced by the modern subject, who ultimately chooses it, albeit while recognizing the fact of its historical and civilizational defeat, a defeat to which her own 'betrayal' is thought to have contributed. The stories represent three possible outcomes of the fantastic genre and also condense three approaches to the narration of the aftermath of the conquest's original trauma, with the other – the ruins of the conquest – appearing in the figures of a strange creature, a statue and a person from the past, respectively the cause of ambivalent desire, fear and passion.

Problems of temporality and reproduction

In the short stories by Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) the other is and is not the same. With their parodic strategies and creative mimicry, they stage startling takes on the issues sketched above, in gestures revisited later by many writers, among them the Brazilians Haroldo de Campos (1929–2003) and Silviano Santiago (b.1936), for whom the theory and politics of translation, understood on more than one level, will also be underlying concerns. In a series of texts which Paul de Man once described as ‘more succinct and devious’ versions of *PMLA* essays,²¹ Borges will return often to the matter of origins and copies, repetition and difference.

The 1939 short story ‘Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote’ (*El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, 1941) (‘Pierre Menard, Author of *Don Quixote*’) is illustrative in many respects. The text, in the form of a critical review, describes a twentieth-century French author who desired to write Cervantes’s *Don Quijote* word for word – to write, that is, an already existing book. After a few frustrated attempts, Menard finally succeeds in reproducing fragments of the book, one of which the story’s narrator, a literary critic, will compare to an identical paragraph penned by Cervantes. The conclusion: Pierre Menard’s *Don Quijote* was innovative and original, ‘almost infinitely richer’ than Cervantes’s tedious predictability. To write *Don Quijote* in Spain in the 1600s was easy; it was scandalous to do it in twentieth-century France. Throughout his extensive production of poems, short stories, essays and short stories that looked like essays, Borges tinkered with narrative structures monumentalized in nationalist histories and literatures, to the extent that Alberto Moreiras asks, in a recent essay, whether

Borges, within the Spanish archive, can be said to have constituted a mark on language, first on the Spanish language, then on language in general. Does Borges break history, the history of language, the history of the Spanish language, in two, does he create a situation such that we, the successors, must then think of a state of things before Borges and of a different state of things after Borges?²²

The notion of the archaic, and the linear temporality on which it depends, would also be upset, from very different angles, in other poetic and narrative works written in the second half of the twentieth century in Latin America, remarkably in the novels *Lavoura arcaica* by Raduan Nassar and *Pedro Páramo* by Juan Rulfo, published, respectively, in Brazil in 1975 and in Mexico in 1955. Intricate aesthetic structures seeking to capture a temporality shaped by the

simultaneity of the non-simultaneous appear also in the poetry and novels of neo-baroque Cuban writers such as Severo Sarduy (1937–93) and José Lezama Lima (1912–76). In some of these reformulations of evolutionary narrative structures, the very notions of the archaic and the future are suspended.

Near the end of the twentieth century, a different sort of temporal marker would impose itself, postdictatorship becoming a common denomination of the Latin American historical experience and its literature following the end of totalitarian regimes in many Latin American countries. As with postcolonial and post-slavery, here too – and the ‘here’ in this case usually refers to the countries of the southern cone of South America (Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Chile, along with Brazil) – the issue is the memory and representation of catastrophe and trauma, bringing with it the question of the status of the witness, as in, to mention just two examples from what is a substantial field, the work of Tununa Mercado (Argentina) and Roberto Bolaño (Chile, 1953–2003; *Nocturno de Chile* (*By Night in Chile*) and *Estrella distante* (*Distant Star*)).

José María Arguedas and the (absent) indigenous locus of enunciation, or of the possibility of the expansion of literature being seen as a problem

And yet, as far as I can see, it was a Peruvian writer from the middle of the twentieth century who would stretch the question of literature furthest, in terms not only of the content and form of literary representation but also of its *concept*. José María Arguedas (1911–69) grew up bilingual and bicultural, moving between Spanish- and Quechua-speaking communities in the Andes, and as an adult, claiming as precursors Peruvian poet César Vallejo (1892–1938) and political theorist José Carlos Mariátegui (1894–1930), produced a significant body of work that included novels, short stories, poems, ethnographic studies and songs, mostly in Spanish but also in Quechua. Arguedas was often read by critics as a figure close to the work of García Márquez, Rulfo and Guimarães Rosa, at times singled out as a paradigmatic example of literary ‘transculturation’, the process identified by Ángel Rama as the rearrangement of previous cultural matter (folklore, religion, etc.) into new shapes (the novel, the short story). In transcultural authors, Rama saw the *reconstruction* of the local universe and its worldview, as if the fact that this was being done in a genre like the novel were irrelevant, as if the local worldview did not include its own discursive practices, as if the literary telling itself were not already indicative of a certain way of being in the world.²³

Recognition of this dilemma – of the fact that literature could already be itself a betrayal – led to Arguedas's successive crises with the Spanish language, the genre of the novel, and the very idea of literature, evidenced in what seems to have been his growing disillusion with the possibility of *localized* literature being a solution to the subaltern's predicament. Brazilian literary critic Antonio Candido's famous statement that nativist Latin American literary movements were never able to question the importation of literary forms, rather than content, since this would have been akin to opposing the European languages spoken in the continent, seems to find its limit in Arguedas: there are plenty of moments in Arguedas's work which may be read exactly as the questioning of the Spanish language, as it is swallowed on various levels by Quechua, as of the idea of literature. In his posthumous work *The Fox from Above and the Fox from Below*, the writing of a novel is transformed into something similar to a traditional ritual in preparation for death, so that, instead of translating religion into literature, the desire seems to be for the transformation of literature into religion and ritual. If the idea of transculturation for all practical purposes celebrated the assimilation of subaltern culture by the global literary system, in Arguedas there is an opening for imagining what the opposite movement might have looked like: the assimilation of modernity by subaltern culture.²⁴ In other words, there seems to be a gap for thinking a decolonization that could have happened.

And alas, despite all the evidence to the contrary, among which the author's suicide cannot be excluded since its announcement is incorporated into his final work, Arguedas would be read as triumphant hybrid. A possible explanation might be found in the fact that an indigenous locus of enunciation has been practically inexistent in the Latin American public debate and in the collective imaginary, limiting the terms of any discussion before it even begins. This invisibility might explain the fact that Arguedas may be read euphorically, or that Brazilian anthropophagy and Latin American magical realism are read as a dispute between (elite) cosmopolitanists and (elite) localists, a conflict between vanguardists and regionalists. This absent enunciatory site must therefore be inserted into the literary debate, either through contact with the light emanating from other historical configurations, where subaltern voices may have been differently silenced – what this chapter has tried to do – or else sought in existent yet concealed parallel manifestations within the Latin American tradition. Perhaps a properly postcolonial literary history would have to not only *reread* the canon with these concerns in mind – this chapter's archive is very much the canonical literature of the last century or so – but also *rewrite* the history of literature and non-literature according to the terms instated by these other manifestations.

In either approach, there would be no guarantee that literature would ultimately survive, when confronted with such a postcolonial gesture. There could not be, and there should not be, such a guarantee. The exercise could not be simply the inclusion of literary works written by Indians themselves, though this would have an interest of its own (there are, increasingly, indigenous writers publishing in native languages, in Peru, Guatemala, Mexico and other countries; for example, Javier Castellanos, *Gaa ka chhaka ki: relación de hazañas del hijo del Relámpago*). The exercise would have to admit the prospect of a history in which literature appears as the adversary, where literature might be the problem rather than the solution.

In other words, there would be no assurance that in the end the conclusion would even be that it would be desirable for literature to survive. In this sense, the overwhelmingly affirmative depictions of the expansion literature might profit from bearing in mind accounts such as the following, by Ugandan writer Goretti Kyomuhendo, writing in 2001:

The book is a fairly recent phenomenon in Uganda's cultural framework. As in many African societies, which are rooted in oral traditions, the book, a concept introduced by foreign missionaries, is often regarded as a foreign intrusion. Such societies traditionally place a higher premium on communal life than on the idea of 'individualism' that is implicit to the solitary reading of books . . . The reading of books is still regarded as an isolating activity which threatens to destroy or disrupt this culture of sharing and togetherness which is part and parcel of the African way of life.²⁵

Suddenly the spread of literature and the consolidation of its tangled web of institutions might no longer seem like something to be automatically celebrated. The story of its spread, after all, is the tale of the consolidation of a certain way of living with language and narrative and of a certain subjectivity. The experience of reading and writing in solitude and silence, the development of interiority which reading incites, literature's debt to individualism, literature's relation to the state and its pedagogical institutions: all of this would have to be rethought, alongside a history of the book, as technology and commodity, in Latin America. If Derrida has insisted on the need to think the link between literature and democracy, and of democracy as a prerequisite for literature, we need also consider the connection between modern literature and the commodity form, and ultimately between literature and capitalism.

With this backdrop in mind, in what sense might literature *not* be desirable? In what place, under which circumstances, for whom? What would be a situation in which literature and justice did not coincide? What goals could trump those of literature? What interests could override those of the literary

institution? Which concerns might be capable of containing literature's omnivorousness? From what perspective might literature's incorporation of other discursive practices be condemnable? Telling the history of literature with an eye to cultural difference would mean writing literary history as something other than the triumphant autobiography of literature and imagining literary histories in which literature were not the sovereign subject or necessary outcome and in which the expansion of literature were not necessarily cause for celebration. In this sense, the amplification of the literary archive to include in it practices previously unlinked to the concept or the institution of literature appears as a gesture to be commemorated only from the point of view of literature itself. To conclude that the inclusion of other discursive practices in literature is beneficial – or a sign of generosity – requires that we presume that the concepts and institutions through which non-literary practices were lived are insufficient. For the purposes of this discussion, it would matter little if non-literary indigenous practices were included, rather than excluded, in the category of the literary (or, as in Octavio Paz, at once included *and* excluded), if the epistemological specificity of the concept of literature is not considered.

Thought should not stop at the goal of writing more inclusive literary histories, or even literary histories from new perspectives. An exercise in writing a postcolonial literary history would also have to consider the possibility that an alternative perspective is no longer even possible, the prospect of a contrapuntal point of view no longer being thinkable.²⁶ If not, and if more inclusive literary histories were all we were to write, we would continue to ignore the fact that models of conciliation such as those of literary cannibalism involve a double digestion – of Europe but also of the subaltern.

Notes

1. Beatriz Sarlo, 'Nuestro mundo híbrido: *El lugar de la cultura* de Homi Bhabha', *Clarín*, 23 (November 2002).
2. Gayatri Spivak, 'Marginality in the teaching machine', in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 57–8.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
4. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 28–9.
5. Arif Dirlik, 'The post-colonial aura: Third World criticism in the age of global capitalism', *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (1994), 329.
6. Mabel Moraña and Carlos Jáuregui, 'Introducción', in M. Moraña and C. Jáuregui (eds.), *Colonialidad y crítica en América Latina* (Puebla: Universidad de las Américas, 2007), p. 11.
7. For an exploration of the notion of Latin America as the template for *coloniality*, see Francisco A. Ortega, this volume, Chapter 10(a).

8. Jorge Klor de Alva, 'The postcolonization of the (Latin) American experience: a reconsideration of "colonialism", "postcolonialism", and "Mestizaje"', in G. Prakash (ed.), *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* (Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 247.
9. Ranajit Guha, 'Subaltern studies: projects for our time and their convergence', in Ileana Rodríguez (ed.), *Latin American Subaltern Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 37–8.
10. Ibid., p. 41.
11. See Julian Murphet, this volume, Chapter 15.
12. Jacques Derrida, "'This strange institution called literature': an interview with Jacques Derrida", in Derek Attridge (ed.), *Acts of Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 35.
13. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), p. 107.
14. Octavio Paz, 'Literatura de fundación', in *Obras completas*, vol. 3 (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1991), p. 43.
15. Paz, 'Alrededores de la literatura hispanoamericana', *Obras completas*, vol. 3, p. 49.
16. See Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*.
17. Idelber Avelar, *The Untimely Present: Postdictatorial Latin American Fiction and the Task of Mourning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).
18. For a similar discussion regarding a different context, see Christopher Prendergast, 'The world republic of letters', in C. Prendergast (ed.), *Debating World Literature* (London: Verso, 2004), pp. 1–25.
19. Oswald de Andrade, 'Manifesto da Poesia pau-Brasil', in J. Schwartz (ed.), *Vanguardas latino-americanas* (São Paulo: Edusp/Iluminuras, 1995), pp. 135–9.
20. See Avelar, *The Untimely Present*, and Alberto Moreiras, *The Exhaustion of Difference: The Politics of Latin American Cultural Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2001).
21. Paul de Man, 'A modern master: Jorge Luis Borges', in *Critical Writings 1953–1978* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 124; see also Alberto Moreiras, 'The villain at the center: infrapolitical Borges', in Sophia A. McClennen and Earl E. Fitz (eds.), *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 4.2 (2002), <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol4/iss2>, p. 2.
22. Alberto Moreiras, 'Newness, world language, alterity: on Borges' mark', in William Egginton and David E. Johnson (eds.), *Thinking with Borges* (Aurora: Davies Group, 2009), p. 123.
23. See Marcos Natali, 'Beyond the right to literature', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 46.1 (2009), 188.
24. See Moreiras, *The Exhaustion of Difference*, p. 207.
25. Goretti Kyomuhendo, 'Literature and books in Uganda's cultural framework', in E. Portella (ed.), *The Book: A World Transformed* (Paris: UNESCO, 2001) p. 41.
26. Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 32.

Postcolonial writing in South Africa

CHRISTOPHER WARNES

South African history is characterized by multiple colonialisms and migrations which were different in the ways they operated and in their impact on the societies and cultures of the region. The large-scale movement of people, the rise and fall of polities, the logic of imperial control by direct and indirect means, and the history of resistance against such control – all were present before the arrival of European settlers in the seventeenth century. Dutch, French and German settlers and their descendants, who over time came to speak Dutch in its creolized local form, Afrikaans, were, in 1806, effectively recolonized by Britain. Large numbers of slaves were imported over centuries from other parts of Africa, Madagascar, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, adding to the mix. The advent of self-rule in 1910, the triumph of the National Party in 1948, or the declaration of the republic in 1961, moments which elsewhere might be iconically postcolonial, in South Africa meant the entrenchment of white power and an extension of internal colonial-style control and exploitation. South Africa thus presents a particular set of challenges to those seeking to describe it as ‘postcolonial’.

The variegated nature of South African colonialism is evident in its literatures. Writing in English and Afrikaans exhibits features similar to those of the literatures of other settler countries, for example in their transactions with European literary traditions, or in a preoccupation with the relations between identity and landscape. But South Africa differs dramatically from other settler colonies in that its settlers never outnumbered its indigenous inhabitants. Literature by black South Africans in some respects evinces commonalities with writing from other parts of Africa – in the appropriation and adaptation of oral traditions, for example, or in its commitment to deploying literature in the service of liberation. Between these two poles lies a range of points of overlap, influence, dialogue and convergence. The key defining quality of South African postcoloniality is, as David Attwell notes, its *texturedness*.¹ The challenge is of finding ways to situate local specificities within the generalizing tendencies of postcolonial theory.

In many ways the term postcolonial finds particular purchase in relation to the term 'postapartheid'. Though racism was a feature of South African life from at least the earliest moments of colonial contact in the seventeenth century, it was only in the early twentieth century, after self-rule was granted by Britain, that a policy of segregationism, affecting millions of people, was enacted in earnest. The first significant piece of racist legislation, the Natives Land Act of 1913, declared that no 'native' could own or hire land outside state-decreed areas. In the years to come hundreds of laws came into being, regulating along racial lines space and movement, labour practices, political affiliation, sexual relations, health and education; in short, every aspect of South African society and cultural life.

Apartheid, the legal codification and large-scale enforcement of racially segregationist policies between 1948 and 1994, was in one sense a consolidation and extension of colonial racial politics, but it had its own unique features and it lacked colonialism's transnational dimensions. From 1962, apartheid was understood by the South African Communist Party (SACP) to be a 'colonialism of a special type'.² Decolonization in other parts of Africa made it possible for the theory to outline fundamental similarities between colonialism and apartheid. Instead of the profits of an unequal and exploitative set of relations being exported, in South Africa they were passed on to the white oligarchs who owned mines, factories and farms, and to the white bourgeoisie who benefited in myriad ways from a subjugated black populace. The theory of colonialism of a special type allowed the SACP to situate apartheid within a history of colonialism and by so doing to predict that, just as happened in other parts of Africa, South Africa too would ultimately have its own moments of liberation and decolonization. After decades of brutal repression, a huge mobilization of opposition from both within and outside the country finally forced the ruling National Party into negotiating with its enemies. On 27 April 1994 the last vestiges of formal apartheid disappeared with the country's first democratic election and the subsequent installing of Nelson Mandela as its first democratic leader.

In a narrow sense, then, South African literature can only be properly considered to be postcolonial after the demise of apartheid in 1994. There are at least two immediate problems with this notion, however. The first is that postcolonialism as a methodology and a field does not typically define itself historically, preferring to take a broader critical focus on colonialism and its legacies as well as processes of decolonization. There are good reasons why we should consider a number of writers and thinkers from the earliest moments of colonialism proleptically postcolonial, a point to which I shall return shortly.

The second objection to the insistence on a historical *ratio* for the terms ‘postcolonial’ and ‘postapartheid’ is that such an approach risks obscuring the extent to which colonial and apartheid practices are still very much with us in the postcolonial and postapartheid world.

If we take a broad view of postcolonialism’s remit and see the term as promoting ‘as much a reflection on the conditions under imperialism and colonialism proper as about conditions coming after the historical end of colonialism’, as Quayson states in the Introduction to this volume, then it is clear that the insights of postcolonial thinking can be used to revise and illuminate aspects of South African literary history, allowing synergies between past and present to become evident. A full reassessment of such moments would require a great deal more space than is available here. There are already several histories of South African literature in existence, and this essay makes no claims to supplement or correct them.³ Rather, it gestures to nodal points in the history, seeking out, firstly, those moments where literature is used to critique iniquitous colonialist policies, attitudes or systems of knowledge, and secondly, those texts which use the powers of literature to imagine an alternative order, a more just world than that bequeathed to us by colonialism.

The place to start, is, unsurprisingly perhaps, with one of the very first moments of sustained contact between colonizer and colonized in the 1650s, and specifically with one woman, Krotoa-Eva, who anticipates key features of the postcolonial condition in important ways. Krotoa was a Khoikhoi child of the Goringhaicona clan, who grew up close to the family of the first governor of the Cape, Jan van Riebeeck. Renamed Eva, she was valued for her ability to translate, facilitating negotiations between the servants of the Dutch East India Company and the local Khoikhoi. The need for translation was urgent: the Dutch were heavily dependent on trade with the Khoikhoi to restock ships on their way from Europe to the East, and the two groups had already begun to clash over access to pasturage. Krotoa’s skills earned her respect; she married the Danish surgeon Pieter van Meerhof and bore him several children. But Van Riebeeck left the Cape in 1652, Van Meerhof died in 1667, and Krotoa’s addiction to drink and tobacco led increasingly to conflict with the authorities. She was banished to Robben Island, her children were taken away from her and placed in the care of whites, and she died destitute in 1674.

Krotoa-Eva is the subject of several novels, poems and works of criticism published since the end of apartheid. Meg Samuelson has outlined some of the reasons behind this attraction.⁴ Herself a translator, Krotoa-Eva is a figure of translation itself, moving to and fro across the liminal space between European and African, as so many after her would. Her appeal to postcolonial theory’s

interest in hybridity is obvious. She gave birth to the region's first mixed-race children, and she was able to be both Khoi and European at once, as what Homi Bhabha would call the 'hybrid hyphenation' in her name implies.⁵ But Samuelson cautions against certain aspects of the way Krotoa-Eva has been taken up in the postapartheid period. Drawing a parallel between Krotoa-Eva and Malintzin (La Malinche), lover and translator of the conquistador Hernán Cortés, Samuelson shows how, in nationalist discourse, these women's work of translation is seen as treasonous, while that of child-bearing becomes heroic. Recent attempts to install Krotoa-Eva as a 'mother . . . of the rainbow nation' depend upon a dangerous domestication, which apart from being historically inaccurate, actually reduces the subversive critical potential of this complex and tragic figure.⁶ The complexities of Krotoa-Eva's life carry over into the ways her story is read and written in the postapartheid present.

Though the Dutch East India Company never envisioned a full-scale colonial enterprise in South Africa, settler demand for land over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries pushed back the boundaries of the colony. By 1789 the contact zone was the Eastern Cape where Boers (Dutch-speaking settlers) and later the British fought a series of nine wars against the Xhosa over the course of nearly a century. These clashes became increasingly brutal after 1820 when several thousand British were settled in the area. Naked expansionism on the British side found its expression in the burning of crops and homesteads, forced resettlement, the ruthless betrayal of agreements, assassination, torture and the defilement of corpses. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Xhosa had experienced huge losses of land. Food shortages were common and were worsened by the outbreak of bovine lung-sickness. In 1856, a teenage girl, Nongqawuse, claimed to have received a message from the ancestors instructing the Xhosa to slaughter their cattle and burn their crops. Such acts of sacrifice, she said, would lead to the resurrection of the ancestors, the return of the cattle and crops, and the white invaders being driven into the sea. Many of the Xhosa followed Nongqawuse's prescription. Mass starvation followed. But many of the Xhosa did not follow Nongqawuse thus providing the 'believers' in the prophecy with an opportunity to blame the 'unbelievers' for the catastrophe that followed – had everyone killed their cattle and burned the crops, so the argument goes, the dead would have arisen.⁷

Nongqawuse's millenarian vision of a peaceful and abundant life for the Xhosa after the expulsion of the whites appears dangerously naïve, for it required the destruction of the very assets that would have helped the Xhosa resist the British more effectively. But, as is the case with Krotoa-Eva, recent fictional, historical and critical studies of the cattle-killing have revealed how

complex and multilayered a phenomenon it was. Restorative sacrifice plays an important role in both African and Christian metaphysics. Both of these systems were present on the frontier, and both fed into the logic of the prophecies. Fruitful work has been done on the gender dynamics of the prophecies and their retellings, focusing particularly on the nexus between cattle and patriarchy in Xhosa life.⁸ Transnational dimensions are present in the ways the Xhosa imagined that the Russians, then fighting the British in Crimea, would provide assistance. On a different level, Nongqawuse has been used as an example of the eurocentricity of postmodern understandings of the decentred self, since the prophetess herself emblemizes a 'splitting' that may be 'a function of the syncretic epistemologies emerging from the colonial encounter'.⁹

The most significant recent reworking of the cattle-killing is to be found in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* (2000), a split-time novel set in the 1850s and shortly after South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994. Although there have been many reprisals of the cattle-killing story in South African writing, Mda's novel is exceptional in the extent to which it makes explicit the contemporary postcolonial relevance of Nongqawuse's prophecies. The split between believers and unbelievers is presented in the 1850s as a question of what form anti-colonial agency should take. In the parts of the novel set in 1994 the same split between believers and unbelievers is present, but is now reframed as a question about what form development should take in the postcolonial, postapartheid context. At stake is the question of whether the inhabitants of a small village should allow a huge developer to transform the area into a casino and resort, or whether eco-friendly tourism, more respectful to the local culture, should be promoted. The unbelievers in this context are those who support the former option, seeing it as bringing 'civilization' to the area. The believers – and Mda's preference for this group is obvious – opt for the latter. The believers win the battle with the area being declared a national heritage site based on its historical significance as the place where Nongqawuse's prophecies originated. The prophetess, has, ironically, as the believer Zim notes, finally saved the village.¹⁰

British expansion resulted in a near genocide in the Eastern Cape. Other groups were also severely affected, and their responses were to define the shape of the future. The descendants of the Dutch, French and German settlers, who had arrived under the mandate of the Dutch East India Company, had, from the late eighteenth century, begun to identify themselves as 'Afrikaners', Africans, to distinguish themselves from more recent European arrivals.¹¹ Vexed by British taxation, the imposition of English in schools, and the

abolition of slavery, the Boers (the word means, simply ‘farmer’) from the 1850s packed up their goods, their families and their slaves and headed in ox wagons away from the Cape. They entered into various relations of conflict and co-operation with the inhabitants of the interior of the country, and later founded two republics: the Orange Free State and the Transvaal Republic.

Though there are reasons to be hesitant about considering Afrikaners under the rubric of the postcolonial, this cultural group emblemizes an interesting feature of what Attwell calls the ‘textured postcoloniality’ of South Africa. Descendants of the original colonizers, they were subsequently recolonized by Britain in 1806. Though their lot was for the most part always better than that of black South Africans, Afrikaners felt like second-class citizens. The response of many was migration and further colonization of the interior of the country. In the late nineteenth century, British expansionist zeal – the figurehead being the megalomaniacal Cecil John Rhodes – was unlikely to accommodate the presence of two small independent republics in its midst. The discovery of gold beneath what is now Johannesburg in the 1880s led to two wars. The second of these, between 1899 and 1902, was a brutal affair in which scorched-earth tactics and internment in concentration camps were used by the British to counter the support networks that were sustaining the Boer commandos. The key to understanding Afrikanerdom’s convoluted postcoloniality lies in the way Afrikaner identity was forged as a response to British colonization, the subsequent century of oppression, and the development of a cultural sense of self as a means of resistance and survival. In a secondary move, Afrikanerdom was defined against blackness; apartheid was to repeat upon South Africa’s black population the injustices of British colonialist spatial politics.

From a linguistic and a literary point of view, the development of Afrikaner identity from the late nineteenth century resonates with movements advocating cultural autonomy in other postcolonial contexts. As Hermann Giliomee has shown, this is especially the case with regards to the link between writing and cultural nationalism.¹² In 1875 the *Genootskap vir Regte Afrikaners* (GRA; the Society of Real Afrikaners) was formed to develop the Afrikaans language and to promote its use by valorizing it in the face of the patronizing attitudes of speakers of Dutch and of English in the Cape Colony. The GRA published poetry, novels, novellas, newspapers, grammar books, histories and children’s stories. Reading publics grew, and the location and identity of Afrikaners were explored in fictional terms, most markedly in relation to issues of anglicization, the relationship between the city and the country, the idealization of the past, and the invention of tradition. The result was that a powerful sense of culture and identity was forged in a short space of time. When combined with

large-scale organization and mobilization, Afrikaners came to dominate the South African political landscape for almost the entire second half of the twentieth century.

English-speaking settler culture in the nineteenth century lacked as overt a desire to assert difference and political/cultural autonomy from Europe as was manifest in organizations like the GRA. The discovery of diamonds and gold led to a transformation in South Africa's status, and an large increase in traffic and commerce with Britain. No longer merely a refreshment post for ships travelling to and from the East, South Africa came to occupy a central place in the imperial system, and literary representations of the region wasted no time in registering this shift. The text that exemplifies the trend is H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), a hugely popular romance in which a trio of British male adventurers discover vast wealth, and restore to his rightful place on the throne a noble African king. As many critics have noted, in terms of its representations of race, class, gender, economic history, along with its idiosyncratic antiquarianism and its meshing of romance and realism, *King Solomon's Mines* operates to legitimize many of the underpinning discourses of imperialism. For a British readership, it implicitly invited 'all the big and little boys' to whom it was dedicated to test and prove their manhood in the colonies, with vast wealth (like that accrued by Rhodes or Barnato) as the more explicit reward.

Haggard's writings are saturated with Victorian self-assurance about the manifold legitimacy of the colonial project. But *King Solomon's Mines* is entangled in the work of two South African writers who actively opposed colonialism in different ways, Olive Schreiner and Sol Plaatje. Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* had appeared two years before Haggard's novel. As Chrisman notes, Haggard praised it in his essay 'On Fiction' and borrowed an important image from it.¹³ Haggard's and Schreiner's writerly projects are far from similar, though, as is clear from the very preface of *The Story of an African Farm* in which Schreiner, writing under the pseudonym, Ralph Irons, warns that adventure stories of the kind Haggard was to write are best written from Piccadilly or the Strand. The South African writer by contrast 'must squeeze the colour from his brush, and dip it into the grey pigments around him. He must paint what lies before him.'¹⁴ To see the distinction as simply one between romance and realism would be to miss the point. So different are the writers, that what is at stake in the contrast between Haggard and Schreiner is nothing less than relationships between literary form and ideology, between the novel and the politics of representation that inform it.

Nowhere are these issues more apparent than in Schreiner's novella, *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, published in 1897, an early example of the

politicized literature that was later to dominate the South African writing in English. The novella is an implicit response to *King Solomon's Mines*, an explicit indictment of colonial practices in Mashonaland during the second *chimurenga* (uprising) of 1896, a revelation of anti-colonial military resistance, and a heartfelt appeal to liberal readers in Britain and South Africa to contain the brutal rapacity of Rhodes's British South Africa Company.¹⁵ The eponymous Peter Halket, a working-class English recruit to the company's army, finds himself separated from his troop and spends a lonely evening on top of a small hill. The novella deftly uses internal monologue, and conversation with a mysterious stranger, who later turns out to be Christ, to effect its critique. Halket reveals to the reader his motivations for being in Africa (the accrual of wealth), his attitudes to women (he freely admits to gang raping a young mother), race (he disavows the possibility of equality) and space (he, as was common, assumes that any resistance to the company's colonial actions constitutes a 'rebellion'). Through his engagement with the Christ figure, Halket's conscience is activated and he realizes how unjust – on material and corporeal levels – have been the practices engaged in by him and his company. At the end of the novella, Halket's commander shoots him after he sets a free a captive; Halket effectively martyrs himself to the cause of anti-colonialism.

In Schreiner's text the anti-colonial reveals itself to anticipate the postcolonial because implicit within the former is the exposure of colonialist spatial and racial politics, along with the idea that justice is attainable, that a world without exploitation is possible. In a different way, and also as a result of a dialogue with the Haggardian romance, a similar ethic can be found in the first novel by a black South African, Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi*. The mission-schooled Plaatje, a journalist, diarist, translator and activist, had been thoroughly shocked by the passing of the Natives Land Act in 1913. This legislation had the effect of dispossessing many thousands of black South Africans who were now forbidden from hiring or owning land outside small reserves set up by the government. Plaatje, a founding member of the South African Native National Congress, the forerunner of the ANC, responded by pleading the case of black South Africans abroad, especially in Britain, where he met Lloyd George, and in the United States where he established links with Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells and other prominent African Americans. In addition, Plaatje wrote two important texts in response to the crisis: *Native Life in South Africa*, published in 1916, and *Mhudi*, written between 1917 and 1920 but only published in 1930.¹⁶

Native Life in South Africa begins, poignantly: 'Waking on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African Native found himself, not actually a slave, but

a pariah in the land of his birth.”¹⁷ Generically hybrid, it mixes analysis of the motivations behind the legislation, statistics and transcripts of the parliamentary debate with a travel narrative that shows the effects of the law on the people it dispossessed. *Native Life* is clearly very closely bound up with Plaatje’s political advocacy, which was unsuccessful in its principal goal of overturning the Natives Land Act. *Mhudi* allowed Plaatje to address white ignorance and racism in a different register by, as he described it in his Preface, ‘interpret[ing] to the reading public one phase of “the back of the Native mind”’.¹⁸ The novel’s subtitle is ‘An epic of South African Native Life a Hundred Years Ago’ – a somewhat exaggerated claim, but one which captures Plaatje’s desire for the kind of fictional founding document that expresses the historical significance of the first moments of colonial contact in the interior of the country.

Epic though its aspirations may be, *Mhudi* is better described as a romance. It is historical in the sense that, in the manner of Sir Walter Scott, it sets out to describe in detail the life and customs of times past; but it is romantic in the more literal sense that tells the story of the love between Ra-Thaga and Mhudi, the heroine of the novel. The novel begins by describing idyllic scenes of precolonial life, soon shattered by the arrival the tyrant Mzilikazi. Through a strategic alliance between the Boers, who were just beginning to arrive in numbers, and the Barolong, who inhabited the region, the imperialist aspirations of the Matabele are thwarted. The alliance is explored on a more personal level through the friendship between Ra-Thaga and the Boer called Phil Jay, clearly a demonstration of Plaatje’s humane optimism. But there is nothing naïve about this gesture: the savage flogging by the Boers of their servant, and their outrage at Ra-Thaga for drinking from one of their mugs hint at a deep-seated racism. Mzilikazi’s speech after his defeat reminds the triumphant Barolong that in making a pact with Boers they are like the man who raises a lion cub, only for it to later devour his children and his wives. Of more significance than the friendship between Ra-Thaga and Phil Jay is that between Mhudi and Umnandi, Mzilikazi’s queen. In making Mhudi the protagonist and heroine of the novel, who saves her husband’s skin on several occasions, Plaatje had already reversed the patriarchal tendencies of Haggardian romance. As Laura Chrisman points out, the bond between Umnandi and Mhudi allows Plaatje to sketch the outlines of an incipient African nationalism that would only much later come to find full political expression.

Plaatje’s mission-school upbringing, his desire to reconcile the oral and the written, to negotiate between African and European influences, and to assert for Africans a place of equality within the nation state, situate him within a tradition of intellectual activity that has much to offer a postcolonial history of

writing in South Africa. David Attwell, drawing on the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, uses the term ‘transculturation’ to describe the ways black intellectuals from the mid nineteenth century until the present have taken as their task ‘to translate modernity into South African terms, to wrest its promises away from corruption and give them new meaning’.¹⁹ Attwell examines the life and work of the Glasgow-educated Tiyo Soga, journalist, speech-maker, hymnist, letter-writer and diarist, who in 1856 became the first Xhosa to be ordained, and finds a tension between early images of Soga as ‘the model Kafir’ and later perspectives of him as ‘progenitor of African nationalism’.²⁰

Different versions of this tension – which is really, in certain respects, the tension between colonialist and proleptically postcolonialist subjectivities – can be traced in the work of a generation of black intellectuals who wrote in English, and in indigenous languages like Sesotho, isiZulu and isiXhosa after Soga. Attwell shows how the early twentieth-century writings of John Langelibele Dube, D. D. T. Jabavu, John Knox Bokwe, J. J. R. Jolobe, Thomas Mofolo and, later, the Dhlomo brothers, S. E. K. Mqhayi, John Dube and B. Wallet Vilakazi all engage with the challenges of modernizing tradition and traditionalizing modernity.²¹ The influence of the missions on these writers provides the context for understanding their contributions to South African letters. In one sense, missionary activity lay at the very core of colonialism’s violent incursions into societies, cultures and minds. But for this select male elite, a mission education provided the intellectual resources for rethinking colonialism from the perspectives of the colonized, of holding up a mirror to the colonizers, and, implicitly or explicitly, of imagining a different, more just future for South Africa. These tendencies were to reach their highest political expression in the life and work of Rolihlahla Mandela, named Nelson by the teachers at the mission school he attended as a child.

The generation of black writers that came to prominence in the 1950s, most of whom were associated in one way or another with *Drum* magazine, had few of the straight-laced, decorous manners of their predecessors. *Drum* was aimed at an urban black readership, and mixed journalism, short stories, poetry and social commentary with discussions of jazz, an agony column, pictures of pin-up girls and advertisements for the latest American fashion items.²² Writers of ‘The Drum decade’ – E’skia Mpahlele, Alex la Guma, Can Themba, Lewis Nkosi, Nat Nakasa, Bloke Modisane, Arthur Maimane, Richard Rive, Casey Motsisi, Henry Nxumalo, Todd Matshikiza, among others – are noteworthy because they gave expression to sophisticated, urban, cosmopolitan identities, strongly at odds with apartheid initiatives designed to limit the identity of black South Africans in premodern, ethnically bound and rural terms.

In its cultural politics, *Drum* was a product of its time, the 1950s being the decade in which resistance against apartheid's extension of segregationist policy was to reach new levels of organization and mass mobilization. At the beginning of the decade the ANC, fed up with, as Albert Lutuli put it, 'knocking in vain, patiently, moderately, and modestly at a closed and barred door', declared the adoption of a less conciliatory approach than that which had been pursued up until then.²³ In 1952, drawing inspiration from the passive resistance campaign led by Gandhi in South Africa in 1908, more than 8,000 people were jailed for defying apartheid laws. The response from the government was to pass legislation allowing a State of Emergency and enforcing ever-stiffer penalties for disobedience. In Kliptown, Soweto, in 1955 some 3,000 people of all races came together to declare their willingness to fight 'side by side, throughout our lives, until we have won our liberty'.²⁴

The Kliptown conference adopted the Freedom Charter, from a postcolonial point of view one of the most significant pieces of writing in South African history, which emphatically declared the rights of all to equality, human rights, work, learning, houses, security, comfort, peace, friendship and a share in the nation's wealth and land. The Charter was denounced by the government of the time as treason, and by 1956 nearly the entire leadership of the alliance of movements was under arrest. In 1960 the Unlawful Organization Act was passed outlawing any organization that threatened public order. The ANC and the Pan African Congress (PAC) were among the first to be banned. In 1964 at the Rivonia Trial Mandela and seven others were sentenced to life imprisonment. In a four-and-a-half-hour speech made from handwritten notes, facing a possible sentence of death, Mandela powerfully expressed the relationships between African nationalism and a vision of a just, non-racial future, concluding:

During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.²⁵

Mandela and seven co-defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment. The arrests, imprisonment, banning orders and censorship that characterized the next three decades led many black South African writers into exile, E'skia Mphahlele, Bessie Head, Lewis Nkosi, Bloke Modisane, Nat Nakasa, Denis Brutus, Alex la Guma and Arthur Nortje, among them. For the most part the

work of these writers was suppressed in South Africa. The next generation of intellectuals, already suffering the consequences of an educational regime designed, as the Soweto Students Representative Council pointed out, to make them ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water’, were denied access to the work of their immediate predecessors.

The void left in black intellectual life by exile, imprisonment and censorship was filled by a social, cultural and intellectual movement which grew out of student politics, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). Informed by a range of different influences, from Negritude to African American black power, to Fanon, the decolonization movements and radical Christianity, BCM was based on the notion that cultural liberation was inseparable from political liberation. The most influential spokesman for Black Consciousness was Steven Biko, who described it as ‘an attitude of mind and a way of life’ centred on the ‘the realization by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression – the blackness of their skin – and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude’.²⁶ With characteristic brutality, the state banned BC organizations and murdered Biko in 1977. But Black Consciousness’s contribution to the impetus of resistance within South Africa proved irresistible, and can be seen in the protests against Bantu Education in Soweto in 1976, which led to uprisings across the country in which more than 800 people, many of them schoolchildren, lost their lives.

Black Consciousness was to have a powerful impact on literature produced in the 1970s and 1980s by both black and white South Africans. Theatre appealed strongly to the desire to conscientize and to activate resistance to apartheid. The stage offered a means of directly addressing audiences, but problems finding venues in townships, and a state increasingly suspicious of anything resembling a political gathering, inhibited the development of BCM theatre. Nonetheless, the nexus of protest and performance was the most vital aspect of South African theatre during the apartheid years. An influential precursor of the protest mode was the early Athol Fugard. Though not involved directly with Black Consciousness, Fugard’s collaborations with black actors from the 1950s led to the creation of plays that are exceptional in their ability to document racism and to observe the resilience and humour of ordinary people.

Among the most successful of Fugard’s collaborations was *The Island*, devised with John Kani and Winston Ntshona and first performed in 1973. The play is set on the infamous Robben Island, home to scores of political prisoners, including, at the time, Nelson Mandela. Kani and Ntshona had

first-hand experience of the abuses of apartheid and knew prisoners on the island, including Norman Ntshinga, who had purportedly arranged for a performance of *Antigone* in the prison. To their imaginative recreation of the prison space, Fugard added elements drawn from his reading of Camus, Brook and Grotowski. With echoes of Anouilh and Brecht, Fugard, Kani and Ntshona translated Sophocles into a modern and politicized idiom. The merging of the space of the cell with the space of the stage, and a mode of address whereby the audience is both the imagined audience of prisoners watching *Antigone* and the real audience of *The Island*, combine powerfully with the representation of abuse and a call for resistance to unjust laws to generate a message that is simultaneously political and metaphysical.

Among the most significant legacies of the Black Consciousness Movement was its influence over the work of the 'Soweto Poets'.²⁷ The most prominent of these, Mbuyiseni Mtshali, Mongane Wally Serote, Siphosiphiso Sepamla and Mafika Gwala, produced poetry which often aggressively explored ideas of blackness, absorbing the language and rhythms of township life, and holding fast to a liberatory agenda. Integral to the development of this fast-paced, urban, politicized mode of writing was, as Chapman points out, the desire to write for other blacks rather than liberal whites, to draw 'fellow blacks into processes of struggle and liberation'.²⁸ The engagement with blackness in the work of the Soweto Poets, which must be understood in the context of its pervasive denigration under apartheid, should, however, not obscure the extent to which they also transacted with a European poetic tradition. Attwell, for example, shows how Donne, Blake, Wordsworth, Auden and Hughes have all been shown to have had some influence on the development of this poetics.²⁹

As one of its slogans – 'black man, you are on your own!' – suggests, intellectuals associated with the Black Consciousness Movement came to reject white liberalism's capacity to contribute to the tasks of cultural and political liberation. Liberals in some circles were regarded with more suspicion than were conservative whites, for at least it was plain to see where you stood with the latter. White liberals were accused by Steve Biko of being unable to follow black leadership. Their economic wellbeing made liberals passively complicit with the apartheid system; their good intentions came to be seen as charity that reinforced, rather than replaced, the inequalities of apartheid. It was particularly Nadine Gordimer, a writer of some stature in the 1970s, who was stung by such criticism into re-evaluating her politics and, by extension, her writing. In 1974 Gordimer declared in an interview: 'I am a white South African radical. Please don't call me a liberal. Liberal is a dirty word. Liberals are people who

make promises they have no power to keep.³⁰ Her fiction shows the marks of this shifting sense of herself, and, more importantly, comes to critique, in direct and indirect ways, the legacy of white liberal writing in South Africa.

In order to understand the ways in which this critique gave substance to white writing of the late 1970s and 1980s it is necessary to reconsider an important forebear of Gordimer's, Alan Paton. The intertwining of liberal politics and creative writing are strikingly embodied in the person of Paton, South Africa's most pre-eminent novelist for many decades, and a founder member of the South African Liberal Party. Paton's view of liberalism was one in which timeless, Christian, humane values were the cornerstone of non-racial democracy. Liberalism for him was 'not a creed of this or any century. It is a generosity of spirit, a tolerance of others, an attempt to comprehend otherness, a commitment to the rule of law, a high ideal of the worth and dignity of man, a repugnance for authoritarianism, and a love of freedom.'³¹ Paton's 1948 novel, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, in many respects asserts these values, and its enduring popularity is testament to the extent to which this vision is still shared by many readers.

The Black Consciousness critique of liberalism is confirmed by the many blind-spots and biases in Paton's novel. Arthur Jarvis, murdered by Absalom Khumalo, is active in liberal politics, and leaves behind a set of notes which diagnose the illness of the country and prescribe a cure for it. In its defence of the colonialist project, its upholding of a binary between 'the old tribal system' and 'our civilisation',³² and in the implied politics of elevating the 'native' to the level of the white through education and social work, Arthur Jarvis's notes reveal a politics which, from a postcolonial point of view, is inadequate. Many aspects of the novel corroborate the critique: the equation of the city with corruption and the countryside with redemption (so different from Peter Abraham's *Mine Boy* (1946) and the Johannesburg of the *Drum* writers); the offering of charity in place of systemic change; the privileging of the ideal over the material; the primitivism of Stephen Khumalo's language and character, and Paton's obvious discomfort with John Khumalo's African nationalism and demands for equality, which anticipate those made in the Freedom Charter seven years after the novel's publication. The novel is paternalistic in both a literal and metaphorical sense: it is a story about the reconciliation of fathers, and about the need for a politics based on a benevolent white authority.

When *Cry, the Beloved Country* is read alongside Gordimer's *July's People* (1981), the limitations of the white liberal position become clearer. Gordimer's novel is postcolonial in a directly proleptic sense in that it imagines a time when apartheid, and with it white South Africa, has been overwhelmed

by the forces of the liberation armies. The Smales family – suburban, white, middle class – flee the city for the country and become dependent upon the charity of their erstwhile servant, July (the name is imposed on him), to survive. Gordimer's skilful inversion of the power dynamics inherent in the master-servant relationship facilitates an exploration of the material underpinning of relationships between white and black in South Africa. Maureen Smales, who always prided herself on her liberalism, realizes that it was, in most respects, a false ideology. Heavily dependent on the very power relations it purportedly wished to change, Maureen's liberalism allowed her to gloss over the unjust nature of apartheid, and did not allow her properly to imagine an alternative to it. The novel's ambiguous ending, which sees Maureen running towards a helicopter most likely piloted by forces of the revolution, has been read as the final repudiation of her suburban liberal hypocrisy: abandoning her family, symbolically baptized in the river she has to cross to reach the helicopter, she chooses to embrace radicalism, or death.

A more philosophical response to the problem of the relationship between liberalism and writing under apartheid in the South Africa of the 1970s and 1980s can be found in the early work of J. M. Coetzee. *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) has an obvious affinity with *July's People* in that both novels are set in a time when apartheid is in the process of being overwhelmed by forces of resistance. Coetzee's protagonist, the gardener, Michael K, like the Smaleses, flees the city and finds refuge on an unused farm where he grows pumpkins. At a key point, K is presented with an opportunity to join the resistance guerrilla army. He declines, asserting to himself in an echo of Voltaire, that in times of war someone has to keep the idea of gardening alive. More enigmatically, K realizes that he cannot join the soldiers because 'his was always a story with a hole in it: a wrong story, always wrong'.³³ This moment, which represents an inverted anagnorisis, can be linked to the insights of the Medical Officer who later treats K for malnutrition. Failing to make any sense out of this strange, wizened man, the Medical Officer realizes that K's story is 'an allegory. . . of how scandalously, how outrageously a meaning can take up residence within a system without becoming a term in it'.³⁴ For David Attwell the impossibility of containing K within any frame of reference suggests that he is 'the narratological figure of the Derridean trace'.³⁵ Coetzee's deconstructive metafictional approach allows him, through the figure of K, to return an ineffability to the concept of freedom, adding a philosophical – even spiritual – quality to the discourse around liberation which was so urgent in the 1980s.

The civil war scenarios explored by Gordimer and Coetzee were far from hypothetical. By the mid 1980s resistance to apartheid had reached such levels

that the government declared several successive states of emergency, giving police and the army extensive powers, including the right to detain without trial. Censorship of news and information was stepped up, and bannings were common. State-sponsored hit squads carried out assassinations and fomented conflict between rival factions. Torture was routinely practised. The death penalty was applied where 'treason' was proved. The armed wing of the ANC and other liberation organizations trained recruits in military bases in Angola and Zambia, and carried out acts of sabotage and terrorism. In northern Namibia and southern Angola a full-scale conflict took place between the South African Defence Force and a coalition of Cuban, Namibian and Angolan forces.

Against this backdrop, the United Democratic Front, an umbrella organization for anti-apartheid activism, insitigated a 'People's Culture' campaign, which encouraged writers to bear witness to inequality, to conscientize readers into taking action against apartheid. As the popular slogan 'culture is a weapon of the struggle' suggests, writers were expected to demonstrate a certain commitment to ending apartheid and this usually took the form of documenting atrocities in believable, shocking, realistic ways. From 1984 the poet and short-story writer Njabulo Ndebele published essays in which he pointed out the dangers of such approaches for black writers and readers. According to Ndebele 'the history of black South African literature has largely been the history of the representation of the spectacle'. Literature of the spectacle results in the 'emptying out of interiority to the benefit of its exterior signs, [the] exhaustion of the content by the form'.³⁶ By contrast, Ndebele proposed a 'rediscovery of the ordinary', a mode of writing that would promote more subjective, intimate, personal and local ways of thinking and being, as a means both of recovering the dignity denied by apartheid and of transforming reader consciousness in more profound ways.

Ndebele's essays appeared in book form in 1991. A year earlier, Albie Sachs, a long-standing ANC activist later to become a constitutional court judge, had published an address he had given to an in-house seminar of the ANC in which he proposed that the slogan 'culture is a weapon of the struggle' be banned for a time. Sachs, like Ndebele, was of the opinion that struggle literature did not always respect 'the true power of art which lies in its capacity to expose contradictions and reveal hidden tensions'.³⁷ He wondered whether 'we have sufficient cultural imagination to grasp the rich texture of the free and united South Africa'.³⁸ The interventions by Ndebele and Sachs signal both frustration at the limitations of the struggle aesthetic and a sense that political changes afoot in the country at the time would release the energies that

would lead to a flourishing of creative arts in South Africa. At the time it was far from clear that reconciliation and peace were going to be achievable: the years between 1990 and 1994 saw some of the highest levels of political violence in the country's history. But immense pressure brought to bear on the apartheid government, along with the willingness to compromise on the part of the liberation organizations, finally led to the country's first non-racial elections on 27 April 1994 in which Nelson Mandela, held for twenty-seven years as a 'terrorist', was elected president.

South Africa's transformation from apartheid to non-racial democracy has been widely celebrated. Allister Sparks uses the term 'miracle' to describe the abandonment of apartheid and the embrace of democratic values.³⁹ Archbishop Desmond Tutu famously named the country the 'rainbow republic' and 'rainbow romanticism' has proved a popular mode of nation building and of representing South Africa to the world.⁴⁰ Mandela's iconic status, the achievements of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (which saw victims and perpetrators of apartheid-era injustices brought together to induce, on behalf of the nation, a collective catharsis that might lead to healing), and the country's embrace of one of the most sophisticated constitutions in the world are among the talismanic elements often invoked in this account. Institutions have been set up to address land reform, gender equality, the protection of human rights, affirmative action, and access to housing, education and health care. Modest public works programmes are in place, and some social security is available. 'Postapartheid' in this context signifies the project of redressing the legacies of the past and building, in the words of an ANC slogan, 'a better life for all'.

But just how much explanatory power this narrative has remains unclear. In the hands of economists like Patrick Bond, or critics like Benita Parry, rainbow romanticism turns out to be an insidious fiction which occludes real historical engagement with the past and with the conditions of possibility that allowed apartheid to happen. In Bond's terms, South Africa's transformation can be understood as an 'elite transition', a handing over of power from one elite to another leaving much else unchanged.⁴¹ Apartheid was a system of racialized capitalism, and South Africa is still, by and large, characterized by the same system, with a small number of blacks having now joined the ranks of the rich and the super-rich. Narratives of healing and reconciliation distract from the realities of a postapartheid South Africa which has, despite an economic boom, seen a large-scale decline in the standard of living of those already rendered poor by apartheid.

What is at stake in the tensions between the models of 'rainbow romanticism' and 'elite transition' is the question of how to read postapartheid South

Africa. Also implied is the question of what to write about South Africa, and how to interpret such writing. Seen in the light of such questions, it is clear that the terms ‘postcolonial’ and ‘postapartheid’ require careful use. Writing in 1994, Graham Pechey argued that ‘postapartheid’

defines a condition that has contradictorily always existed and yet is impossible of full realisation: always existed because apartheid as a politics of permanent and institutionalised crisis has from the beginning been shadowed by its own transgression or supersession; impossible of realisation, because the proliferating binaries of apartheid discourse will long outlive any merely political winning of freedom.⁴²

Such was the nature of apartheid, a system that allowed a mere tenth of the population to prosper while the rest suffered brutality and privation, that it must, according to Pechey, have at some level been ‘shadowed’ by the possibility of its own demise. Literature that contested apartheid, like literature that oriented itself critically towards British and Dutch colonialism, was characterized by its imagining of a time beyond, of alternative sets of social and political relations from the brutal binaries of the colonial and apartheid systems. But Pechey’s comment also gives pause to those who think that the moment of the postcolonial is straightforwardly inaugurated by democracy. Apartheid may have formally ended in 1994, but its consequences will be with South Africans for a long time to come. Literature after 1994 is bound to be conditioned in one way or another by these legacies.

One of the most prominent voices to emerge in postapartheid South African writing is that of Zakes Mda. Mda had in fact been writing and publishing plays, poetry and works of criticism since the 1970s, and his dramatic works in particular had been well received. His return from exile in 1994 corresponded with a turn to the writing of novels, a genre which he felt better suited him now that the imperative to protest had fallen away. Mda’s novels are especially interesting for the ways they innovate with form in order to explore postapartheid human and physical landscapes. The protagonist of *Ways of Dying* (1995), Toloki, like millions of South Africans before him, makes his way from a rural village to a large, unidentified urban city in search of jobs and opportunity. The fact that this city is a hybrid in which features of Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town can be identified would seem to suggest that the urban experiences – slums, violence, deprivation, but also a spirit of community and mutual support – that Mda writes about are generalizable features of life for the poor in South Africa. The refusal of geographical and temporal specificity also speaks to a desire to break free from the norms of a narrative realism. The space left

open by the departed norms of the struggle aesthetic allows Mda to explore alternative narrative strategies associated with a desire to incorporate an oral dimension into the written space of the novel.

In *Ways of Dying* Mda uses an omniscient first-person-plural narrator as a way of locating individual stories of the novel's characters within a gossipy, communal, village voice. Other techniques designed to weave an oral dimension into his narratives include proverbs, anecdotes, the representation of ritual and folklore, and moments of magical realism. But intertwined with these non-realist elements is a strong awareness of the material, historical dimensions of the postapartheid present. *Ways of Dying* is set between 1990 and 1994, some of the most violent years in South African history. Toloki is by trade a professional mourner, and his visits to funerals allow Mda to register the violence of the period by means of the stories of the deceased. He also recognizes the dangers of the emergence of new black elites, a theme picked up in his *Heart of Redness* (2000). While it lacks the explicit gestures towards orality that characterize the earlier novel, *Heart of Redness* is in fact a more thoroughly postapartheid text, a quality most visible in the fact that it explicitly refuses to deal in any way with the apartheid years, referring to them simply as 'the Middle Generations'.

It is, arguably, Mda's 2002 novel *The Madonna of Excelsior* which represents more explicitly than any other postapartheid work the immediate dynamics of political reconciliation in South Africa. Unlike Mda's previous novels, *The Madonna of Excelsior* meditates extensively on events that took place under apartheid. Specifically, the novel reimagines the true story of the trial in 1971 of nineteen citizens of the small town of Excelsior in the Orange Free State, scandalously charged with violating the Immorality Act of 1950, which forbade interracial sex. The law was one of the most invasive imaginable, designed as it was to license the policing of the bedroom in order to protect racial purity. Mda's novel explores the power dynamics around the events, suggesting that some of the black women were in fact raped by white men, and then, compounding the injustice, were subsequently imprisoned by the state for this. The narrative shifts forward in time, first to the 1980s, where black is pitched against white in the political violence of the emergency years. In its final section, the novel moves into the postapartheid period, where as town councillors, Popi, the mixed-race child born from an illicit union, her brother, a former freedom fighter, and Tjaart Cronje, her white, right-wing half-brother must learn to work together to develop the town.

Mda is not the only writer to find magical realism a useful narrative strategy for exploring postapartheid questions. In an essay published in 1998, André Brink, a powerful force in Afrikaans literature for more than half a century,

suggested that 'Africa has a brand of magic realism, peculiarly its own, to offer the world'.⁴³ For Brink, the postapartheid moment represented an opportunity for Afrikaans writers to rediscover their Africanness. An essential part of this rediscovery would be the awareness that 'the easy intercourse between the living and the dead forms an integral part of African oral traditions in languages like Zulu, Xhosa, and Sotho; and from there it has spilled over into Afrikaans literature'.⁴⁴ In his 1998 novel, *Devil's Valley (Duiwelskloof)*, Brink uses Khoi and Xhosa mythology to show how Afrikaner identity has been nourished by its contact with the indigenous inhabitants of the region. The Devil's Valley is located in a remote part of the Swartberg mountains of the Little Karoo. A small group of Afrikaners settled the area in the 1830s, but they have remained isolated until the 1990s, when the novel's narrator discovers them, and discovers just how saturated their culture is with superstition. Brink uses magical realism as a means of exploring, foregrounding and negotiating these belief systems as means of calling into question exclusionary discourses of Afrikaner identity.

Also preoccupied with whiteness, and its shifting status in postapartheid South Africa, are three novels published between 1999 and 2003: J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, Damon Galgut's *The Good Doctor* and Ivan Vladislavić's *The Restless Supermarket*. Each of these novels represents white males who marginalize or abject themselves before history; each invites reading as a literary negotiation of the deliberate and necessary devaluation of white masculinity in South Africa in the postapartheid period. Where Coetzee and Galgut clothe their protagonists' failings in the accoutrements of modernist high seriousness – ennui, alienation, despair – Vladislavić chooses a different path, stripping away gendered and racial scripting through postmodern comedy. In all three cases, narrative and aesthetic choices can be shown to be intimately related to questions of gender and race, power, loss and nostalgia.

In Coetzee, Galgut and Vladislavić, confession, abjection and submission function as overlapping discursive positions to be embraced, resisted, sublimated or celebrated. There is an obvious sense in which all three novels respond to the (still largely symbolic) denigration of white masculinity in postapartheid South Africa by creating white male protagonists and narrators in various states of decline, deflation and disempowerment. David Lurie was once a professor of Modern Languages; at the start of *Disgrace* he has already been downgraded to 'adjunct professor of communication';⁴⁵ by the end of the novel he has lost his job, his pension, most of his possessions and a large part of the value system by which he has lived his life. In *The Good Doctor* Frank Eloff's marriage has ended (his wife left him for his best friend); the illustrious medical career envisaged for him by his father has faded into the banalities of

day-to-day life in a forgotten rural hospital. When he finally gets the promotion he has spent seven years waiting for, he responds by scaling down the hospital to a day clinic, and seeing ever fewer patients while deceiving the Department of Health that he is doing vital work. *The Restless Supermarket* is nothing less than an allegory of cultural decentring, charting as it does Aubrey Tearle's experience of the six-year 'decline' of the Café Europa, from what in his mind were its salad days as a venue for European men only to its violent but democratic closing bash, which coincides exactly with the beginning of non-racist governance in South Africa.

The novels do not only chart the downward trajectories of their white male characters; they actively comment on them. Lurie knows he is regarded as 'a hangover from the past'.⁴⁶ Indeed, he thinks of himself as 'obscure and growing obscurer. A figure from the margins of history'.⁴⁷ Frank Eloff's residual cynicism – stemming, one is led to believe, from unresolved psychological trauma sustained during the war in Angola – is constantly shown up by the idealism of young Laurence Waters, who even accuses Eloff directly of not being part of 'the new country'.⁴⁸ For Aubrey Tearle, 'beset on all sides by change and dissolution', the disjuncture between his conception of himself as chivalrous upholder of order and others' conceptions of him as a doddering old crank generates a restless irony which constantly reinforces the main theme of decentring.⁴⁹

As is clear from just these brief examples, postapartheid literature, already a large body of writing, exhibits signs of the release of creative freedoms hoped for by Sachs, the ambivalence identified by Pechey, and the disappointment of Bond and Parry. Along with the novelists considered above, the writers who have emerged in the period since 1994 – Phaswane Mpe, Marlene van Niekerk, Zoe Wicomb, Ivan Vladislavić, Mike Nicol, Michiel Heyns, K. Sello Duiker, Mark Behr, Niq Mhlongo, Brett Bailey, Lesego Rampolokeng, Achmat Dangor, Anne Landsmann, A. H. M. Scholtz and Jeanne Goosen, to name just a few – have all found themes, forms and moods appropriate to the changed situations in which they write. But although political change may superficially have signalled the liberation of the aesthetic from the ethical, so strong has been the social conscience of South African literature that to a large degree its writing continues to be characterized by a commitment to exploring, critiquing and negotiating cultural, social and political spheres of life. The key issue at stake in postapartheid writing is the question of change. Shifting power relations, the nature and role of memory, reconciliation, redistribution, and justice, crime, betrayal, corruption, the changing face of city and country, and many other themes taken up by these writers demonstrate the continuing entanglement of politics and writing in South Africa.

Notes

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7. See Jeff Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856–7* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989).
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11. Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners* (Cape Town: Tafelberg and Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), pp. 22–3.
12. *Ibid.*, p. xvii.
13. See Laura Chrisman, *Rereading the Imperial Romance: British Imperialism and South African Resistance in Haggard, Schreiner, and Plaatje* (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 53–9.
14. Olive Schreiner, *Story of an African Farm* (Oxford University Press, 1992), p. xl.
15. See Lucy Graham, 'Re-imagining the cave: gender, land and imperialism in Olive Schreiner's *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*', *English Studies in Africa*, 50.1 (1997), 25–50.
16. See Brian Willan, *Sol Plaatje: South African Nationalist 1876–1932* (London: Heinemann, 1984), p. 349.
17. Solomon T. Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa before and since the European War and the Boer Rebellion* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1995), p. 21.
18. Solomon T. Plaatje, *Mhudi* (Johannesburg: A. D. Donker, 1989), p. 11.
19. Attwell, *Rewriting Modernity*, p. 4.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 34–5.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
22. See Michael Chapman, *The 'Drum' Decade: Stories from the 1950s* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1989).
23. Albert Lutuli, 'The Road to Freedom is Via the Cross', 1952, www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/lutuli/lutuli1.html, accessed 12 February 2009.
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26. Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like: Selected Writings* (University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 91–2.
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32. Alan Paton *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948; London: Penguin, 2000), p. 127.
33. J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), pp. 150–1.
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39. See Allister Sparks, *Beyond the Miracle: Inside the New South Africa* (University of Chicago Press, 2003).
40. See Desmond Tutu, *The Rainbow People of God* (London: Doubleday, 1994).
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44. *Ibid.*
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47. *Ibid.*, p. 167.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
49. Ivan Vladislavić, *The Restless Supermarket* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2001), p. 122.

Postcolonial literature in Southeast Asia

RAJEEV S. PATKE

From colonial to postcolonial in Southeast Asia

In the context of Southeast Asia, 'postcolonial' invokes the lasting influence of several nations, languages and cultures from which this chapter singles out the narrative of writing by anglophone authors born in societies governed for varying periods, and with varying degrees of control, by Britain and the US. 'Southeast Asia' is a fictional name of recent provenance which was eventually adopted by the people whose region it was meant to designate as a theatre of operations during World War II: the zone located east of India, south of China and north of Australia on any map of Asia. The usefulness of the term outlasted the war and the Cold War. Currently, it refers to a group of nations comprising Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar (formerly Burma), the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste (formerly East Timor) and Vietnam. The grouping is formalized in international organizations such as the ASEAN (founded in 1967), and highlights three factors: geographical proximity, shared economic interests and a history of nationhood built – with the partial exception of Thailand – from the aftermath of European (and in the case of the Philippines, Spanish and American) colonialism. Although not generally considered part of Southeast Asia, we can add the territories of Hong Kong and Macao to the comparative context of this chapter: their status as British and Portuguese colonies changed to that of Special Administrative Regions of the People's Republic of China in 1997 and 1999 respectively, giving the use of English for creative purposes in these territories additional nuances within the idea of 'postcolonial' cultures and literatures.

The terms 'colonial' and 'postcolonial' are especially complicated in their application to the Philippines, where more than 350 years of Spanish rule came to an end in 1898, but was followed after the Philippine–American war of 1898–1901 by almost half a century of American rule. That came to an end in 1946, though neo-colonial US influence lasted much longer, at least until the closure of

the US military bases in the Philippines in 1991. 'Postcolonial' thus acquires a double application in Philippine writing, and refers to two very different kinds of colonizing influences. In Hong Kong and Macao, 'postcolonial' becomes applicable belatedly, only by the end of the twentieth century, and leads not to nationhood, as in all the other cases, but to reabsorption into mainland China. For the rest of Southeast Asia, political independence became a reality in the two decades that followed the end of World War II. Meanwhile, the more dynamic sense of postcolonial complicity with and resistance to Western cultural influences remains a fact of life for the entire region to this day, though with varying degrees of force. In terms of literary history, and with the exception of the Philippines, writing prior to World War II constitutes the bulk of what can be described as colonial writing. This was produced mostly by expatriates brought to the region directly or indirectly by the opportunities for travel and work opened up by empire. It is surveyed very briefly below as a preamble to the principal subject of this chapter, the main trends, preoccupations, problems and achievements of works in English by writers born in Southeast Asia, including some attention to writing from the various Southeast Asian migrations produced or induced by British or American colonialism.

Southeast Asia consists of mainland and maritime countries covering an area of four million square kilometres, with a population approaching 600 million. The region is marked by enormous differences in cultures, ethnicities and languages. The religious diversity of the region is characterized by a historical tendency for the original form of a practice or belief that has been derived from an external source to get modified over time in interaction with indigenous belief systems. Religious affiliations continue to play a significant role in public and private life, even in countries committed to secular government. Islam (in its Sunni form) is predominant in Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia and the southern islands of the Philippines; Roman Catholicism prevails in central and north Philippines, Timor-Leste and parts of Vietnam; Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand, and Mahayana Buddhism in Vietnam; other religions such as Taoism, Confucianism, Hinduism and various denominations of Christianity are also practised as minority religions in several countries including Hong Kong and Singapore.

In economic terms, the countries of Southeast Asia can be said to be developing countries, although there are big differences in the rate of development and in living standards: Brunei (with its oil reserves), and Singapore and Hong Kong (with their trade and manufacturing) sustain the highest GDP and a level of prosperity comparable in some respects to that of Japan, Europe or the US. Postcolonial Southeast Asia exhibits a variety of political systems. Few are

democracies in the Western sense: most governments function on the basis of populist politics closely allied to leadership roles that are tied to religious and ethnic factionalism; many governments routinely practise authoritarian rule, repressive measures being supported either by manipulation of the popular vote or by military muscle. Regardless of variations in economic output and degrees of political (in)stability, all the nations of Southeast Asia partake in the processes of globalized modernity: the pursuit of a model of progress based on industrialization and technology, whose consequences entail rapid and largely involuntary urbanization, a continual flow of capital and human resources to and fro across national borders, and a continual renegotiation, at conscious and involuntary levels, of the relation between local or indigenous and global or Western cultural assumptions and values.

European colonial influence in the region was preceded by a long history of trading relations with India from the west and China from the northeast, which led to various localized migrations and partial assimilation of Indian and Chinese peoples and cultural practices into different parts of Southeast Asia. A third dimension to external influence took the form of Islam, which established itself in many parts of coastal Southeast Asia from the thirteenth century onwards. The European presence in the region was gradual, and for a large part of its history, mercantile in orientation. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, exploration and trade metamorphosed into territorial and economic control, first by the Portuguese and the Spanish, then by the Dutch, the British and the French. The Portuguese established control over Malacca in 1511, but found themselves displaced by the Dutch in 1641, and their subsequent colonial outposts and territories were limited to East Timor and Macao. The Spanish, sailing towards Asia across the Pacific, claimed the Philippines for Spain in 1521, and ruled over most of the archipelago for over 350 years, until displaced by force in 1898 by the US. The Dutch came to Southeast Asia in 1596 and gained eventual control over a large part of the trade from the East Indies (modern Indonesia), which lasted until the Japanese invasion during World War II. The British, who competed with the Dutch, established the Straits Settlements (Penang, Singapore and Malacca) during 1786–1824, gained increasing control over the princely states of Malaya during 1874–1914, and administered British Malaya from the last quarter of the nineteenth century until 1957–61. French rule in Indo-China (modern Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam) began relatively late, with the seizure of Saigon in 1859, and was consolidated by 1907. As in other parts of the world, colonization was accomplished piecemeal, through a combination of economic initiative, technological advantage, military superiority, administrative acumen, logistical skill,

religious zeal (at least in the case of the Catholic European powers) and a psychology that combined the capacity for systematic exploitation with sustainable management. The extent to which colonialism affected indigenous societies varied, depending on the nature of the European interest in the region, and the policies and practices developed by colonial regimes in matters of education and social governance.

The Japanese dismantled European control over their colonies during World War II, claiming that they were liberating fellow Asians from the yoke of European imperialism. Rhetoric notwithstanding, the period of Japanese occupation (1942–5) ensured that the era of European colonialism was no longer viable after the end of World War II. Decolonization followed: in some cases, immediately and with spirited resistance to the resumption of European control (as in Indonesia and Vietnam); in other cases, more gradually and peaceably (as in British Malaya). After winning the Philippine–American war of 1898–1901, the US conceded to the logic of decolonization, albeit reluctantly: granting the Philippines the status of a semi-autonomous commonwealth in 1935, and giving it independence in 1946. After World War II, the Dutch met fierce resistance to their attempt to resume control over the East Indies. Indonesia declared independence in 1945, and became sovereign by 1950. The British relinquished control over Burma (contemporary Myanmar) in 1948; the French gave up ruling Vietnam in 1954. The Malay states became independent in 1957 and formed a Federation which was joined in 1963 by Sabah, Sarawak, Penang, Malacca and Singapore; and Singapore was forced out of the Federation in 1965. Power struggles after the demise of European colonialism took a different form during the Cold War: the spread of communism in the region, and American and British efforts to contain this through direct and indirect pressure on Southeast Asian countries. An upsurge of anti-communist measures affected the postwar politics of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, while Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were to remain violent battlefields over this struggle well into the 1990s. Meanwhile, East Timor declared independence in 1975, but suffered annexation by Indonesia thereafter. Brunei declared independence in 1984; Hong Kong and Macao reverted to China in 1997 and 1999 respectively; and Timor-Leste declared independence from Indonesia in 2002, bringing to an end the overt aspects of colonial history in the region.

Contexts: expatriate writing from the colonial period

Postcolonial writing in English from Southeast Asia was preceded by the work of European explorers, travellers and colonial administrators, which often

created or reinforced various stereotypes about the Orient. Examples include G. A. Henty's *On the Irrawaddy* (1896) and H. Fielding-Hall's *Thibaw's Queen* (1899) from Burma; Anna Leonowens's *The English Governess at the Siamese Court* (1870) and its adaptation, Margaret Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam* (1944), from Thailand. Not all the writing was of this kind. The most significant work scrutinized colonial life for how it affected both colonizer and colonized. Writing of great insight, set in various parts of Southeast Asia, includes Joseph Conrad's *Almayer's Folly* (1895, Borneo), 'Youth' (1898/1902, Thailand), *Falk: A Reminiscence* (1903, Thailand) and *The Secret Sharer* (1910, Cambodia); Somerset Maugham's *On a Chinese Screen* (1922, China and Hong Kong) and *The Casuarina Tree* (1926, Borneo); W. H. Auden's *Journey to a War* (1939, Hong Kong and Macau); Henri Fauconnier's *La Malaise* (1930, Burma); George Orwell's *Burmese Days* (1934, Burma); and H. E. Bates's *The Purple Plain* (1947) and *The Jacaranda Tree* (1949, Burma). Subsequent writing that mixes vivid evocation with insightful critique includes Anthony Burgess's *The Long Day Wanes* (1956–9, British Malaya), Richard Mason's *The World of Suzie Wong* (1957, Hong Kong), Edmund Blunden's *A Hong Kong House: Poems 1951–1961* (1962, Hong Kong), Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* (1979, Vietnam), James Fenton's *The Memory of War* (1983, Vietnam and Cambodia), and Margaret Drabble's *The Gates of Ivory* (1992, Cambodia). Other writers of the colonial period who provide perceptive representations of the colonial experience include Hugh Clifford, Patrick Anderson, Katherine Sim, D. J. Enright and James Clavell.

Contexts: the spread of English in Southeast Asia

The spread of European languages in the colonies was a slow and gradual process, as much the result of chance and accident as policy or design. In this respect, British reluctance to teach English in British Malaya contrasts sharply with the eagerness with which the US disseminated English in the Philippines. In general, the ability to understand, speak and read some kind of English in Southeast Asia must be placed in the context of the numerous languages well-established in local use before the advent of European colonization, each with a cultural tradition of its own, largely oral, and often religious in context (Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic). The history of the region's writing systems reflects the history of external influences: Indic followed by Arabic followed by European. In the linguistic relation between Europe and colonial Southeast Asia, the degree of access, and the type of individual who secured access to the colonial language varied from one territory to another.

The spread of English to different parts of the British colonies corresponded to, but also differed in some respects from, the spread of Spanish in the Philippines, Portuguese in Macao and East Timor, and French in Indo-China. The Dutch used Bazaar Malay (a simplified form of traders' pidgin common to the ports of the Malayan peninsula and the Indonesian islands) as the preferred language for administration of the Dutch Indies, limiting the teaching of Dutch to expatriate children and *mestizos* (the offspring of interracial unions in the colonies). The Spanish showed a similar reluctance to share their language with *Indios* (natives) in the Philippines. After more than 300 years of rule, Spanish was limited to colonial administrators, select clergy, the descendants of *mestizos* and, after 1863, the *ilustrados* (privileged and wealthy natives who could afford to send their children overseas for a European education). Promptly (and ironically), the *ilustrados* became inspired by European models of enlightenment, and created a new local intelligentsia which began to promote nationalist ideals in the Philippines. Although a printing press had been set up in the Philippines as early as 1593 and the University of Santa Thomas in 1611, writing in Spanish by natives did not gather momentum until the generation of the *ilustrados*, and the critique of Spanish colonialism contained in José Rizal's *Noli me tangere* (1887) and *El filibusterismo* (1891). Both novels were written in Spanish, as were the writings of his nationalist contemporaries, Andrés Bonifacio and Emilio Aguinaldo. In the event, the 1890s dream of nationhood proved brief-lived and the Philippines had to go through the American interregnum before achieving independence. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that access to European ideals, acquired through a European language, provided the initial intellectual and emotional inspiration that subsidized resistance to European imperialism.

Access to the colonizer's language was at best a mixed blessing. The spread of a European language generally meant the curtailment or decline of the vernaculars. Access to the colonial language led to, or was driven by, aspirations towards the forms of knowledge, power and status conferred by that language. The fulfilment of such aspirations, as in Rizal, was but part of the picture. Acculturation to European mores was often accompanied by a degree of alienation from indigenous modes of belief, knowledge and practice. The creation of Southeast Asian literatures in English was thus paid for by a depletion of the potential for vernacular writing. While there is some writing of interest in Dutch, French and Portuguese from Southeast Asia, it does not correspond in significance to the role occupied by Rizal in the Philippine collective imagination. With the partial exception of the Philippines, the literary influence of the colonial European languages faded away from the colonies of Southeast

Asia after independence. English alone flourished even better after independence. Why this should be so remains in part a conundrum, although it is obvious that its ubiquitous role in education, international relations and the media ensured that postcolonial nationhood saw practical advantages to retaining English in nations liable to factional strife fuelled by ethnic and vernacular loyalties. Today, some form of elementary English is understood in limited formal or business contexts by urban minorities in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Meanwhile, regions which came under British or American control either in the latter part of the nineteenth century or in the first half of the twentieth century continued using English in schools after independence, and their populations show reasonable degrees of familiarity at least with rudimentary forms of the language. In Malaysia, English is partially marginalized by Malay; in Hong Kong by Cantonese (and now Mandarin).

In the Philippines, the swift and systematic dissemination of English by the Americans ensured that the language became the second primary language for most regions, especially in the bigger cities. After a century of English-language education, the number of speakers with some kind of literacy in English is over 45 million. Given the size of the population, and the existence of several major languages of indigenous origin, and many more that are specific to particular regions in the Philippines, the linguistic plurality has ensured that English serves a major function in education, business and international relations. In British Malaya, the spread of English was more slow and selective. Colonial administrators were reluctant to change the Malay way of life and create in Malaya the kind of results produced by the policies implemented in British India after Thomas Babington Macaulay's 'Minute on Indian Education' (1835). The attempt to propagate the English language and its culture in order to create a class of Indian *Babus* that would act as a buffer between the English and their subjects had also produced disaffected petty clerks (who aspired to an English way of life and did not take well to the lowly work allotted them by their masters), nationalists (who taught themselves to ask for European modes of liberty, fraternity and equality in the colonies) and writers (who dared to emulate the English literary tradition in India).

The British did not want to replicate similar results in Malaya, where they wanted to leave the Malay way of life untouched while introducing many demographic and economic changes that were profitable to their empire (importing Chinese labour in the tin mines, and Indian labour in the rubber plantations and in creating rail and road networks). The need to look after the larger interests of those who laboured for them eventually obliged the English

to formalize and partially subsidize education in British Malaya after the 1850s. This was done with the proviso that an education in English would be available primarily to expatriates and immigrants. The indigenous Malays were to be taught only in their own language, a divisive policy whose consequences would help aggravate ethnic tensions in postcolonial Malaysia and stoke Malay resentment against English as one among many agents of cultural deracination. In 1856, the total number of students enrolled in English-medium schools was less than a thousand, and the census of 1957 indicated that a bare 6 per cent of the population was conversant with English. After independence in 1957, the Malaysian majority, smarting at a century of deprivation, enacted policies that marginalized the minorities and their languages. English was relegated to a secondary role in higher education, a situation that would change only in the 1990s, when English was brought back to something like the position it had occupied in Malaysian schools before the linguistic policy changes of 1963–76.

Exactly the reverse happened in Singapore. The People's Action Party (which has ruled the country since 1965) ensured that linguistic policy did not favour the majority faction, the Chinese. Malay, Chinese (Mandarin), Tamil and English were given recognition and the educational policy adjustments that followed saw to it that a bilingual education equipped everyone with English and one other local language. The direct impact of such policies on writing was that literature in English flourished in Singapore while it languished in Malaysia, forcing or inducing several Malaysian-born authors into migration or self-exile. Thus only in Singapore can it be said that English has become the primary language of work for the majority, although, as we shall see below, the lack of a large local base in English has not prevented writing of interest from arising in nations such as Thailand, where English is used by a very tiny minority. The spread of English was even slower in Hong Kong. The first mission schools had opened in the 1860s, but the role of English in the life of the colony did not grow until the end of the nineteenth century.

By 1960, less than 10 per cent of the population claimed to know English, a figure that had risen to over 30 per cent by the end of the century. However, Cantonese remained the dominant language of everyday life outside the narrow circles of colonial governance and international business until 1997. Mandarin started making inroads after 1997 and English still occupies a marginal place in most aspects of Hong Kong life except for the expatriate community. That is why writing in English did not develop in Hong Kong until recently. A feature of the English used in Southeast Asia that is not always reflected by the printed word is the degree to which the spoken forms have evolved across the spectrum of individuation from error to hybridization,

creating rhythms, constructions and usages that are unique to specific communities: the spoken English of Singapore and Malaysia is similar, and noticeably different from that spoken by the Chinese population of Hong Kong or by Filipinos. English speech habits are affected by the other languages of the region and by the kind of education undergone by a speaker; bi- and trilingualism are common; polyglot constructions occur frequently in casual conversation, and there can be wide shifts in register within the same conversation: conversations often modulate shifts from formal to hybrid usage. Singapore English becomes Singlish (e.g. ‘I work about four months already’),¹ likewise we get Manglish in Malaysia (e.g. ‘Myself so thin don’t eat, can die one, you know?’);² and equivalent transformations are common among English speakers in the Philippines. English usage is prone to code-mixing of two kinds: words from local languages are absorbed into the English being used in a conversation; words from English for which there is no exact equivalent in a vernacular, become assimilated to speech in the vernacular.

Malayan writing in English before independence in 1957

Although a British presence had been established in Penang since 1816 and in Singapore since 1823, an education in English was not readily available to the indigenous people of British Malaya until the latter part of the nineteenth century, and even then it was restricted to expatriates, a few members of the Malay aristocracy, and Chinese, Indian and other minority immigrants who might prefer to send their children to an English-medium rather than a Chinese- or Tamil-medium school, while the Malays were encouraged to complete their schooling through the Malay language, a policy of ethnic divisiveness in education that laid the foundations for subsequent postcolonial resentment and suspicion against English (and Western influences) in independent Malaysia. The earliest writing by indigenous peoples occurred in local periodicals of the 1880s and 1890s of which the most prominent was the *Straits Chinese Magazine*, which published stories and poems of modest achievement and scope by writers drawn from the Straits Chinese community (immigrants from China who had settled for generations in Malaya before the advent of the British, and served as intermediaries between the British and the indigenous people of Malaya during the colonial period). The earliest novels from the region were authored by a Eurasian writer from Malacca, Gregory de Silva in the 1930s. More interesting fictional material was published from London in the 1940s by S. Rajaratnam, then a student, and later Minister of Culture

in independent Singapore. While the Straits Chinese writing was content to depict local life, Rajaratnam's short stories contained strong nationalist sentiments which grappled with the issue of how the ethnic communities in Malaya (Malays, Chinese and Tamil Indians) might foster a sense of nation without being driven to communal factionalism.

Subsequent developments grew from the creation of a university in the region, with a campus established in Singapore in 1949 (followed by a second campus in Kuala Lumpur in 1959). The Singapore campus provided a milieu in which young Malaysians developed the ambition to emulate the literary genres and styles they read in college and university, and British Malaya had its first sustained attempt at creating and representing a Malayan consciousness in English. Poems and short stories became the preferred genres, and as empire drew to its end, anti-colonial sentiments combined with literary derivativeness to produce the beginnings of a new literature whose main preoccupation was to represent characteristic features of the local social, cultural and linguistic environment in a literary language derived from British models. College and university magazines provided the first outlets for this writing. The first attempt to break free from literary mimicry was largely a failure: poets tried to mix elements of English with Malay and Chinese to create a hybrid style known as *Engmalchin*. The results proved unsatisfactory, but their significance was greater than the issue of why the experiment did not work: writers were alerted to the need to balance their dependence on literary English with the need to adapt the language to local rhythms and the sentiments of nascent cultural nationalism. The first chapbooks of poetry were Wang Gungwu's *Pulse* (1950), Lim Thean Soo's *Selected Verses* (1951), Edwin Thumboo's *Rib of Earth* (1956), Wong Phui Nam's *Toccata on Ochre Sheaves* (1958) and Ee Tiang Hong's *I of the Many Faces* (1960). Wang soon dropped literature for a distinguished career as historian; Lim turned to fiction, while Thumboo, Wong and Ee became the first dedicated poets of the period preceding and following Malayan independence in 1957.

Thumboo's early poems are characterized by confidence in the handling of tone and rhythm, a willingness to let personal themes evoke landscapes, friendships and social commitment in the lyric mode without the straining after local effects that had preoccupied *Engmalchin*. His elegiac poem 'For Peter Wee' (1956)³ provides the first convincing proof that poetry in the Malayan peninsula had managed to work out a personal equilibrium between literariness and deep feeling. In contrast, Wong's poems found their themes in a problematic zone of triple displacement: from Malayan society (for belonging to a Chinese minority that suffered political marginalization in Malaysia); from

mainland China (for being born to Chinese immigrants living away from mainland Chinese culture); and from the English or Western literary tradition (for not being an organic part of these systems and their myths). Wong made a vocation from his over-determined sense of displacement. He combines translations from the classical Chinese with obscure but emotively evocative poems that represent an abiding sense of anguish which can neither live comfortably with, nor ever do without, his elective affinity for Western myths and symbols. In contrast, Ee Tiang Hong (of Peranakan descent, born to Chinese immigrants who had lived and intermarried in Malacca for many generations and assimilated largely to Malayan culture while retaining distinctive communal traits of their own) revealed a dry and ironic personality always sceptical about the local scene. After racial riots broke out in Malaysia between Chinese and Malay factions in May 1969, Ee grew estranged from a land and multiracial society he had believed was his homeland. He migrated to Australia, continuing with a poetry whose capacity for wit was darkened by a sense of displacement forced upon him by the factional politics of his birthplace.

The first generation of poets from Malaysia and Singapore touched upon several themes and preoccupations that became characteristic of later writing from the region: the attempt to define a unified idea of community and nation in a land divided by ethnicity, language and culture; the need to balance self-representation with assimilation to literary English; the search for an idiom, tone and style that could help individuate poetic identity in circumstances overshadowed by the feeling that literary ambitions in English were difficult to sustain at a cultural distance from Britain. It is curious that unlike writers from the Philippines, none of these writers felt the need to explore creative options in the indigenous languages. The desire to become a writer was welded tightly to English in Malaya, whereas in the Philippines, the desire to write has always found itself comfortable with English as well as indigenous languages. Several of the authors whose writing bridges the colonial and postcolonial divide in British Malaya wrote stories as well as poems, among them Wang Gung Wu, Lim Thean Soo, Goh Sin Tub, Lloyd Fernando and Goh Poh Seng.

The short story was the staple of college magazines in the period leading up to independence in 1957. Much of the writing is competent without being exceptional, and remains tied to a straightforward form of realism that tends to be imaginatively drab but rich in sociological detail. Realist narratives based on autobiography made their appearance with Sybil Kathigasu's *No Dram of Mercy* (1954), a spirited and moving account of loyalty, betrayal and resistance during the Japanese occupation in whose aftermath the author succumbed to injuries sustained at the boots of the Japanese; and Janet Lim's incomplete but

substantial narrative *Sold for Silver* (1958), which offers an unadorned and convincing account of the author's life as child slave, child bride, nurse, refugee and gutsy survivor of numerous wartime calamities. Women's writing of a very different kind – comic-satirical and tongue-in-cheek – was produced over 1951–6 by Hedwig Anuar (née Aroozoo), one of the earliest students of literature in the University of Malaya (in Singapore). She abandoned poetry after her student years to pursue a career in library science; the handful of poems she wrote in a mock-solemn vein as a student remain the wittiest body of writing to have been written in British Malaya, tucked away in obscure periodicals, and collected belatedly in *Under the Apple Tree: Political Parodies of the 1950s* (1999), giving proof of how parody can be the most perceptive form of social commentary and criticism, making her the first postmodern writer from the Malayan peninsula, well before the notion of postmodern writing had acquired currency.

The first Malayan writer to demonstrate a sustained ability to handle prose narrative with subtlety and power was Lee Kok Liang, whose early novel, based on student life in early 1950s London, was published posthumously as *London Does Not Belong to Me* (2003). Its composition and abandonment were followed by the stories collected in *The Mutes in the Sun* (1964), *Death is a Ceremony* (1992) and the novel *Flowers in the Sky* (1981). Lee's early style is intense, dark and surreal: he has a sensitive and unblinking eye for detail, combined with a penchant for the disquieting aspects of private and public life. The later writing is a little more schematic in its handling of themes and narrative lines, but all his works show a capacity to deal with the ironies of how different races fit or do not fit together in multi-ethnic societies. Urban decay, and the psychological injuries suffered by ordinary people are handled with insight and compassion. Lee remains the most impressive prose author from the Malayan peninsula for the 1950s and 1960s; and two novels by the Chinese-Eurasian Han Suyin provide the most vivid account of life in the region: *A Many-Splendoured Thing* (1952) sets its semi-autobiographical love story amidst a sweeping panorama that extends from mainland China to the teeming life of Hong Kong; *And the Rain My Drink* (1956) recounts the enormous confusion and suffering caused by the Japanese invasion of the Malayan peninsula in 1942.

While poetry and fiction flourished as the elite and the popular genres of choice, drama lacked confidence in using local forms of spoken English as a medium for performance. Early attempts in college and university magazines (such as the short plays by Lloyd Fernando and Mohammad Ali bin Abdul Aziz) were hampered by stilted dialogue, wooden characterization and cumbersome plots. Drama and theatre remained in the realm of amateur productions by

students and small groups of enthusiasts well into the 1960s. The founding of the Experimental Theatre Club by Lim Chor Pee in 1961, which staged Lim's first play *Mimi Fan* in 1962, added new energy to the theatrical scene. Lim abandoned the theatre shortly thereafter for a professional career and the torch was taken up shortly thereafter by Goh Poh Seng.

Philippine writing in English before 1946

The Philippines went through two phases of postcolonial experience, the first in relation to Spanish colonialism, the second in relation to American colonialism. Both kinds of experience involved long periods of thwarted anticipations, and it is not surprising that the idealism inspired by Rizal continues to affect writers to this day. Philippine writing in English is distinguished by at least three traits for which there are no real correspondences in the British colonies. The first concerns tempo, the second concerns thematic preoccupations, the third concerns the sense of vocation as it determines choice of language and genre. Philippine writers took to English with alacrity; they continue to apply themselves to a dream of nation that still awaits full realization; and they are routinely bilingual *as writers*, moving from one genre to another with a facility not matched elsewhere in English writing from Southeast Asia (barring a few exceptions, such as the Singaporeans Robert Yeo in respect to genres, and Elangovan and Alfian Sa'at in respect to languages and genres).

The American takeover of the Philippines was followed by the policy of spreading English as quickly as possible throughout the archipelago. The massive undertaking proved largely successful, even if the literacy accomplished was basic and uneven to begin with. It produced a new literary tradition far more quickly than anything from the British colonies. The first 600 US teachers arrived in 1901; by 1903 the first US-trained Filipinos were being sent to the US for further study as *pensionados*; by 1905 the first poems in English by a Filipino had been published (in the *Filipino Students' Magazine* in Berkeley, California), and included poems by Maria G. Romero, the first Philippine woman poet in English; in 1908 the University of the Philippines was established in Manila, with emphasis on a liberal arts education. Student enrolment grew exponentially. Periodicals in English appeared quickly on the scene after *College Folio* began publishing in 1910, and they remained a staple for creative writing. Literary magazines such as *Philippine Magazine* (1904–41) and *Philippines Free Press* (1908–72), followed by several others, provided outlets for writers, as did the University of the Philippines Writers' Club (founded

in 1927). While the literacy rate for Spanish declined steadily during the first quarter of the twentieth century, that for English rose dramatically. The first novel in English, Zoilo M. Galang's *A Child of Sorrow* (1921), was followed by the first collection of short stories, the same author's *Tales of the Philippines* (1923).

The short story became, and has remained, the most popular creative genre for writers from the Philippines. Paz Marquez-Benitez's 'Dead Stars' (1925) quickly established itself as a classic of the genre, as did the work of Paz Latorena (collected in *Desire and Other Stories*, 2000). Paz Marquez-Benitez published only one other story, 'A Night in the Hills' (1931), but she and Paz Latorena also mentored young writers. Others to publish noteworthy volumes of short stories in the 1930s included Arturo Rotor, Manuel Arguilla, Bienvenido Santos, N.V.M. Gonzalez, Estrella Alfon, Nick Joaquin and Francisco Arcellana. Santos, Gonzalez and Joaquin went on to produce exceptional work in almost all the literary genres. The standard Philippine anthologies of short stories, edited by Leopoldo Y. Yabes (1975, 1981) and Gémino H. Abad (2008), show that while love stories dominated the early decades, along with quasi-historical evocations of life in the era of Spanish colonialism, writers soon found more relevant material in contemporary social realities, including sexual mores, the life of ethnic minorities and the overseas sagas of Philippine migrants. The best short stories of the 1930s and 40s were characterized by width of social representation and a realist treatment of interpersonal relations in a variety of rural and urban settings, as in Rotor's *The Wound and the Scar* (1937) and Arguilla's *How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife* (1940).

Social engagement, attachment to specific regions and histories, and commitment to realism helped localize the Philippine short story. Women writers made a singular contribution to this body of work, presenting an emancipative element for which counterparts took longer to appear in print from other parts of English-speaking Southeast Asia. The struggle to localize narrative provided the necessary counterbalance to the inevitable modelling upon American and Western canonical writers that has remained the problem besetting colonial/postcolonial dependency in the Philippines. American models dominated early Philippine writing in all the genres, especially fiction and poetry, and they continue to preoccupy Philippine writers to this day. The best that was accomplished in the form of the short story can be exemplified by the work of Arguilla, who died at the hands of the Japanese during World War II. Directness, economy of means and the semblance of untutored candour give to his style a charm that is both minimalist and rich in suggestiveness. The title story of his 1940 volume focuses on the bringing to a rural farm of a young city

bride. The story is narrated from the point of view of the bridegroom's younger brother: excitement, unspoken tensions between siblings and parent, the authority of the father figure, the need for endorsement, the mutual suspicion between dwellers in the city and the countryside are all evoked with the utmost concision, narrative momentum balanced by atmospheric sensitivity, clarity of delineation matched by the open-endedness of the climax.

The writer who had the greatest impact on his contemporaries in the 1930s and beyond was José Garcia Villa. Iconoclast, short-story writer and avant-garde poet, Villa left the Philippines in 1929 after having published erotic poems for which he was penalized by the authorities. From the US, he remained a forceful and influential arbiter of taste, whose annual selections of stories (1927–40) and poems (1931, 1938, 1939–40) became the controversial but respected standard by which Philippine writers measured themselves for several decades. Villa's early short stories, collected in *Footnote to Youth* (1933), were remarkable for their variety of styles and subject matter. Later, he confined himself to verse – publishing *Poems by Doveglion* (1941), *Have Come, Am Here* (1942), *Volume Two* (1949) and *Selected Poems and New* (1958) – and was lionized for a time in New York by American and British authors and critics. Villa cultivated a highly original poetic style based on experiments with punctuation, syntax and 'reverse consonance'⁴ which mark him out as the earliest colonial/postcolonial poet from Southeast Asia to have experimented consistently with modernist techniques. Aesthetic mysticism, nuanced sensitivity to language and feeling, a loner's self-confidence, an elitist vanity and an experimentalism that sometimes mistook wilfulness for originality make him a unique figure. His career as poet dried up by the early 1960s, but his symbolic role as an exponent of aesthetic formalism made him the primary authority figure and the primary target of criticism in the see-saw between autonomy and social commitment that dichotomizes English writing from the Philippines.

His contemporary, Angela Manalang Gloria, wrote poems that were far more decorous and conventional in their strict adherence to the metrical conventions prevalent in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American women poets such as Edna St Vincent Millay, Elinor Wylie, Sara Teasdale and Adelaide Crapsey. Manalang Gloria refined the convention of tight stanzas in which the feminine expressions of suffering (often caused by male insensitivity) are suspended in self-restraint, so that precision of syntax and rhyme both evoke and allay a sharpness of passion that is at once articulated yet contained by the formalization of feeling and sentiment. Manalang Gloria wrote some of the most well-crafted poems from Southeast Asia, which show how women brought close to the conflagrations of desire can become, as

the remarkable sonnet ‘Soledad’ says, ‘blackened spires’, ‘aureoled in flame’.⁵ A failure to win a competition for which she prepared her *Poems* (1940) – the first volume of poetry in English by a woman in the Philippines – caused much private disappointment. Domestic loss and responsibility ensuing upon the impact of World War II on her family led to the abandonment of poetry in the 1950s. The volume that did win the contest was Rafael Zulueta y da Costa’s *Like the Molave* (1940), which takes on the Whitmanesque task of addressing the nation with the exhortation that the glory hour augured by Rizal was yet to come for the nation.

In contrast to poetry, drama and the novel were slow to mature. Although a university production of Jesusa Araullo and Luis Castillo’s *A Modern Filipina* was staged as early as 1915, the local production of Western plays by students and amateur plays by local authors such as Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero lagged behind the popularity of the older form of indigenous dramatic entertainment, the *sarsuwela*. Guerrero’s radio play, *Half an Hour in a Convent* (1937) was followed by *Wanted: A Chaperon* (1940), *Forever* (1941) and *Frustrations* (1944), in which comedy is mixed with a sober awareness of how social modernity affects traditional society in the Philippines. Despite the accomplishments of such plays, and as in other Southeast Asian countries, Philippine drama in English continued to languish, because theatrical idioms continued to suffer from the absence of local confidence in indigenous forms of spoken English as the natural medium for performance.

In his pioneering account of the *Origins and Rise of the Filipino Novel: A Generic Study of the Novel until 1940* (1983), Resil B. Mojares notes that the indigenous novel in English showed early awareness of the need for local roots and local sources of formal inspiration. Maximo Kalaw’s *The Filipino Rebel: A Romance of the American Occupation of the Philippines* (1930) inaugurated in English the dominant trend in Philippine novel-writing that stretches from Rizal to the twenty-first century. This trend shows the Philippine author drawn compulsively and obsessively to revisiting the climactic history of 1896–1901 (the period during which the Filipinos almost succeeded in overthrowing Spanish rule only to succumb to a new colonialism at the hands of the Americans) in order to analyse the failure of the dream of nation (a dream close to hand in Rizal’s time) and keep the flame of nationalist idealism alive despite all that has been done by subsequent misrule to dowse it. Through a variety of styles, plots and techniques, all such novels remind a contemporary readership of the suffering, struggle and tragic heroism of their ancestors, while also underlining the relevance of such reminders to a country whose history comprises a series of exploitative practices in which local elites act in collusion with a succession

of conquerors – Spanish, American, Japanese. A novel such as Juan Cabrerós Laya's *His Native Soil* (1941) provides an updated version of a parallel symbolic narrative, the exploitation of the Philippine masses by various forms of colonialist capitalism. N. V. M. Gonzalez, in the slightly overwrought narrative of *The Winds of April* (1941), offers another variant: a fable of hope and aspiration in which a young protagonist born in a rural area struggles to realize his dream of betterment through the search for love and an urban career while being undercut by a father-son relationship that keeps bringing him back to a cultural zone from the past.

When the Philippines became a commonwealth in 1935, a newly created Institute of National Language recommended the creation of a national language based on Tagalog (the regional dialect of the region surrounding Metro Manila). Interest in English as a creative option was thus counterbalanced by official endorsement of an indigenous alternative. The founding of the Philippine Writers League in 1939 created opportunities for a reconciliation of tensions between writing in English (an elitist, Western-oriented and urban activity) and writing in the regional vernaculars (an activity that had more emotional and intuitive appeal for many, while it lacked the prestige of a Western language). Such issues were complicated by the Japanese occupation, when writing in English was forced underground, while Tagalog received Japanese support.

Philippines writing in English after independence in 1946

World War II caused enormous damage and suffering to the people and the economy of the Philippines, and recovery was slow. Stevan Javellana's *Without Seeing the Dawn* (1947), the first novel in English by a Filipino to be published in the US, became celebrated for its evocation of the trauma of war. The independence promised by the Americans finally arrived in 1946, but the basic inequalities and hardships that had beset the Filipino masses did not change much. What changed swiftly, however, was the setting up of new programmes which sent young Filipinos to America for further study on a variety of scholarships and fellowships, producing successive generations of Americanized Filipino intellectuals. Neo-colonial dependency was thus set in place and would not change in essentials for a long time. A symbolic end to the more overt forms of US control came in 1991, with the closing down of the US naval base at Subic Bay and the Clark airbase. The events that have dominated Philippine history since independence generally concern the failure of the

nation to find a leadership adequate to the needs of the people. The lack was highlighted during the Marcos years, when the early hope of positive changes soon turned to disappointment, followed by Martial Law (September 1972–February 1986). Subsequent changes in political leadership have done little to bring the dream inspired by Rizal any closer to realization, but writers have become more confident through the decades, both in their handling of language and literary genres, and in the range of experiences they address.

Fiction was the dominant genre of the postwar years, led by the stories and novels of N. V. M. Gonzalez, Nick Joaquin and Bienvenido Santos. The stories from Gonzalez's *Children of the Ash Covered Loam* (1954) provide a stark account of the struggles and hardships of the peasantry. *Season of Grace* (1956) and *The Bamboo Dancers* (1959) underline the significant contribution of the rural way of life to the values of Filipino culture and society, the first through a direct evocation of its routines in the life of the cultivators of Mindoro, and the second through the failure of its expatriate protagonist, Ernie, to grasp the significance of his own alienation or the values of the life he revisits in his home town. Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* (1961) is a novel of baroque complexity in which the inability of the young female protagonist, Connie Escobar, to cope with the realization that her father's wealth and status is based on his covertly operated abortion clinic, and that her husband was formerly her mother's lover, leads to a literal and psychic displacement to Hong Kong, where in several encounters with expatriate Filipinos, the girl is able to arrive at a personal resolution to her crisis. No account of the plot can convey the drama of guilt and culpability, of dreams betrayed and nightmares unleashed that is orchestrated by the novelist in this darkly Jesuit fable, perhaps the most impressive single novel of the period, whose evocations of postwar Manila are as remarkable as its dramatization of the enigmatic quality of human motivation.

Joaquin's creativity is shaped by his admiration for the Hispanic culture brought to the Philippines by the Spanish, including Catholicism and all the technologies we associate with modernity, from the printed word to the concept of nation. This gives his writing a tendentious orientation, although there is no denying the sheer profusion of his stylistic gifts. His preoccupation with the Spanish past makes him atypical among his contemporaries, who were more preoccupied with becoming Americanized. But looking forward to the New World is only one aspect of Filipino writing; the other remains preoccupied with looking backwards, as in Linda Ty-Casper's *The Peninsulars* (1964), which illustrates the impulse in Filipino writing which hopes to retrieve from the past a spirit of Filipino resistance which might be useful in dealing with the

political and social problems of the present. A similar compulsion to revisit decisive periods of Philippine history drives the narrative momentum of many other novels such as Erwin Castillo's *The Firewalkers* (1992), Eric Gamalinda's *The Empire of Memory* (1992) and *My Sad Republic* (2000), and Alfred Yuson's *Great Philippine Jungle Energy Café* (1996). What distinguishes the last-named novelists from their predecessors is that the influence of magical realism makes a huge difference to narrative technique and the postmodern sense of exuberance as well as self-reflexivity that makes the romanticism inherent to the Philippine fixation on the events of 1898 more complexly inflected in tone. If revisiting history constitutes one compulsion, as in Ninotchka Rosca's mixture of realism and allegory in *State of War* (1988), then presenting fictional analyses of what went wrong with the nation in the Marcos years forms a natural complement, as in Linda Ty-Casper's *Dream Eden* (1996) and Vicente Groyon's *The Sky over Dimas* (2004). Such analyses derive their strength by evoking the life of the specific region in which the author's formative years were spent. In the case of Charlson Ong, this happens to be the life of the Philippine Chinese community, whose history is vividly portrayed in *An Embarrassment of Riches* (2000) and *Banyaga* (2006). Likewise, the short stories of Jose Y. Dalisay Jr, from *Oldtimer and Other Stories* (1984) to *Selected Stories* (2005), cover a wide canvas of contemporary as well as historical materials, handled with economy and insight.

Turning to postwar poetry, the writing of the 1950s and 60s shows how the education of Philippine writers in US universities ensured that the dominant critical discourse of the American literary academies, New Criticism, would get firmly entrenched in the practice of Filipino authors and academics. Those who returned from such an education helped perpetuate similar practices through their example and teaching. Edilberto Tiempo (novelist and critic) and his wife Edith Tiempo (poet, novelist and critic), went to the Iowa writer's programme in 1946 and 1947 respectively. They later set up a similar workshop in their home town, the first of many such writing programmes that have become the normal training ground for writers in the Philippines. The central debate underlying writing in the Philippines sometimes takes the simple binary form of an oscillation between commitment to aesthetic criteria and commitment to issues of social realism and the righting of injustices; at other times it seeks to reconcile the two compulsions, and that is when it gets to be most compelling.

Philippine drama has never come close to matching the achievement of the fictionists and the poets. The plays of Wilfrido Guerrero and Alberto Florentino remained anchored in the world of amateur theatricals and

university productions, so that despite their humour and social realism, their impact on society was muted. The single Filipino play that stands above all others is Nick Joaquin's *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino* (1952). Set in the old Manila of the prewar years, the play is allegorical in nature. The painting alluded to in the title, which is never shown on stage, depicts Aeneas carrying his old father Anchises to safety on his back from the ruins of fallen Troy. It also emblemizes the past and present condition of the old and now impoverished artist Don Lorenzo Marasigan, and of the old walled city of Intramuros, built by the Spanish in the seventeenth century. Joaquin thus dramatizes the condition of a cultural inheritance that even in its depleted condition forms part of a legacy that must be cherished by the Philippines of the present, which is represented in the play by the old artist's unmarried daughters. The *Portrait* is something of a closet-drama, and needed cuts before it was produced, illustrating the difficulty experienced by postcolonial Southeast Asian authors in taking to the mode of dramatic writing with anything like the ease with which fiction and poetry have been attempted.

The sheer diversity of poetry from the Philippines after independence demonstrates the ease with which authors took to writing verse in English. The most significant volumes of poetry from the 1950s were Angela Manalang Gloria's *Poems* (1950, 2nd edn), Nick Joaquin's *Prose and Poems* (1952), Bienvenido N. Santos's *The Wounded Stag* (1956) and Jose Garcia Villa's *Selected Poems and New* (1958). Villa and Manalang Gloria embodied different aspects of a formalist aesthetics. Both had fallen silent by the late 1950s. The writers who followed were adept at several genres: N.V.M. Gonzalez, Bienvenido Santos and Nick Joaquin. Gonzalez can be charming in how traditional rhythms and vocabulary can deliver the reader to turns of thought and feeling at once apt and pleasing. Santos's *The Wounded Stag* (1956) was followed after a long gap by *Distances: In Time* (1983). His style keeps close to the rhythms of ordinary speech; what distinguishes it from the banality of most ordinary speech is the capacity to open up complex ironies through unexpected juxtapositions of phrase and metaphor. The poetic achievement of Joaquin deserves respect. The work collected in *Prose and Poems* (1952) and *Collected Verse* (1987) shows talent both for the long poem that combines narrative with dialogue and the short terse lyric whose energy is often allied to a melancholia that produces effects of neurotic excitement. Other poets of the 1950s included Dominador Ilio, Ricaredo Demetillo, Alejandrino G. Hufana and Bienvenido Lumbara. Demetillo had a long and industrious career and was the first Philippine to attempt a long epic poem in *Barter in Pinay* (1961), while Hufana's *Poro Point* (1962) assembles a collection of local portraits in verse. It

fails to come off because of the author's predilection for a blank verse that is wilful, congested and self-indulgent. In contrast, Ilio wrote in a style that is easier to understand and enjoy.

The 1960s were prolific. Poets who published first volumes during this decade included Edith Tiempo, Carlos A. Angeles, Cirilo Bautista, Manuel E. Viray and Emmanuel Torres. The most distinctive of these was the largely self-taught Angeles, who gave up writing for a time and eventually settled in the US. His early poems show an intuitive gift for metaphor and a propensity for unusual syntax that at its most effective springs his metaphors as a surprise upon the reader, but at other times leads to effects of awkwardness. The poems in *a stum of jewels* (1963) and Tiempo's *The Tracks of Babylon and Other Poems* (1966) are among the most successful work of the 1960s. While Viray and Torres wrote in relaxed poetic idioms, enriched by their interest in the graphic arts, Tiempo practised an art informed by the formalism of the New Critics, which aspires to dense interactions between intellection and feeling, giving her verse a compression and mannered poise that is striking. Bautista began a career that has been profuse in poems long and short, poems that nurse epic ambitions and others that dramatize dialogic and lyric intensities with a versatility that has been frequently admired in the Philippines.

The 1970s introduced readers to several new poets, including Ophelia Alcantara Dimalanta, Gémino H. Abad and Eric T. Gamalinda; the 1980s introduced Alfred A. Yuson, Simeon Dumdum Jr, Merlie M. Alunan, Ricardo M. De Ungria, Marjorie M. Evasco, Marne L. Kilates, Fidelito C. Cortes and Ramon C. Sunico. The inequities of the Marcos years, culminating in the assassination of Senator Aquino in 1983, provoked a variety of responses from the poets, among them *In Memoriam*, authored by Cirilo Bautista, Alfrredo Navarro Salanga, Alfred Yuson and Ricardo de Ungria; parts of Marne Kilates's *Versus* (1986), and Fidelito C. Cortes's *Waiting for the Exterminator* (1989). It is not easy to generalize meaningfully about the diversity of Philippine poetry in English from the 1980s and 90s. One way of distinguishing between the stylistic and thematic diversity is to recognize that some prefer more complex and literary types of language use, while others prefer a verse idiom close to that of natural speech. Ophelia Alcantara Dimalanta and Abad began with very literary styles; the former has stayed close to that preference, while the latter has moved towards a more direct utterance. While Merlie Alunan and Marjorie Evasco write in a style that is close to common speech, the former excels in handling feelings with quiet decorum, the latter with feminist and mythopoeic modes of communication that amalgamate the world of nature with the world of magic.

In their different ways, Gamalinda, Yuson, de Ungria, Kilates and Sunico represent the postmodern end of the stylistic spectrum. Alfred A. Yuson's *Sea Serpent* (1980) and *Dream of Knives* (1986), Dum Dum's *The Gift of Sleep* (1982) and *Third World Opera* (1987) and Gamalinda's *Lyrics from a Dead Language* (1991) and *Zero Gravity* (1999) show the best that has been accomplished in this vein from the Philippines. The poems are characterized by a mixture of the surreal, the Dadaist and the whimsically self-indulgent. Satire and irony dominate, and if the temperature rises, it leads to scorn or derision rather than bitterness or anger. Style is indistinguishable from matter and the seriousness of social and political critique is not diluted by a cosmopolitanism of reference that has learnt to shed narrow preoccupations with the local without abandoning any of the commitment that ties all Philippine writers to the dream of nation enlightened by historical memory. There is a lot of promising writing from the youngest generation, which has begun appearing in print within the last decade. A group of poets associated with the online journal *High Chair* has produced work of much promise, including Conchitina Cruz's *Dark Hours* (2005) and *elsewhere held and lingered* (2008). Issues concerning gender, urban living and contemporary lifestyles come to focus in the poetry written from the Philippines in the twenty-first century. It has a degree of self-confidence and experimental self-reflexivity which suggests that such writing has learnt to live with its colonial and postcolonial ships without losing posture.

Singapore and Malaysia from the 1960s

Despite common legacies and geographical proximity, the political, linguistic and cultural paths of Malaysia and Singapore diverged after 1965. Motivated by ethnic nationalism, Malaysia adopted a policy that marginalized English; motivated by the pragmatic need to link a small country with no natural resources to the web of international trade, Singapore gave English a central role in its educational policies. Writers who preferred English found themselves isolated in Malaysia, and a Malay poet such as Muhammad Haji Salleh gave up writing in English and devoted himself to a career in Malay poetry (although he is not averse to translating his Malay poems into English); meanwhile, in Singapore, writing in English soon relegated the local vernaculars to secondary status. From among the poets who appeared in the 1950s, Edwin Thumboo went on to publish *Gods Can Die* (1972), *Ulysses by the Merlion* (1979), *A Third Map* (1993) and *Still Travelling* (2008); Ee Tiang Hong's *I Of the Many Faces* (1960) was followed by *Myths for a Wilderness* (1976), *Tranquereah* (1985) and *Nearing a Horizon* (1994); and Wong Phui Nam's *How the Hills are Distant* (1968) was

followed by *Remembering Grandma and Other Rumours* (1989), *Ways of Exile* (1993) and *An Acre of Day's Glass* (2006).

A large part of Ee's work is taken up by a bitter sense of dispossession at the marginalization of ethnic minorities, such as the Baba Malay community to which he belonged, by the policy of Malaysia-for-Malays which was promoted by the state after independence. Wong continued with his mythopoeic preoccupations and the struggle to cope with a sense of internal self-exile. Thumboo, meanwhile, developed a discourse that ranged from poems commemorating places, persons and events of personal significance to writing with a more public focus, which fostered the need for communal unity and a sense of common purpose in a multicultural and multiracial society embarked on the precarious path of new nationhood. The role he chose to adopt made Thumboo prominent among his contemporaries, while it also induced subsequent poets to resist the agendas of nation building to which Thumboo's work was amenable. The most significant among them were Arthur Yap and Lee Tzu Pheng.

Yap's volumes – *Only Lines* (1971), *Commonplace* (1977) *Down the Line* (1980), *Man Snake Apple and Other Poems* (1986) and *The Space of City Trees* (2000) – comprise two kinds of poems, both radical in tone and style. One kind adopts a formal, slightly bookish and often rather elaborate style of discourse which is apt for the sardonic and wry observations on social anomalies and oddities that Yap specializes in. The other is ventriloquist in mimicking local speech habits in a way that is at once satirical and humane in capturing for his readers the exact nuances of utterance and underlying thought and feeling that make Singapore unique as a linguistic and cultural environment, determinedly efficient and prosperous, yet always threatening to succumb to arid soullessness or paternalistic authoritarianism.

Both Yap and Lee look like very private poets, but their work often makes direct allusion to very public issues and predicaments. Lee's volumes – *Prospect of a Drowning* (1980), *Against the Next Wave* (1988), *The Brink of an Amen* (1991) and *Lambda by Galilee and Other Surprises* (1997) – are neat in their lyric composure. The vulnerability of love and the inevitability of anguish, religious feelings that worry over issues of faith, the need for emotional autonomy all find expression as the gentler side of this sensibility; and an acute and tempered irony provides the complement to that sensitivity. The cost of the prosperity and modernity that the city state of Singapore has accomplished with unrelenting efficiency is administered a cautionary reminder in 'Bukit Timah, Singapore' and 'My Country, My People'.⁶ Other noteworthy poets who wrote in the 1960s and 70s include Robert Yeo, Chandran Nair, Lim Thean Soo, Goh Poh Seng, Kirpal Singh and several others. A lot of this poetry reflects the ongoing debate in

Singapore between the claims on poetry of the private and the public dimension of city life, an urban space that is also a civic space, densely populated, heavily micro- and macro-managed, addicted to a materialist notion of prosperity and to equations between prosperity and happiness, and between efficiency and docility. Poetry in Singapore measures the ethical and psychic cost extracted by the state's ideal of postcolonial nationhood.

Younger poets, who appeared in print in the last two decades, sound different in terms of the stylistic clothes they wear, which have a more eclectically international feel to them, though the body of thought and feeling still reckons on private solutions to the public problem of Singapore as a success story with a price to reckon. The best poetry to have come from the troubled corner is that by Boey Kim Cheng (who has since migrated to Australia) and Alfian Sa'at; that from the less troubled side is best represented by Alvin Pang and Yong Shu Hoong. All write free verse, the automatic contemporary choice for poets unburdened by any sense of a tradition of metre and rhyme attached to their use of English. Boey brings up a sense of suffocation and restlessness, and Sa'at voices protest and anger in relation to Singapore. In contrast, Pang and Yong come across as relaxed in temperament, willing to grant a greater degree of acceptance to their environments, and a matter-of-fact turning away from the kinds of writing that focuses on nation, state, community, father-son relations or issues of race, politics and authority.

Boey is the author of *Somewhere-Bound* (1989), *Another Place* (1992), *Days of No Name* (1996) and *After the Fire* (2006), and his style depends on a gift for metaphor. Alfian Sa'at is the author of *One Fierce Hour* (1997) and *A History of Amnesia* (2001), and his work has an energy that comes from a grasp of how to mobilize syntax for rhetorical purposes. Alvin Pang is the author of *Testing the Silence* (1997) and *City of Rain* (2003). His poems excel in understatement and precision. Yong Shu Hoong has published *Isaac* (1997), *Isaac Revisited* (2001), *Dowhile* (2002) and *Frottage* (2006). His latest work is characterized by a calm and collected manner, which balances a semblance of the casual with the intuitive, American idioms comfortably assimilated to a manner that is relaxed without becoming complacent. Other young poets of promise include Felix Cheong, Aaron Lee and Ng Yi-Sheng. Over more than a half century of writing, poetry in English from Singapore has grown in bulk, with more than a hundred volumes of poetry published in the last decade from a population of slightly over 4 million. It has also grown in terms of variety, although it suffers somewhat from tendencies worth outgrowing: blandness and timidity in respect to genre, lack of stamina and the strategic resources to attempt anything like a long poem or any other kind of poem but the short lyric in free verse.

Singapore stands out more for its poets than for its novelists or playwrights. The elitism associated with the genre continues to draw young writers, though the short story flourishes (especially in the popular form of the ghost story) and so do popular genres such as the novel of crime and detection. Fictional narrative is closely allied to realism as the preferred mode of representation in almost all Southeast Asian fiction until the late 1980s, when the alternatives opened up for postcolonial writers by modernist and postmodern experiments and Latin American magical realism showed up the limitations of realism. By and large, and especially in Malaysia and Singapore, social realism lends novelists an earnestness of tone and metonymic detail that is both a virtue and a limitation.

The kinds of question these novelists raise turn repeatedly towards the rapid and disorienting transformations undergone by the social environment, which leaves the central characters of narrative fictions caught uncertain between disaffection, curiosity and uncertainty about their own and their society's future. Set in Singapore, Goh Poh Seng's *If We Dream Too Long* (1972) and Lim Thean Soo's *Ricky Star* (1978) create protagonists who reflect the changes brought about by the project of social and technological modernity through an assortment of observed detail and a frame of mind in which anxiety and tension mix with something close to anticipatory excitement. Robert Yeo's *The Adventures of Holden Heng* (1986) provides a slightly later take on adolescents growing towards an uncertain adulthood in a rapidly changing society. The novel is light in tone, and mixes affectionate satire with shrewd humour, while Colin Cheong's *Stolen Child* (1989) is more oblique in tone and style, leaving reader and protagonist ambivalently placed amidst the ceaseless metamorphosis of Singapore. Philip Jeyaretnam's linked stories in *First Loves* (1987) give another, deft update on what it means to be growing up in the Singapore 'heartland' of HDB housing estates (the state-run Housing Development Board ensures that most Singaporeans have basic cheap housing) through the life of an adolescent who also serves as the narrator, while *Raffles Place Ragtime* (1988) offers an account of interpersonal relations worked out in a contemporary urban environment. Claire Tham's stories from *Fascist Rock* (1990) and *Saving the Rain Forest* (1993) give the feminine version of the growing-up-in-contemporary-Singapore narrative with a good deal of verve and sharpness. Alfian Sa'at's *The Corridor* (1999) gives an even sharper account of what it means to belong to different minority groups while living in Singapore's HDB housing, where class, race and sexual preference are all open to scrutiny and the pressure towards conformity.

Multi-ethnic societies whose histories of long and complex coexistence seem always on the cusp of change continue to provide the favourite topic for fiction

set in Malaysia and Singapore. The first few decades produced Lloyd Fernando's *Scorpion Orchid* (1976), Lee Kok Liang's *Flowers in the Sky* (1981) and K. S. Maniam's *The Return* (1981). Fernando's schematism entails bringing together four ethnicities into a single plot: Malay, Chinese, Indian and Eurasian. The setting is the University of Malaya in the 1950s. The semi-autobiographical narrative feeds on the ideology of syncretism. How shall a Malaya that hopes to continue drawing upon its traditional narrative strengths, as exemplified somewhat romantically by the *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals) and the *Hikayat Abdullah* (Story of Abdullah), and its spiritual strengths (as embodied by the enigmatic wise man of the novel, Tok Said, at once a Malay *Bomoh*, a geomancer and a priest), enable four friends to sustain their friendship (which becomes emblematic of the national ideal)? The realities of Malaysian ethnic politics ensure that the friendships do not survive. The novel drives home the lesson of a sombre morality play for the times.

Lee too adopts a schematic approach. His double plot involves, in one strand, a Buddhist monk who undergoes surgery at the hands of an Indian-born Malaysian doctor, and reviews his past life while the doctor regurgitates his own personal preoccupations and memories; in the other strand, the doctor's wife is beset by devotees who have discovered a statue of the god Ganesh that has washed up in her garden. The ensuing entanglements are worked out with help from an incompetent Malay constabulary and a narrative style that moves in and out between internal monologue and external description and narration. K. S. Maniam's *The Return* (1981) is less schematic in drawing upon autobiographical experiences that evoke the life of a small Malay-Tamil community living the humble life of plantation workers on the margins of the large political events that befall Malaya: the war, decolonization, independence, the marginalization of the ethnic minorities. It too arrives at a gloomy conclusion. The growth and development of the narrative parallels the growth in consciousness of the protagonist, whose studies in 1960s Britain bring him back to a Malaysia that does not make it easy for life in the margins for its ethnic minorities. Maniam's *In a Far Country* (1993) adopts a modernist approach to narrative technique but *Between Lives* (2003) reverts to the close scrutiny of marginalized lives and histories that he has made his forte.

Catherine Lim, who migrated at an early age from Malaysia to Singapore, provides lighter reading that does not lack for perceptiveness but is much less portentous about the shrewd and sharp liberalism she promotes in the stories of *Little Ironies* (1978) and *Or Else, The Lightning God* (1980). Another writer who migrated from Malaysia to Singapore, Christine Suchen Lim, provides a relatively non-schematic account of society in the 1960s in *Rice Bowl* (1984). The

novel represents the notion of a Singaporean community not merely in ethnic terms but in the context of social and political activism. Her third novel, *Fistful of Colours* (1993), marshals considerable narrative resources to focus on three young women in 1980s Singapore, whose journeys of discoveries take them deeper into their family and communal histories, even as they dismantle the many patriarchal structures of myth and belief that fence in individual and communal identity in Singapore. The repressions and marginalization habitual to patriarchal societies also come up for exposure in her latest collection, *The Lies That Build a Marriage* (2007). Just as Asian ethnic groups get their representative texts within the literary history of the new nation, so do the communities in whose lives the colonial and the postcolonial are fused: thus the sizeable and distinctive Eurasian community in British Malaya gets its sensitively commemorative novels in Rex Shelley's *The Shrimp People* (1991) and *People of the Pear Tree* (1993).

When realist narrative is stretched to allow for symbolic and allegorical possibilities, the results, as in Philip Jeyaretnam's third book and first novel, *Abraham's Promise* (1994), are resonant. The novel covers issues of political repression that overlap in part with Gopal Baratham's novel *A Candle or the Sun* (1991), although Jeyaretnam is not as experimental or volatile as Baratham. Jeyaretnam's biblical fable enables him to use allegory to pose an ethical question: do ends justify means? Does the father have the right to submit his son to the possibility of sacrifice on the basis of his faith in God? The plot makes it possible to treat the allegory as valid for a specific father and son pair in the novel and also for the state's treatment of its recalcitrant subjects. The novel implies a certain degree of suspicion about how the ethics of independent Singapore has been managed by the postcolonial state. This is unsurprising, given that the author is the son of a politician who fell out with the party in power; but also ironic, given that the author now occupies a senior position in the judicial system of the state he represents so sceptically in the novel.

It will be obvious from the above that there is something claustrophobic about a good deal of the fiction from Malaysia and Singapore: the very helplessness of the authors to change what they so obsessively note and annotate about the real or perceived ills their nations are prone to is highlighted by their unwillingness to let formal or narrative issues leaven earnestness. Wider awareness of changes in Southeast Asia is reflected in Goh Poh Seng's *The Immolation* (1977) which is set in a country resembling Vietnam, and in Ho Mingford's *Sing to the Dawn* (1976) which is set in Thailand, as well as Colin Cheong's *Tangerine* (1997) which is set in Vietnam. The cosmopolitan approach to writing is rare and recent in Singapore fiction. The much-travelled Tan Hwee Hwee's two

novels, *Foreign Bodies* (1997) and *Mammon Inc.* (2001) help fill this lack with an exuberance that has all the positive energy of a university student full of ideas, including ideas about how there might be viable and enjoyable alternatives to narrative realism.

Drama remains the least well developed of the literary traditions in Malaysia and Singapore, although the contemporary scene is far livelier than in the 1960s. A spirited attempt at a socially committed theatre was made in Singapore during the 1960s by Goh Poh Seng. Impressed by kitchen-sink realism in Britain, Goh returned to Singapore from Dublin with the idea of bringing social awareness into drama. His first play, a student production called *The Moon Is Less Bright* (1964), was well received. Set in 1942 wartime Singapore, it dramatized issues of moral choice and expediency amidst an awareness of class struggle, although its idealization of a rural working class remained an intellectual abstraction. His second and third plays were performed under the auspices of a new group called Centre 65: *When the Smiles Are Done* (1965) was a farcical comedy; *The Elder Brother* (1966) addressed tensions within a contemporary Chinese family, and was prefaced by the declaration that a nation that did not encourage local theatre was 'culturally pitiable'.⁷ *Smiles* claimed to solve the problem of finding an appropriate English for Singaporean characters by deciding to give Standard English to characters who, if they had existed, would have used languages other than English, and 'local colloquial English' for types who did speak English in 'real life'. The strategy produced odd results for the non-English-speaking characters. It is hard to keep a straight face when a Singaporean farmer says in a stilted idiom: 'It's tough enough for us poor farmers, always having to scramble and scrimp for a meager existence.'⁸ In contrast, the Singlish from his comedy is more convincing: 'I no even got a watch on my wrist'; 'What for give you education only to make you afterwards insult your mother'.⁹

The dilemma faced by Goh in the 1960s continues to plague realist English-language theatre and television in Singapore and Malaysia, where local English is 'allowed' but confined to comedy, while more serious conversation often resorts to an idiom either plain, flat or stilted. The situation took a while to change. The next substantial contribution to theatre after Goh Poh Seng came from Robert Yeo. His trilogy – *Are You There Singapore?* (1974), *One Year Back Home* (1980), *Changi* (1996) – is political in orientation. It focuses on the issues at stake in the formation of the new state, but the setting and stage action are not confined to the island. Yeo's plays subsidize a faith in debate about political issues affecting new nationhood that was met with state resistance in 1980. Willingness to tackle such issues directly on stage has not remained a lasting

feature of the cultural environment in contemporary Singapore. The next big events in Singapore theatre were Stella Kon's *Emily of Emerald Hill* (1984), first performed in Malaysia, and Kuo Pao Koon's *The Coffin is Too Big for the Hole* (1984). Kon's play features a long monologue by a single character, Emily, who represents the Peranakan way of life (Straits Chinese who had migrated to Malaya many generations before the British arrived on the scene, and evolved their own subculture) at a crossroads between evoking a dying tradition and making adjustments to accommodate old lifestyles to a new era of personal loss and diminishment. Gender, class, communal values and a sense of family and tradition are all activated through a stage idiom that is the chief glory of the play, which provides plenty of scope for a *tour de force* to any actress who can sustain the demands of the role and its unique mixture of the tragic and the affirmative.

Kuo's achievement consists in creating a theatre in which the linguistic plurality of Singapore could find representation in performances that were unique in their combination of critique and humour, showing understanding of the scope as well as limits of contingent (as compared with idealized) multilingualism. Having migrated to Singapore from China, Kuo studied theatre in Australia and entered the Singapore theatre scene in the 1970s with a critical energy that led to several of his plays being banned by the state. He was released from detention in 1980, and *Coffin* was performed separately in Chinese as well as English, providing a humorous critique of bureaucratic mind-sets and state interventions in private life. His multilingual *Mama Looking for Her Cat* (1988) was an even more significant landmark for Singapore theatre. It presented a plurality of languages on stage as a spectrum of communicative possibilities ranging all the way from mutual incomprehension to partial and intuitive understanding of an underlying and unsentimentalized humanity that could sometimes manage to transcend or circumvent the gaps, false starts and slippages to which communication across languages and cultures is prone in all situations not devised by a state committee. Kuo's method of authorship was collaborative, and depended a lot on workshop experience. It set the tone for future developments in which stage practices would become increasingly free of the dominance of a text-based script.

Meanwhile, in Malaysia after independence, English-language drama played a very distant second fiddle to plays in Malay. What little activity there was in terms of English-language theatre did not move away from expatriate productions until the plays of the Eurasian schoolmaster Edward Dorall, who won a competition in 1965 with *The Young Must Be Strong*, which was followed by the staging of *Arise O Youth!* (1966). *A Tiger Is Loose in Our Community* (1967)

followed, and then many other plays. Dorall's plays were significant for their largely successful attempt to capture the nuances of the spoken idiom in his dialogue. An amah from his second play, for instance, illustrates what can be accomplished: 'T'cha! I tole Philip she no careful she blake glass.'¹⁰ Several of Dorall's plays focused on problems such as poverty and social inequalities. They also stood out from the work of his Singaporean contemporaries in being conceived not as realist plays but as musical comedies. Subsequent Malaysian developments in theatre involved the 1984 production of K. S. Maniam's *The Chord*, and the production in the following year of Kee Thuan Chye's *1984: Here and Now*, both directed by Krishen Jit. Maniam's play dramatized the struggle to retain a common chord of humanity in circumstances governed by an authoritarian bureaucracy whose negative impact on life in Malaysia's plantations also figures in his fiction. Kee's play adapted Orwell's novel to contemporary Malaysia, making an explicit plea for racial equality and integration. The door had been opened to explicit allegory. The opening was used to great advantage by Huzir Sulaiman, whose black comedy, *Atomic Jaya* (1998), presents a hilarious plot involving the devising of an Islamic bomb by Malaysian scientists. Satire on the anomalies of Malaysian politics and ethnic stereotyping combine to create a play that is enormously amusing without compromising on critique.

Diasporic writing

British and American imperialism spread the English language to Southeast Asia. It also encouraged Southeast Asians to study, work and live in Britain and the US, either permanently or for long periods. Migration created its own set of experiences, those concerning memories of the homes left behind and the adjustments needed to make a new home overseas. Diasporic writing is almost as old as colonialism, especially in relation to the US, where the first poems by Filipinos were published just two years after the first Filipinos had been sent to the US for further studies. The most significant such writer from the period before and after World War II was Carlos Bulosan, who arrived in the US in 1930, aged seventeen, worked at all kinds of manual labour, became active in labour politics, taught himself to write, and wrote essays, poems and fiction with directness and passion. Before his death from tuberculosis in 1956 he gave poignant expression to the hopes and frustrations of immigrant life, edited *Chorus for America: Six Filipino Poets* (1942), and wrote effectively on the theme of *America Is in the Heart* (1946). Several major Philippine writers, such as N. V. M. Gonzalez, spent a large part of their professional career in the US.

Bienvenido Santos, in the stories of *You Lovely People* (1955) and *Brother, My Brother* (1960), addresses issues of migration (isolation, alienation, nostalgia, rootlessness), and returns to the problems of how cultural memory suffers from such displacements in his novels, *The Villa Magdalena* (1965) and *The Volcano* (1965). The later poems of Bienvenido Santos are another product of the diaspora, as are the densely allusive and Philippines-haunted poems of Luisa Igloria and Fatima Lim-Wilson, and the complexly orchestrated narrative of Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* (1990).

The Malaysian diaspora began in the 1960s when Hilary Tham, Siew-Yue Killingley and Shirley Geok-lin Lim, who had all started writing poems or stories as students at university in Malaysia, left for the West. Each pursued a long literary career from her new home. Tham, in volumes such as *Paper Boats* (1987), *Bad Names for Women* (1989) and *Men and Other Strange Myths* (1994), writes with shrewd humour of the cultural anomalies that strike someone who bridges several cultures (Chinese, Malay, Jewish-American) within her own life. Lim has had a long and distinguished career, as poet, academic and fictionist. Lim's *Crossing the Peninsula* (1980) won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize, and was followed by several other volumes of poetry, autobiography and fiction. Lim has kept her connection with different parts of Southeast Asia an active component in all her writing, using biculturalism to enrich her work as scholar of Asian-American writing as well as a creative writer. Goh Poh Seng migrated to Canada in the mid 1960s and some of his later work is set overseas, although he has returned to Singapore in person and in some of his writing. Other writing about Malaysia from diasporic writers includes Beth Yahp's *The Crocodile Fury* (1993) and Tash Aw's *The Harmony Silk Factory* (2005).

Minoritarian writing

Minoritarian writing refers to literary productions in English authored in circumstances where the author's use of English does not correspond with the languages used by the majority of people in the society he or she writes from and about. English is not widely spoken in Thailand, but it has produced several writers of exceptional interest such as Montri Umavijani, author of twenty-seven slim volumes of poetry in English, from *The Intermittent Things* (1968) to *Poems from Thailand, 1988–1991* (1991). Thailand has also produced two English-language novelists of distinction. Pira Sudham, who studied in Australia and England, has authored several volumes of short stories set in the Esarn region of Thailand, and the novels *Monsoon Country* (1988) and *The Force of Karma* (2002). His fiction mobilizes awareness about the plight of Thailand's

oppressed peasantry. The second novel brings to the narrative an element of magical realism: events in Thailand are connected ingeniously to their alleged reverse images in England, in a device that underlines the interconnections between local and global dimensions of human experience. A very different kind of fiction is authored from Thailand by the inimitable S.P. Somtow (Somtow Sucharitkul). After a long career as a writer of gothic horror stories, Somtow turned his hand to a *Bildungsroman* in *Jasmine Nights* (1995). The quirky humour and charm of the book, as well as its motley crowd of characters, is unforgettable, as is the stylistic finesse of *Dragon's Fin Soup* (2000).

English writing from Hong Kong also qualifies as minoritarian writing if we consider that the majority of the local inhabitants have used Cantonese as their principal (often their sole) language at work and at home (with Mandarin joining the school system after 1997), and English has remained the language of expatriates and professions such as education, law, the media, tourism, trade and business. Louise Ho's poems from *New Ends, Old Beginnings* (1997) engage with the complexities of the transitional stage of Hong Kong's postcolonial history in a style that is poised as well as perceptive. The most significant work in English from a writer born in Hong Kong comes from the Anglo-Chinese novelist Timothy Mo. It ranges from *The Monkey King* (1978), which is set in Hong Kong; *Sour and Sweet* (1982), which treats the lives of Hong Kong Chinese immigrants to Britain; *An Insular Possession* (1986), which provides a fascinating historical reconstruction of the period of the Opium Wars whose outcome gained Hong Kong for the British; and *The Redundancy of Courage* (1991), which dramatizes events set on a fictive island whose history resembles the history of the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia in 1976; to *Renegade or Halo 2* (2000), a picaresque narrative concerning a black Filipino-American whose life and travels take him to Hong Kong, the Middle East and England, giving to the narrative a breadth of scope not found in most other novels from Southeast Asia. The contributions of authors like Hagedorn or Mo make fictional materials from Southeast Asia international in scope, giving to their handling of specific histories, real and imagined, a range and tonality that is fully cosmopolitan.

Notes

1. John Platt and Heidi Weber, *English in Singapore and Malaysia: Status, Features, Functions* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 61.
2. Tom McArthur (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* (Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 640.
3. Edwin Thumboo, in Ee Tiang Hong, *Responsibility and Commitment: The Poetry of Edwin Thumboo* (Singapore: Centre for Advanced Studies and Singapore University Press, 1997), pp. 105–7.

4. José Garcia Villa, 'A note on "reverse consonance"', in *Selected Poems and New* (Manila: Bookmark, 1993), p. 76.
5. Angela Manalang Gloria, *The Complete Poems of Angela Manalang Gloria* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1993), p. 73.
6. Lee Tzu Pheng, *Prospect of a Drowning* (Singapore: Heinemann, 1980), pp. 50–1.
7. Goh Poh Seng, *The Moon is Less Bright; When the Smiles Are Done; The Elder Brother* (bound typescript; National University of Singapore Central Library, 1964).
8. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.
10. Edward Dorall, in Lloyd Fernando (ed.), *New Drama One* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 53.

Postcolonial South Asian poetry

G. J. V. PRASAD

There are four points that must be made early about South Asian English poetry. First, the category of South Asia, while convenient, may do dis-service to those nations, Pakistan and Bangladesh, whose very *raison d'être* is their separateness from India and each other. The second is that these three countries do share a common political, literary and cultural history with India (as do Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan) and therefore need to be distinguished only after 1947; hence, this chapter will look at pre-independence subcontinental poetry as a separate category, while looking at post-independence poetry in terms of the nations. The third is that Indian English poetry dominates the others in South Asia, having a much larger corpus. The fourth is that though we are dealing with South Asian English poetry, no such English really exists or is used by the poets except for comic purposes.¹

Pre-independence subcontinental poetry

The subcontinent saw the flowering of Indian English poetry very early (travel memoirs came even earlier) – in the 1820s. To give a sense of perspective, the British Empire was thirty-odd years away, as were the first universities in India; Macaulay's famous 'Minute on Indian Education' would be written in 1835 and implemented even later. But the East India Company was already in India, and the people of Kolkata (known as Calcutta till recently), which was a cauldron of languages, races, and commercial and cultural possibilities, had already decided that English would be the language of power and emancipation. The controversial reformer Raja Rammohun Roy (1772–1833) had already written to the Governor General, in 1823, opposing the setting up of a Sanskrit College and asking instead for a post-Baconian European education, one that was imparted to the British. This education would, of course, be in English and take Indians away from the stultified knowledge systems that they were being imparted! There was a demand for English as a language of commerce, and there was a

demand for English education as an emancipatory modernizing project. And yet, interestingly, the first poets were nationalists – versifying India into being in English – as have been many of the later poets as well. From Henry Louis Vivian Derozio’s early call to Indian nationalism (decades before Indian nationalism would enter Indian languages), Indian English (male) poets have written the nation into their verse. This should not be so surprising if we take into account the fact that the nineteenth century is a crucial period in the history of modern India, mainly because it was imagined into fractured being during this period. One must remember that while many of the early Indian English poets have been dismissed as mere apprentice poets, their works and their lives are of great interest because of the new cultural mix from which they wrote. Bengal saw the earliest impact of colonization, and Bengalis took to the English language even before the English saw fit to impose it on the subcontinent. Kolkata was a multilingual multicultural metropolis; the English and the Indians (many of them new converts to Christianity) studied in the same schools and were, thus, trained in the same Orientalist framework. Hence, the transactions of the Indian English poets with the colonial language and culture are of great interest – their nationalist consciousness makes them part of the process of redefinition of Indianness and Hindu masculinity and valour, and they use their education and training, the colonizer’s language and methods, to delineate and claim their India(s). Their hunt for Hindu heroes from the past, heroes who fought the Muslim outsiders, valiantly collaborates with Orientalist historiography and archival research – e.g. borrowing from James Tod’s *Annals and Antiquities of Rajast’han or the Central and Western Rajpoot States of India* (1829). The Bengal poets thus collaborated in the construction of an authentic Hindu India. It was the English reading of subcontinental history, glorifying the Hindu past, and the missionary position on the effeminate (non-martial) nature of Hinduism that led to the imagination of a martial Hindu India, one that had to be recovered through celebration of its past glory and the bravery of its sons in their defence of the motherland against the Muslim outsiders. This can also be read as a manifestation of displaced hostility towards the new colonizers, the Muslim ‘outsiders’ taking the place of the British. It is thus not so surprising that it was in English that this version of (modern) India had its formal literary birth, and that in the genre of poetry. It would not be an exaggeration to say that modern India came into being in the English poetry of Indian male poets of the nineteenth century and after, a construction of India in which the Muslim was the natural outsider.

It would also be true to say that Indian English poetry is both a result and a symptom of cultural dislocation. The pioneering poets had to seek a language

that would express their complex positioning within India (as critical insiders whose insider-ness was immediately under question), even as they followed the example of Anglo-Indian poets (i.e. British poets in India) who were catering to a market that hungered for the exotic East. The flag bearer was Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809–31), whose sonnets ‘The Harp of India’ and ‘To India – My Native Land’ are still anthologized since they signal a nationalist consciousness, though paradoxically in the language of the colonizer and in the hands of a poet who was only a quarter Indian, his father being of mixed Portuguese and Indian descent and his mother English. Derozio is known for his pioneering and provocative work as a teacher in Hindu College (now Presidency College), Kolkata, encouraging his students to question the rituals and practices of their Hindu faith, and is credited with being one of the intellectuals who ushered in the Bengali Renaissance. He was trying to create a peer group that would give him his due place as an Indian, one who could not be part of the rooted traditions and cultures around him. However, he claimed to represent India and its glorious past (‘My country! in thy day of glory past’, in the poem ‘My Native Land’). He was also claiming India for the English language, the language he was writing in. What he wanted was a reciprocal recognition as an Indian poet. This disjunction from the local language and culture (Bengali for him) is characteristic of postcolonial writers in general and Indian English poets in particular. However, even as he explored his third space, it was imperative for Derozio as it was for later Indian English poets to state his commitment to his native land.

Among the poets whose complex transactions with colonialism and Orientalism make for fascinating study of the construction of modern Indian consciousness, one must name the Bengal poets – Kashiprasad Ghose (1809–73), who is often credited as being the first Hindu poet; Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824–73), who later wrote in Bengali; the anglicized Dutt family consisting of the brothers Govin Chunder (1828–84, father of the famous Toru Dutt), Hur Chunder (1831–1901) and Greece Chunder Dutt (1833–92), who, along with their nephew Omesh Chunder (1836–1912), brought out a collection of poems, *The Dutt Family Album* (1870); their cousin Shoshee Chunder (1825–86), a prolific writer of both poetry and prose; and the brothers Manmohan (1869–1924) and Aurobindo Ghose (1872–1950), the latter being the well-known seer Sri Aurobindo. Michael Madhusudan Dutt famously relinquished English for Bengali and achieved the lasting fame that he was seeking, fathering modern Bengali poetry with revolutions in form (introducing the sonnet and blank verse) and diction even as he continued with his search for the masculine technological Hindu. His case is often seen as a kind of

paradigm – the colonized mimic intellectual then finds his true voice in his own language, serving his people the way a self-respecting creative writer should. A poet should write not in the language of the public sphere but in the language of the private world that he inhabits. Unfortunately for this thesis, Michael Madhusudan Dutt was always more at home in English, and Bengali was the language of the public sphere for him. In any case, poetry in India (as elsewhere) has had its life in the formal public languages of the courts. The impact of colonial dislocation is to be seen in the confusion between public and private language as evidenced in Dutt's life and writings, a confusion that is affirmed when critics often ask subcontinental Indian English writers to write in their own languages, and are told that it is what the writers are doing. Dutt is paradigmatic in the sense that he tried to accommodate and explain the West in Indian terms, to incorporate Western values into Indian contexts. That he did this better in Bengali does not take away from the fact that this is precisely what is at work in his English poems like *The Captive Ladie* (1849) and 'King Porus – A Legend of Old', where he rereads and versifies Indian history to construct Hindu masculine heroes. The other Dutt listed earlier too show this tension between their adopted linguistic and cultural heritage and their indigenous locations and inheritances. They embraced Christianity but still thought in terms of Hindu mythology; they wanted to be English, to be part of the colonial project, to be with the rulers, but felt Indian, the victims. While Shoshee Chunder Dutt, a prolific writer, was a Justice of the Peace and a man of good standing, he was deeply conflicted about the colonial enterprise. On the one hand, he wrote a long poem to assert his faith in Christianity; on the other, he not only wrote a number of poems yearning for India's freedom and celebrating the manliness of earlier defenders of the Hindu land, he also wrote a short piece of fiction, 'The Republic of Orissa: A Page from the Annals of the Twentieth Century' (1845), where Orissa fights and gains its freedom from British rule. It is no surprise that he easily slips into an unstated anti-British stance in his patriotic poems, where he sees India as servile and attached to the loathsome chains of its despotic rulers. The language of the rulers taught the ruled to imagine a future nation based on shared past histories.

One cannot talk of nineteenth-century Bengal without a separate mention of Toru Dutt (1856–77). She died young, but she left behind a promising body of work in both prose and poetry. Her translations of French poetry are justifiably praised, as much for her cultural confidence as for the quality of translation, and her English poetry has had later poets acknowledging that perhaps she was the first major voice in Indian English poetry. She is another classic example of the dislocation caused by colonialism – born a Hindu, she was baptized a

Christian when she was six years old, when her father Govin Chunder Dutt converted along with his family. She learnt English when she was very young, and sailed to Europe in 1869, spending a year in France, where she learnt French and learnt to identify with the French cause, and three years in England. Displaced from and within her environment, Toru Dutt managed to forge her own unique identity, and was in the process of rendering her hybrid Indianness into her literary works, when she died of tuberculosis. She had begun to learn Sanskrit and was rendering puranic tales into English towards the end of her life. Translator from French and Sanskrit, a novelist in French, poet and novelist in English, a critic who wrote about fellow colonials, Toru Dutt was all that you would expect from someone exposed to different languages and traditions – she tried to synthesize them, make sense of them in her own creative and intellectual manner. Her much-anthologized poem ‘Our Casuarina Tree’ heads a long list of distinguished poems written by Indian English poets while away from India. It is not just a poem occasioned by nostalgia but a poem that tries to explore and recreate the idea of Indianness. The impulse to synthesize, to translate, to locate oneself in terms of one’s own indigenous traditions – all these characterize South Asian English poetry till now.

Colonial Indian poetry moved to other centres as well – especially Chennai and Mumbai – producing, among others, A. M. Kunte who published in Poona, B. M. Malabari (1853–1912) from Mumbai, G. K. Chettur (1898–1936) who published in Mangalore, and the Goan poet Joseph Furtado (1872–1947) who is unique not only in that he brings a different landscape into the imagination of India (crossing imperial borders with lyrical ease) but also in the fact that he writes with an abandon not seen in other Indian English poets so far. His comic use of Indian words in English foreshadows the ways in which the language has been used in recent fiction.

Manmohan Ghose is unique among the male poets because he did not publish from the margins but from the imperial centre itself. Hailed as a leading talent of his generation by Oscar Wilde, Manmohan Ghose was a contemporary of Laurence Binyon and his poetry is truly English in that he was actively involved in the literary scene of London and Oxford at the beginning of his career, and his poetry written in India after his forced return in 1894 reads like poetry written in exile. His life and career is a curious example of denationalization – he was sent to England to become English, and then was forced back to India when he identified himself completely with England. His brother, Aurobindo, who was seven years old when he was sent to England along with Manmohan, is a study in contrast. Returning to India

when he was twenty-one, he participated in the same nationalist programme as the other Indian male poets, and reclaimed his Sanskrit heritage so well that after a short career as a revolutionary he became famous around the world as a seer and a guru. He has an impressive corpus of poetry, displays great virtuosity in his use of poetic forms, and his prose works and letters document how deeply he thought about his craft and about the Indianization of English poetry for which he advocated the use of Sanskrit metre. Aurobindo's mystical poetry, of which the epic *Savitri* is a prime example, has become a convenient dividing point between what is seen often as two periods in Indian English poetry – the colonial and post-independence. Curiously, there is a great deal of mystical and religious poetry written in English during colonial times by Indian male poets, including Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), which calls for investigation. Was this a logical extension of the Orientalist project, with the Indian men actively seeking and playing the role of the Eastern mystics or was this the logical extension to the construction of identity necessitated by the disjunctions and displacements caused by colonialism as has been argued? Did the exploration of identity brought on by colonialism lead to the exploration of self, of the spiritual, leading to a kind of universalism even if it based itself on Indian texts and practices? In any case, colonial poetry by Indians is dismissed by many as insipid, imitative, Orientalist and inauthentic. Thus they see the true birth of Indian English poetry taking place only after Indian independence in 1947. Interestingly, the first generation of post-independence poets too seem to be involved in the same practices of definition of the nation, a nation that would accommodate their English-educated and writing selves in it, even if they are no longer seeking acceptance from the British or asserting equality with them.

But before we end the section on pre-independence Indian English poetry, we must mention the other case of a writer who straddled the nineteenth and the twentieth century like a colossus, much like Aurobindo Ghose. This is of course the curious case of Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), who embarrasses most Indian English literary historians because they cannot easily include him in the canon of Indian English poets, nor can they afford to leave him out. This is not because he still remains India's only winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, but because he won it owing to his own English rendering of *Gitanjali*, a translation that gives us a completely different Tagore, one who is an answer to the Orientalist's prayer. Tagore hardly wrote in English, but translated prolifically from his Bengali. His influence on South Asian writings of the time was phenomenal and this was through his own English renderings of his work. While in terms of form, he popularized

the epigram and the prose poem, his influence has to be seen in terms of his deep interest in identity formation, in his evolution of a synthesized way of life which took what he considered to be useful from various cultures in order to strengthen the indigenous, to create a syncretic but uniquely local philosophical vision that centred the human being and not any national ideology.

Another poet that one must talk about is Sarojini Naidu (1879–1949). Hers is an interesting case of someone whose fame as a poet far outshines her accomplishment as one. She led an active political life, was part of the freedom movement and called the ‘nightingale of India’ by everyone including Mahatma Gandhi. She is paradigmatic of the postcolonial poet in the way in which she was instructed by an English critic, an instruction she listened to a bit too well, on what to write about. It was Edmund Gosse who asked her to stop writing like the English and write as a genuine Indian poet about the colours and sounds of India, revealing the heart of India. Perhaps it was this instruction that moved her into the freedom struggle as she struggled to represent her Indian identity (already hybridized as a Bengali in Hyderabad and then married to a Telugu man) in the very language that had caused huge dislocations, English. Her lyrical poetry about Indian subjects, poetry which shows the influence of Urdu, especially in her use of metaphors and similes, did not carry her very far in her exploration of identity. She abandoned poetry for politics. Hers was a pre-modernist Romantic poetry, showing great mastery over metrical variations and sound effects. Interestingly, Sarojini Naidu may have played a part in the history of modernism in English poetry because she is said to have introduced Ezra Pound to Mary Fenollosa, a turning point in Pound’s literary life, one that led to his translations of Chinese poetry. However, Naidu’s path was to be different from that of Pound’s.

But the subcontinent did find a modern voice in poetry in the 1930s. This was Shahid Suhrawardy (1890–1965), who in the truly subcontinental tradition can be claimed by all three countries – India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Bangladesh claims the legacy of all Bengalis, especially Bengali Muslims; Suhrawardy grew up in Kolkata, studied at Kolkata University and Oxford, worked for a while in India and then emigrated to Karachi, Pakistan in 1948. A multitalented individual, who served as a diplomat as well and wrote extensively on art, Suhrawardy is known for his witty compositions, which remind one of Eliot and Yeats. His book, *Essays in Verse* (1937), is quite exceptional if one looks at the general tenor of Indian English poetry of the time.

Post-independence Indian English poetry

When the subcontinent was divided into India and Pakistan in 1947, it was bound to happen that the literary traditions would take different routes in order to fulfil different goals. Pakistani poets would necessarily have to deal with matters of history and to evoke the new Pakistan into being. Sri Lankan poets would not have to do this since there was a sense of continuity for the nation. This would be true for Indian English poets as well, since they had always been Indian, but as is true in the case of all South Asian English poetry, Indian English poetry was always under attack for being written in a foreign language, for being inauthentic. Having got rid of the English rulers, Indians wanted to get rid of English as well. What was the point writing in English after independence from the English? Were the poets Indian or not? Thus, Indian English poets had to define and defend their Indianness even more after independence.

Nissim Ezekiel (1924–2004), who was the dominating figure in post-independence twentieth-century Indian English poetry, setting its critical and hence ethical standards, devoted a major part of his poetry to playing the harp of the nation, constructing a modern urban India as a space for the westernized Indian male who can from its anonymity assert his right to belong and to contest and critique other spaces and positions both inside and outside the nation. Ezekiel used his Jewish descent to write himself a natural outsider-insider position in India, but asserted his sense of belonging. He was the poet of modern Mumbai and modern India, and to underline his right to this space he even tried his hand at translating Marathi poetry. His career spanned the second half of the twentieth century and his poetry has been very influential. He is often hailed as the first of the moderns in English, which is actually a way of saying that his poetry challenged and turned away from the metrical, mystical poetry of Aurobindo which had been so dominant till then. What the first generation of post-independence poets offered in its stead was an ironic, secular, urban, modern poetry, one that tended towards free verse. There was not a nation steeped in Hindu tradition but one that was reinventing itself in the Nehruvian vision. This contestation of the nation plays a major role in the poetry of male Indian English poets writing in the first two to three decades after independence. This is the generation that was under attack both by Hindi nationalists and regional language writers. Their cultural practices, their writings and their very lives were seen as alien and unpatriotic. The India that had been born in English now wanted to manifest itself only in other avatars, exclusively in other languages. Many of the male Indian English poets

thus saw themselves as having to defend their positions, even if they sympathized with some of the theoretical positions ranged against them. What was at stake was their very right to exist as poets. Hence while women poets used the distance offered by English to explore their sexuality and explode their gendered worlds, the male poets were making desperate attempts to defend their nationalist turf (is this why women poets seem more at ease with the language, not only in control but also moulding it into their own personal languages the way male poets don't seem to be able without a sense of defensiveness or the nudge of theory?). They were willing to show their poetic commitment to India, while defending their right not to be steeped in Indian mythology or epics. Nissim Ezekiel, who played the role of a gentle patriarch and encouraged many poets, reading their works and commenting on them, identifying and nurturing talent, led this defensive nationalistic pack, but R. Parthasarathy (b. 1934) has a whole corpus of poetry in English that is about the futility of writing in English and the frustration of his desire to write in his mother tongue Tamil, which has become unworthy of serious poetry! He is one of the major figures who participated in the frenetic anthologizing work that took place during the 1970s, when Indian English poets anthologized each other in collections titled *Indian* rather than *Indian English* poetry – the nation belonged to them. Parthasarathy was hugely influential because of his position as editor in the publishing house, Oxford University Press, and was instrumental in defining the contours of post-independence Indian English poetry and also in the formation of the canon. Parthasarathy has gone on to become a successful translator from Tamil, while residing in the conducive English environment of USA.

The dilemma this identity crisis caused by the use of English was common to the entire subcontinent. P. Lal (1929–2010), the other patriarch of Indian English poetry, whose publishing house Writers Workshop has published the first volumes of most of the major Indian English poets, exemplifies the pressure that this anxiety can exert on the career and vision of a poet. Lal started off as a modernist, one who launched vitriolic attacks on the soft, greasy, spiritual poetry of Aurobindo and his followers, and took exception to the views of Buddhadeva Bose who had said that Indian English poetry was a pointless genre, a blind alley, especially after independence, since only the earlier writers had any reason to write in English.² He issued a questionnaire based on Buddhadeva Bose's essay to a wide range of Indian English poets, and their answers along with their poems came out in a massive and extremely significant anthology of poetry.³ This champion of modern Indian English poetry soon learnt to appreciate Aurobindo and to feel that one could not write

poetry in Indian without an understanding of Indian epics and mythology; he has spent the latter part of his career on an ambitious project – translating the *Mahabharata*. Almost naturally, he has fallen out of favour with anthologists and other Indian English poets.

By now, it should be clear that even as this generation of poets asserted their rights to the English language and to India they felt defensive about both, their tongue was in English chains and they could not articulate specific Indian cultural locations with ease. The male poets did not ‘chutnify’ the language; when they did attempt an Indian English it was only to achieve comic effects, not to evolve their own language (see Nissim Ezekiel’s ‘Very Indian Poems in Indian English’ for instance). The sense of disjunction allows them to adopt ironic postures with ease, one of the hallmarks of modern poetry. The attempt of this generation of male poets is thus to evolve a personal theoretical position and poetic subject matter that would allow them to connect with their specific Indian-language traditions, their literary pasts. A. K. Ramanujan (1929–95) is the most successful example of this trend, his poetry traversing the terrain between classical Tamil poetry and Anglo-American modernism, his Indian past and his American life. Even he doesn’t attempt anything very much with the English language, using the language itself as a distancing device, which would aid his ironic positioning. This allows him to put the lid on violent emotions and schism within, but his poetry on childhood has often been misread as poetry of nostalgia or of Hindu belonging, making him more ‘authentic’ than Ezekiel in the eyes of some Indian critics! He has some wonderful translations from Tamil and Kannada, and also wrote in Kannada, earning himself a footnote as a pioneer of modernism in Kannada poetry. He saw himself as living an intellectual life where his Indian languages and traditions and his English were continuous, where one could not be separated from the other. Hence, unlike Parthasarathy, he had no guilt about writing in English, and unlike Ezekiel, he did not see it as his poetic dharma to defend and enact the Indianness of his poetry. There could be two major reasons for this – one that he had a base outside India and, secondly, unlike Ezekiel and many other contemporaries, he was a Hindu.

Jayanta Mahapatra (b. 1928) who began his writing career much later than the others, is the only one of the male poets of his generation to write in an Indian English, but he has frequently been accused of simply not having enough control over the language. Mahapatra is the poet of Cuttack, in Orissa, and his poetry charts the familiar course of belonging and non-belonging but within a specific cultural and geographical location. He also differs from the other modern Indian English poets in that his poetry is highly

emotive and full of personal symbolism. Mahapatra is Christian and this is what adds the poignancy to his poetry of loss. Keki N. Daruwalla (b. 1937) is the leading figure in Indian English poetry today, and his poetry has always been an unapologetic part of the Indian environment. His other (earlier) profession of police officer seems to have kept his feet firmly on the ground, so he has always known where he stands – in modern, complex and conflictual, wonderful and wonderfully corrupt India, where else? His may be existentialist poetry of scepticism, but more and more he seems to assert his right to all his heritages, from the Parsi to Western literary. He writes with great skill and control a poetry that encompasses the world he knows. There are other notable poets – Adil Jussawalla (b. 1940), Saleem Peeradina (b. 1944) and Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (b. 1947) who follow soon after. Each of them has left a mark as anthologist, while the first and the third are more well-known poets in India. Mehrotra has an impressive corpus of poetry, and he for one demonstrates a certain impatience with both the English literary tradition and Indian English modernism, having moved to French surrealism for inspiration because he couldn't get his English to bend enough to convey his reality. On the other hand, Jussawalla uses his postcolonial predicament as subject matter for his poetry as most famously in *Missing Person*. He is unique in that his poetry fits in well with the theoretical construction of a colonized mind struggling to decolonize itself, to recover from the schizophrenia caused by the fragmentation that resulted from colonization. On the other hand, Peeradina has always tried to be Ezekiel-like in his poetic concerns and techniques. His is a poetry that tries for equipoise that is imbued with an ethical consciousness. Interestingly Mehrotra is now an accomplished translator, rendering in English poetry from the classical Prakrit as well as Hindi.

There is an interesting group of poets who demonstrate their belonging in this cradle of multiculturalism by writing poetry in two languages – two of those prominent among them are Dilip Chitre (1938–2009) and Arun Kolatkar (1932–2004). Both have works in English as well as Marathi. Their creative bilingualism is worthy of study because the pressures exercised by the cultural environment and the language of their choice of the moment force their poetic landscapes into interesting shapes. It should be noted that Jayanta Mahapatra flirted with Oriya poetry late in his career but seems to have shifted back to English. Arun Kolatkar's *Jejuri* was a Commonwealth Award-winning book of poems that has defined a generation of urban westernized secular Indians with their religious scepticism, mainly because it is a Hindu's look at Hindu pilgrimage consumerism. While Arun Kolatkar translated some of the poems of the Marathi saint Tukaram into English, Dilip Chitre has translated a wider range

of Tukaram's poetry – both poets following the distinguished line of poet-translators in Indian English poetry. Chitre has also translated *Anubhavamrut* by the *bhakti* poet Sant Gnaneshwar. Kolatkar's contribution to Indian English poetry is impressive, but his contribution to Marathi is even more substantive and has had a greater impact. He brought a radical voice to Marathi poetry – just as he did to Indian English poetry – and was the high priest of experimentation. His poetic stance provoked the Marathi writer and nativist critic Balachandra Nemade into saying that Kolatkar wrote in English because 'an alien language ... [was] more conducive to his determination to alienate himself!'⁴

Ploughing a different field in this generation is Dom Moraes (1938–2004), who, like Manmohan Ghose, saw himself for a long time as an English poet. His poetry again belonged to the centre and shows a similar difference from that of his contemporary Indian poets, in that he too, like Ghose, was part of the currents of literary change in England. As King says, 'Moraes was the darling of England' in the 1950s and the mid 1960s. He too, like Ghose, shows 'unusual mastery over the harmonies and rhythms of traditional English verse'.⁵ He came back to India and spent many years in Mumbai till his death, but he was still an outsider poet, at home only in his poetry.

It is with Agha Shahid Ali (1949–2001) that you get a really fresh breath of air, the sign of a new generation of poets. Here is poetry from a different axis altogether, a poetry that does not argue for or establish belonging but that which arises confidently from the cultural mix that produces it. But this is also the poetry that is born in fragmentation and reaction – a world where cultures are dying and need to be celebrated to be kept alive, where the poet has to evolve his identity not in terms of national politics but in terms of subnational belonging or a transnational sense of literary and cultural heritage. Agha Shahid Ali's movement as a poet is from that of an urban Indian poet celebrating the traditions of Urdu poetry and singing to that of a diasporic Kashmiri poet addressing the loss of belonging. He can and does play with language and form, encouraging many poets to write the (Urdu) ghazal in English. While his American sojourn saw him change his identity as a poet, it is interesting to see what role his homosexuality played in his poetry. Again Agha Shahid Ali spent considerable energy in translating poetry from Urdu. His version of Faiz Ahmed Faiz is justly celebrated. Another interesting writer is Vikram Seth (b. 1952), who has established himself as a novelist, but it is as a poet that I think his reputation will survive for a long time. One can see the ease with which the Indian English writer can move in this transnational world in Seth's writings. His poetry has come out of varied experiences in different parts of the

world and it is said often that it is only his name that identifies his poetry as Indian. Quite like Manmohan Ghose and Dom Moraes, Seth displays a mastery unsurpassed by native Anglo-American poets of his generation, evolving or reinventing forms and even genres (take *The Golden Gate*, for example, a novel in verse with fourteen-line stanzas). Seth has written children's verse as well and is also open about his homosexuality in his poetry. There are two other poets who now write openly about gay preferences – Hoshang Merchant (b. 1947) and R. Raj Rao (b. 1955). While Hoshang Merchant seems to revel in playing to the gallery, Raj Rao writes a highly emotive poetry, which has been termed by King as a mixture of 'Swiftian satire and gay activism'.⁶

A truly impressive poet is Manohar Shetty (b. 1953), who has evolved a personal style – his poetry is quiet and explores the world of the observed. Among the other poets writing in Indian English, Bruce King identifies the following male poets – Ranjit Hoskote (b. 1969), Jeet Thayil (b. 1959), C. P. Surendran (b. 1959), Vijay Nambisan (b. 1963), R. Raj Rao (b. 1955), Bibhu Padhi (b. 1951), Tabish Khair (b. 1966) and G. J. V. Prasad (b. 1955) – as worthy of his canon. This is a varied crop of different half-generations and poetic aims. While the age of the Indian English novel seems to have brought no greater visibility to Indian English poetry, these poets do demonstrate that poetry still has a space and that it is reaching out in different directions. If the nation-space is still a contested space, it is so not because the poets write in English but because the Indian nation was contested quite hotly in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Thus the poets play their personal quests out in their poetry and the ease with which the younger poets show the language to be their own shows us a generation has come of age and dropped any defensiveness about using English. If Hoskote's poetry has an explosive quality and is perhaps demonstrative of his interests as an art critic and of his readings in other Indian poetry, Bibhu Padhi writes a Mahapatra-like regional, small-town poetry, quiet and contemplative; Thayil and Surendran and Raj Rao write from an urban, a cosmopolitan space. Thayil is positioning himself as more of an international poet, heir to the many traditions of cosmopolitanism, while Surendran is an exciting new voice who articulates the angst of living in contemporary times holding nothing sacred or immune to his attack. Thayil is now a noted anthologist of Indian English poetry, and has been instrumental in giving a stage to many young poets. Tabish Khair, a diasporic poet now living in Denmark, writes the poetry of an intellectual, one who analyses and has a vision, but the poetry of one with not only the eye for the light and the ironic, but also a deft touch with the language. Along with Agha Shahid Ali, he is a major Muslim Indian poet in English, but like Ali his poetry is that of the

secular intellectual. Nambisan's poetry shows great skill and a distrust of emotional or linguistic excess. This is a poet who has published little but whose poetry is worth exploring. G. J. V. Prasad's poetry is closer in the use of language and its intent to map India to some of the novelists like Rushdie and Seth. His attempt is to write a more accessible poetry, an oral poetry that uses the conventions of light verse for serious themes.

But this essay would be incomplete without looking at poets of this generation from the northeast of India, who still struggle with issues of nation, race and identity. Poets like Robin Ngangom (b. 1959), a bilingual poet who writes in English and Manipuri, and Sing Nongkynrih Kynpham (b. 1964), who writes in English and Khasi, are two of the major writers from the area. Both write in and about their politically surcharged environment while also singing of love and a longing for life. They write about the ever present sense of menace, of mutilated bodies, of soldiers and insurgents, about tribal identities and conflicts, using their indigenous languages and English ambidextrously, with Ngangom translating everything he writes in either language into the other. English is the language they use to come out of a sense of isolation, centring themselves and their poetry. Their sense of dislocation is caused by actions of the Indian nation, as much as it was by colonial missionaries who helped to marginalize their tribal gods. These are poets who serve as witnesses to the state of their part of the world, their English poems testifying to their continuing sense of outrage, their state of colonization.

The poets of the last decades of the twentieth century have thrown into the dustbin of history the questions of authenticity of Indian English poetry, and of the suitability of the language to represent Indian (even if individual) realities. If the pioneering male poets defined the nation and established their rights to the language, the first generation of post-independence male poets defended the national turf even as they continued to refine the language without taking too many risks, while the next generation has more personal and political axes to grind, contests the making of the turf, and is more interested in cultivating individual flower beds, be they in different diasporic gardens altogether. However, one must say that the hostility to English is yet to disappear, and also that there is still a way of sorting poets by those who have one or more (other) Indian languages and those who know only English.

The case of women poets makes for a different and more exciting reading. Kamala Das (1934–2009) is a major voice in Indian English poetry from the 1960s and 1970s. Here was someone who took to English poetry in order to take on the Indian patriarchal world, to write of sexuality and body and love, to undercut the grand world of history and nation-making and the angst of

writing in foreign tongues. Her India is one of feminine discontentment. A bilingual writer (who writes in Malayalam as well), Kamala Das chose to write all her poetry in English, an English which was her own, one of the languages that she owned, and one that did not own her. English did not impose any roles or rules on her and she could explore her longings and sense of belonging in ways not available to her in Malayalam. A path-breaking poet, one who made it easier for women poets who followed her, Kamala Das uses English to challenge her society. In an early poem 'An Introduction', Das asserts that those who want her to write in Malayalam also want her to conform, to play the woman. English allows her to break free from all patriarchal, national constructs.

Poets who began to publish just after Kamala Das, like the bilingual poets Gauri Deshpande (1942–2003) and Mamta Kalia (b.1940), also followed the same trend. Gauri Deshpande was quite like Kamala Das in that she did not write poetry in Marathi, whereas Mamta Kalia has written poetry in Hindi as well. As a matter of fact, Mamta Kalia is better known now as a Hindi writer, having written poems, plays, short stories and novels in the language. She brought into Indian English poetry a quirky wit, one that marks her reading of the space allotted to women in Hindu middle-class society. Her much-anthologized poem, 'Tribute to Papa', can be read at different levels – as a satiric critique of the male world of materialism and propriety, the expression of a generational clash, the expression of (rebellious) desires, or an ironic poem that critiques both the me-first generation of the woman-speaker and the timorous middle class of her father's generation. This is what keeps us on our readerly toes with women poets of the 1960s and 1970s; they take on everything. However, they do create a woman's world even when fighting to be part of the man's world. As Gauri Deshpande puts it, when you want to talk about women's issues like love or despair or children, 'A man is no use whatever then' ('The Female of the Species').⁷ Gauri Deshpande wrote both poetry and short fiction in English. She was also a well-known translator, translating into Marathi as well as from Marathi into English.

This is what is refreshingly different about Indian women poets – they are not weighed down by their English, their Indianness. They quite unabashedly critique the very heritage that they are asked to defend or prove their claims to. Eunice de Souza (b. 1940) with her Goan Catholic roots (she was born in Pune, in Maharashtra, and has spent most of her life in Mumbai) gives us a very different picture of India. Naturally the India she critiques directly is of Catholic origin, even if she does comment about colour prejudice and the alienation felt by Goan Catholics in and from the majoritarian Hindu India.

In 'de Souza Prabhu', she gives us the contours of her world. This is a world in which Catholic Christians are still aware of caste; it is a world of confused identities: her name is Greek, her surname is Portuguese and her language is alien. She belongs 'with the lame ducks'. It is not so much her anti-Catholicism as her not being a Hindu in India that makes her a lame duck, added to the fact that she is a woman in this order of the male. Eunice thus writes from the margins – as poet, as Goan, as Catholic and as a woman. Her poetry is characterized by wit, irony and a quiet strength. Her eye for detail is apparent in most of her poems as is her ear for speech patterns. Some of her poems, which are written in a certain Mumbai English of the Christian community, are worth reading again to demonstrate both her control and her sense of the dramatic and the immediate.

This sense of the dramatic – the use of a natural, colloquial language, one that is inflected by emotion and situation – is seen more in the English poetry of Indian women than men. This is what separates Kamala Das, Mamta Kalia, Gauri Deshpande, Eunice de Souza, Suniti Namjoshi (b. 1941) and Tara Patel (b. 1949) from the male poets of their generation. They are also witty in a quiet way more often than the men. Even Melanie Silgado (b. 1956), Charmayne D'Souza (b. 1955), Sujata Bhatt (b. 1956), Imtiaz Dharker (b. 1954), Menka Shivdasani (b. 1961) and others seem to write quite differently from the men.

Tara Patel is quite like the other women poets from the 1960s and 1970s, even though her first collection was published in 1992. Hers is a poetry of loneliness, of failed relationships, of female desires, and of the frustrations and demands of urban life. Her poetry is direct and unequivocal. Written with great control and a sense of rhythm, the poems seem to traverse the terrain of her angst relentlessly. On the other hand, Suniti Namjoshi, who decided to stay on in the West after going there for training and research, is a writer with an agenda. A feminist and a lesbian writer, she has an impressive oeuvre of poetry and fables to her credit. While the fable seems to be her favourite genre, Suniti Namjoshi's poetry too allows her to articulate her political positions – her writings display her involvement with issues of gender, sexuality, culture and human rights. Again, like the other Indian English women poets, Suniti Namjoshi is witty, quirky and satiric. Someone who had to move out of India to find her context, Suniti Namjoshi weaves together her lesbianism and her cultural heritage and sees cultural sanction for the subversion of received texts.

Melanie Silgado too decided to stay on in England after going there to do a course at the London College of Printing. A Goan Catholic, like Eunice de Souza who incidentally was her teacher at college in Mumbai, Melanie Silgado

has often been seen as the more compassionate of the two towards one of the major subject matters of their poetry – their community. However, there is greater violence in her poetry, even more directness: ‘The year you died / I inherited a mind’ (‘For Father on the Shelf’).⁸ Her irony is sharp, almost corrosive. Silgardo’s poetry, like Eunice de Souza’s, takes one to a different margin of Indian experience.

Sujata Bhatt is another diasporic poet (born in Gujarat, she went with her family to the US, and is now in Germany), but one who has made an impact on poets in India. Her experiments with language take Indian English poetry to a new frontier. Not only does she give free play to her tongues, allowing all her languages to come together (English, German and a liberal dose of Gujarati), she also allows the scripts to interact with each other. If Adil Jussawalla sneaks in the first letter of the Hindi alphabet, Bhatt dares to go where no man has ever been before! However, it is debatable as to how well her Gujarati insertions in English poetry work. Something that has become apparent to most Indian English writers is that the more they localize English, the more they inflect it with Indian words and images and references, the more exclusive they become, and unless this Indianization is shallow (and therefore not worth much) their work will tend to lose readers, who will find the text as hard to read as any written in a foreign language (and this will happen with Indian readers as well – not every Indian knows more than two or three languages). While it is tempting to say that multilingual poetry should be a part of one’s oeuvre, it is not clear as yet how much Sujata Bhatt will be able to accomplish with it. It must be said that she is a poet who can paint pictures vividly, who can evoke emotions seemingly effortlessly. If she is the poet of loss, and of the ironies of history, she is also the poet of love – writing some wonderfully erotic poems. Sujata Bhatt has also translated from Gujarati as well as from German into English. And she has the final word on writing in English: ‘Which language / has not been the oppressor’s tongue?’ (‘A Different History’).⁹

Imtiaz Dharker, on the other hand, was born in Pakistan and came to India via England and a marriage, and now divides her time between London, Wales and Mumbai. She has also been claimed by Pakistan as one of their own! Some of the themes that Dharker’s poems deal with are the ideas of home, freedom and gender politics. This is part of her exploration of cultural displacement, of geographical and cultural journeys. She explores the position of being a woman in the Islamic tradition, and about the communal conflict that she encountered in India. An exciting poet, one whose collections take her and us on a journey towards the celebration of in-between-ness, Imtiaz Dharker seems to say that the journey is the thing, that one doesn’t have to discover or put down or even

deal with roots. In her poem 'Not a Muslim Burial' the persona wants to be cremated after death and her ashes to be scattered in some foreign country or to be left on a train, travelling for ever between stations. Indian English women poets are certainly going places in their journey away from imprisoning, categorizing nationhood.

A woman poet who is aware of the use of language, of cultural politics, of literary theory, and who writes postmodernist verse of great wit and some insight is Rukmini Bhaya Nair (b. 1952–). Again, she goes further than the men in her adventure with words, her explorations of the limits of language, her wit, her playfulness, and her ability to address the social and the political without losing her sense of poetry, even if the poetry sets out to pursue literary problems. Her poetry has muscle, and she can surprise us as much with the startling image as with the alienating effect of postmodernism that makes you think about the constructed nature of meaning and the architecture of literary works. Menka Shivdasani, on the other hand, seems to play with the form and language of confessional poetry, full of quirky surrealistic imagery, and again a sense of violence is close to the surface. Hers is urban poetry, about the seemingly pointless existence of people in cities.

Some of the newer poets are equally impressive. Anjum Hasan (b. 1972) is a poet from Shillong, in the northeast. Hers is the insider-outsider position, giving us vignettes of life in a town far away from the plains, one in which she is both observer and inhabitant. Priya Sarukkai Chabria's is a fresh but accomplished voice, one that claims its inheritances from all sources and traditions that she has access to. She has a series of poems in the Tamil *akam* tradition. These are love poems, poems that are written in various voices, of women and men in love, but also of friends and observers. Her first published collection also has a selection from poems written for a Bharatanatyam performance. Inspired by Sanskrit poetics, these poems too interact with classical conventions with consummate ease. A poet who explores the pastoral, Priya Sarukkai Chabria shows what a contemporary poet can accomplish with traditional forms.

Mamang Dai (b. 1957), from the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, is another accomplished poet, and her almost romantic poems about her land and its mythology, about love and yearning, along with those of Tamsila Ao (b. 1945), who is a Naga writer and who also writes about the ecology and mythology of her land, give us an insight into a troubled part of India, one which is still struggling with issues of race(s) and nation(s). Ao is also a folklorist and both of them write fiction, with Ao writing about the effects of the armed struggle and state reaction. Their poetry, like that of many others

from northeast India, also gestures to and attempts to recover a precolonial, pre-Christian past.

There are many younger poets writing now and among them are Arundhati Subramaniam (b. 1967), whose poetry is a cosmopolitan encompassing of the world, and Rizio Yohannan Raj (b. 1973), who is a bilingual writer, in English and Malayalam, and an accomplished translator into English, almost in the line of the canonical male poets. Meena Kandaswamy (b. 1984) is a poet from Tamil Nadu who also translates from Tamil. She is an activist dalit writer and writes about her identity as a Tamilian, as a woman and as an outcaste. She is aware of the political uses of language, and this makes her an extremely interesting poet to read, whose poetry exhibits wit and wordplay, one who uses English to talk about the dislocations caused by caste and language.

It can be said that contemporary Indian English poets are discovering a lightness of touch along with a cultural confidence where they can claim ownership to traditions in Indian languages (making them their backyards as much as that of writers in Indian languages) and gesture to form as well as content from across centuries in India (as well as around the world). Also, since the Indian English poets of the 1970s, in their defensive zeal, did the useful work of canonization, contemporary poets all know and have read and can gesture to an earlier generation of Indian English poets. The influence of poets like Ramanujan and Ezekiel, of Das and de Souza can be seen in the language, theme and forms of the poetry of the new generation. Thus the poetic language has gained a certain resonance, and no longer do poets use English for its negative positives – the fact that it does not carry any of the Indian cultural burdens, that English words are what the poets make of them and thus have a fragile ice-like clarity – and this is so because it is no longer true. Indian English has accrued a cultural weight, and poetic references, including formal ones, may not be clear to those who have no access to Indian cultural history.

Pakistani English poetry

Ahmed Ali (1908?–94), the famous novelist, is also credited to be one of Pakistan's pioneering English poets. His collection of poems, *Purple Gold Mountain: Poems from China* (1960), is noted for its unsentimental manner of dealing with loneliness, alienation, nostalgia and loss. Heavily influenced by T. S. Eliot and the Chinese poetry that he was translating, Ali wrote imagistic poetry. A fellow pioneer was Taufiq Rafat (1927–98), who has been called the doyen of Pakistani English poetry and a towering presence in its short history. Poets whose names are taken along with Rafat are Daud Kamal (1935–87),

Alamgir Hashmi (b. 1951) and Kaleem Omar (1937–2009). One must also remember that the modernist Shahid Suhrawardy too moved to Pakistan and continued to write poetry. The first Pakistani anthology of English poets, *First Voices: Six Poets from Pakistan* (1965), included his poetry along with that of Ahmed Ali, Taufiq Rafat, Zulfikar Ghose (b. 1935) – who incidentally is a diasporic writer and doesn't see himself as nationally bound, Shahid Hosain (b. 1934) and Riaz Qadir (b. 1979). A sense of exile and loss permeates most of the poems in this anthology with Taufiq Rafat proving the only exception.

Taufiq Rafat is said to have been a mentor to Khaled Ahmed, Alamgir Hashmi, Tariq Yazdani Malik, Shuja Nawaz (b. 1949; again a diasporic writer but one who has reformed his Pakistani-ness) and Athar Tahir during the 1970s in Lahore, and to have influenced them to develop a distinctive Pakistani idiom to write poetry. Much like other poets from the subcontinent, Rafat, who also translated from Punjabi, tried to resolve the issue of dislocation by trying to forge an idiom that would incorporate his roots even while allowing him to come to terms with the contemporary westernized world of Pakistan. Thus he did not want to take recourse to the Urdu poetry but to make his English poetry refract his (dis)location. According to Tariq Rahman, 'Rafat's achievement as a poet was to incorporate into his poetry Pakistani landscapes and situations and to adapt the English language to express a distinctive Pakistani sensibility.'¹⁰ As Vinay Dharwadkar points out, the early post-independence Pakistani poets flesh out the Pakistani landscape and cultural history, mapping its valleys and rugged mountains, retelling history as part of a new national past – from the Indus Valley to the Moghuls to the British; looking at other migrations that settled their land.¹¹ Theirs is also the poetry of dislocation, of migration, of nostalgia and exploration of identity.

The 1960s and 1970s constituted the golden age of Pakistani English poetry just as it did poetry in Indian English. Oxford University Press published three poetry anthologies, and Taufiq Rafat, Daud Kamal and Maki Kureishi (1927–95) ruled literary gatherings in Lahore, Peshawar and Karachi. This celebration of English in the 1970s was important because the language policies of Pakistan were for promoting Urdu and inimical to English, as the language of the colonizers and an un-Islamic language at that. It is not surprising that the one of the continuing themes across generations of Pakistani English poets is that of Pakistan as a land that has survived invasions over centuries, provided a home to migrants and lived on as a civilization since ancient times – everything shall pass, Pakistan has always been there and always will.

Daud Kamal is seen as a towering figure in Pakistani English poetry. His first collection of poems came out in 1973, after he had published his translation of

Ghalib. He is known for his use of surreal imagery, and for his attempts to forge a poetics based on imagism, the ghazal and the Japanese haiku. He is a poet who looks at the past, which is in fragments, but tries to put together a recognizable Pakistan. His poetry is sensitive, and full of a sense of sadness and outrage; it is about a sense of loss, a yearning for the past, and despair. Daud Kamal's attempt was to be a quintessential Pakistani poet, in idiom and in imagery.

Maki Kureishi, widely credited to be the first woman poet in English in Pakistan, has been seen as a poet who contributes a different perspective to Pakistani English poetry. A Parsi, born in Kolkata, she moved to Karachi with her family in her early teens, before the departure of the British. The family stayed on in Pakistan, in Karachi, which provided the backdrop to her poetry. Influenced by the American confessional poets, she is seen to write on gender issues within the matrix of tensions between tradition and modernity. However, her poetry may also be read in terms of her increasing introversion brought on by her rheumatoid arthritis.

Alamgir Hashmi has an impressive range of poetry and is perhaps the best known of Pakistani English poets. He has been publishing since the 1970s and has a range that cannot be easily matched by other Pakistani poets. At home in an international idiom, Hashmi creates a unique style to decentre himself and his readers. As a poet who has spent long periods outside Pakistan, and as a postcolonial poet writing in English, he can and does refer to other histories than his own, other literary cultures, with great sophistication and wit. His long poem, 'Voyage East', is remarkable for the way in which it claims lands and legacies. The narrator travels across time and space from the Volga and the Caspian Sea to Delhi via Transoxania, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, from the time of Genghis Khan to the height of the Delhi Sultanate. He takes in other journeys and other empires – from the 'original' migration of the Indo-Europeans to Punjab, Alexander's invasion through the Khyber pass, Tamburlaine's campaign against Delhi all the way from Samarkhand, and Babur's move from Kabul, which founded the Mughal Empire. One sees that the Pakistani poet is more at ease with transnationalism than the Indian poet, since their claim is to an international Islamic past.

Among the newer poets, Hima Raza (1975–2003), whose death in an accident silenced a promising voice, experimented with bilingual poems, much like the Indian Sujata Bhatt. She brought together English and Urdu, the two scripts embodying the coming together of different worlds in the life of the poet. One would have expected to find more bilingual poets, with the state patronage of Urdu, and the importance of Punjabi and other languages in local

life. The one such poet of note is the development activist and politician Harris Khalique (b. 1967), a well-known poet in Urdu, who writes in English as well. His English free verse is an escape from the tradition of Urdu literature, especially the structure of the ghazal. He has also tried writing in Punjabi. His forefathers were Kashmiris (Hindus who converted to Islam) and he feels at home in different languages, carrying his various heritages. He sees his poetry as a continuation of his political life, even though a substantial part of his oeuvre consists of love poems, though many of them are directly political in nature. His poems on the Partition of India and the history of conflict that it has unleashed are quite powerful. It should not surprise us that he is now involved deeply in Pakistani politics.

The diasporic poet Moniza Alvi (b. 1954) has made a name for herself in England. Her poetry is more a part of the multicultural ethos of England even if she has written poems about Pakistan, a land she left as a child. It is difficult, though not impossible, to read her along with other Pakistani poets except as a case of even greater postcolonial displacement. The location is even more dramatically different for the Indian diasporic poet Daljit Nagra (b. 1966), who exploits the English available to him in England and brings a new energy and language into poetry.

The task of the postcolonial English poet seems to be one of constructing and mapping one's location, including asserting one's right to one's indigenous literary heritage and making it visibly part of one's repertoire by translating it into English. As we have seen already, Rafat translated from Punjabi. Daud Kamal translated poems from Urdu – by Ghalib and Faiz among others. This need to translate is manifested in other poets as well.

Sri Lankan English poetry

George Keyt (1901–93), better known as a painter, is the first major Sri Lankan poet of note in English by common consent. Yasmine Goonaratne, for one, dismisses earlier poetry as imitative and inferior. Keyt published three collections of poems – *Poems* (1936), *The Darkness Disrobed* (1937) and *Image in Absence* (1937) – and two volumes of translations (1939 and 40), and did not publish poetry after that! Ashley Halpe says that Keyt's was 'Lanka's first authentically modern poetic voice'.¹² In interesting continuities with India, Keyt was influenced by Rabindranath Tagore, whom he met, and Keyt also translated the medieval poetic work *Gita Govinda*, apart from translating Sinhalese folk tales. Thus there seems to be a movement even in Keyt to locate himself in terms of the legacy of the subcontinent, much like Indian English poets of the time.

Sunetha Wickremesinha (1923–41) was Sri Lanka's spiritual poet – writing poems in a slightly old-fashioned diction about spiritual yearning. However, it was after independence in 1948 that Sri Lankan English poetry came into its own with Patrick Fernando (1931–82), Anne Ranasinghe (b. 1925–) Lakdasa Wikramasingha (1941–78), Yasmine Goonaratne (b. 1935) and Jean Arasanayagam (b. 1930) among others. Patrick Fernando published only one collection of poems during his lifetime, *The Return of Ulysses* (1955). According to Nihal Fernando, Patrick Fernando is 'a postcolonial writer who is not particularly concerned with either postcolonial issues or literary styles, but has still succeeded in producing poetry of considerable distinction'.¹³ He did not experiment with language or style. However, even Rajiva Wijesinha, who thinks that poetry of significance began to be written only in the 1980s because the earlier poets were somewhat detached from social realities of the common people, points out that Yasmine Goonaratne's 'tour de force *The Lizard's Cry* ... [is] deliberately based on the Sinhalese messenger poems of the 16th century ... [and] at one point breaks into baila rhythm, the rhythm of the dance form derived from the Portuguese that is now put forward at times as a form of nativised entertainment'.¹⁴ Oh, the ironies of the postcolonial condition. Yasmine Goonaratne also experiments with language, recreating the spoken rhythms of Sri Lankan English. (Yasmine Goonaratne is a diasporic writer now, settled in Australia, but she moved away from poetry to prose fiction in her new land.) Even Lakdasa Wikramasingha is known for his use of Sri Lankan English as much as for his identifiably Sri Lankan poetry, in terms of subject matter and imagery. This is in contrast to Patrick Fernando's classical English diction and deeply Catholic poetry. It can be safely said that for the most part the earlier poets, even if some of them tried to write in a distinctly Sri Lankan English, seemed to be writing elitist, ironical poetry. One must note that Anne Ranasinghe (a German Jew who escaped to England as a child) writes poetry which always has the undercurrent of the memory of the Holocaust, and is as hybrid as you can get. She has also translated from German into English.

Sri Lankan poetry underwent a distinct change after the beginning of ethnic violence in the 1980s. In 'July 1983', Anne Ranasinghe compares the situation in Sri Lanka to that of the Holocaust. Jean Arasanayagam, who had been writing poetry from the 1970s and was seen as part of the earlier group till then, began to write about the ethnic conflicts in the country. Married to a Tamilian, she had already written poems on the Tamil way of life, but the poems are from the point of view of an outsider trying to understand and belong. The ethnic conflict shattered her outsidership, and

Jean Arasanayagam began to write about ethnic violence with an immediacy and involvement not to be seen in her poetry till then. This led to a more intense poetry, where the idiom and the images come from the location of the experience – her Nallur quartet marks the difference in her style and subject matter. She also writes about her own colonial heritage, that of the Burghers, of Dutch descent.

Richard de Zoysa (1958–90) too came to the forefront with his political poetry written during this period. He didn't write very many poems but what we have shows a craftsman, who paid attention to metre and form, even when he was writing about troubled times. The sudden use of Sri Lankan vocabulary in his poetry has the power to surprise one into an understanding of the locale, into appreciating the specificities of the historical situation. On the other hand, Kamala Wijeratne (b. 1939) is a poet whose poetry undergoes a change, like Arasanayagam's but in a different way, after the beginnings of the hostility between the Sinhala majoritarian state and the Tamil minority. She depicts the situation in the country without diluting its horror or violence. However, her poetry is written from the Sinhala Buddhist point of view – her focus is on the sufferings of the Sinhalese majority. The dominant trope is of the suffering mother, the anguished motherland. While she does make gestures to the Tamilians, it is from the Sinhala nationalist position. There is also a harking back to an almost mythical rural time and landscape in her poetry, an escape from the present reality.

Bangladeshi English poetry

Bangladesh has seen intense language conflict, and its creation was because of its assertion of its linguistic culture, its Bengali-ness, as different from that of the then West Pakistan. In the conflict between Urdu and Bengali, English was completely marginalized. The only Bangladeshi English poet of note is Kaiser Haq (b. 1950), though one should not underestimate his classmate Feroz Ahmed-ud-din (b. 1950), whose poems on death and loss of vision in contemporary life emanate from around the Bangladesh war of liberation. Incidentally, Kaiser Haq took up arms during that war as did thousands around the country (though he has written only one poem, 'Bangladesh '71', on the war). Since Haq has written usually in the company of one, he has had no immediate Bangladeshi English poetry to react to or work with. His literary forebears and creative community are English and Indian (like Indian poets of his generation, he seems quite indebted to Nissim Ezekiel, like whom he has written some poems in Bangladeshi English), and Bengali writers of his

generation from Bangladesh. The two most important themes in his poetry are poetry itself and love. A number of his poems are written in response to the worlds created by other writers, notably Beckett. He himself said in an early poem in 1978 that his soul was ‘with Shakespeare’ while his sensibility was ‘Like Prufrock’s tie pin’ (‘Brown, Powerless’). Nevertheless, Haq’s is a Bangladeshi voice – one can see it in his imagery (monsoon is always a presence), even if it is urban, and sometimes in his content. What one sees in Haq is that, like other English poets from the subcontinent, he too strives to construct his location, but unlike most of them his location is literary – it is made up of his reading, his influences. His landscape may be desolate, but there is escape in writing and in love. A poet with a long writing career, Haq has an impressive range of poetry including the erotic. The nine poems in the slim volume, *Black Orchid* (1996), dedicated to the votaries of Kama and Rati (the Hindu God of love and his consort), are committed to the evocation of pleasure and sexuality. One can see that in this too, Haq is claiming more than an Islamic past, a more composite cultural past and present. Haq is also a translator of note, having translated Shamsur Alam’s poetry written in Bengali and Tagore’s novel *Chaturanga* into English.

English poetry from Nepal and Bhutan

Laxmi Prasad Devkota (1909–59) was the foremost Nepali poet, who wrote in both Nepali and English. He wrote a sequence of sonnets in English on Mahatma Gandhi after his assassination. He also translated a number of his contemporary Nepali writers, such as Lekh Nath Poudel, Balakrishna Sama and Kedar Man Vyathit, into English. It is important to note that Nepal wasn’t colonized by the British, and English entered the curriculum only in 1959, yet its foremost poet from first half of the twentieth century resorted to writing in English and translating into it, in order to communicate with the rest of the subcontinent. Abhi Subedi (b. 1945) is another distinguished poet and translator, as well as a playwright in English. Nepal has a growing community of English poets, some of whom are expatriates who have stayed on and identify with the country. A startling voice is that of the diasporic writer, Satis Shroff (b. 1950), who lives in Germany and writes political poetry about the situation in Nepal in English, and also writes in German. Needless to add, he translates Nepali poetry into English. While Bhutanese poetry in English is still in the domain of translation and the important task of recording folklore, Dorji Penjore (1972) has begun to make a name for himself as a poet.

South Asian poetry: prognosis

Thanks to the internet, there is new life for South Asian English poetry. While books cannot cross borders, the internet can. So the impossibility of finding publishers for poetry has actually resulted in a boom, owing to the availability of poetry on the web. This may mean a larger cross-fertilization, a making of a genuine South Asian poetry; but this may also lead to a more cosmopolitan poetry. The impact of violence and dislocations is still being felt in South Asian poetry, mainly because it is still a recurring and lived reality, and will be so for some time to come. Hence South Asian poetry will continue to have affinities with earlier subcontinental poetry. The question of language is still to be settled, though it always looks as if it is a dead horse. Poets are still contesting the terrain of the nation even if they are not constructing a larger one; quite a few are still constructing their cultural locations, a construction brought on by their English writing, and the issues of community identity are still important.

Notes

1. While there are many opinions about this, the truth is that South Asian Englishes have rarely been exploited by writers (and this includes novelists) since no South Asian English writer feels comfortable in what is seen as incorrect English. South Asian Englishes have been defined or studied in terms of their deviations from Standard British English, and the fact is that the differences in pronunciation and grammar are seen by English-educated South Asians as wrong English. What is accepted is a certain amount of local slang and code-mixing. Thus poems in South Asian Englishes are usually in the form of dramatic monologues – they represent other people's speech patterns, not those of the poets.
2. Buddhadeva Bose, 'Indian poetry in English', in Stephen Spender and Donald Hall (eds.), *The Concise Encyclopaedia of English and American Poets and Poetry* (London: Hutchinson, 1963), pp. 177–8.
3. P. Lal, *Modern Indian Poetry in English: An Anthology and a Credo* (Kolkata: Writers' Workshop, 1969).
4. Balachandra Nemade, 'Arun Kolatkar and bilingual poetry', in G. S. Amur *et al.* (eds.), *Indian Readings in Commonwealth Literature* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1985), p. 84.
5. Bruce King, *Modern Indian Poetry in English: Revised Edition* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 296.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 343.
7. Saleem Peerradina (ed.), *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English: An Assessment and Selection* (Delhi: Orient Paperback, 1972), p. 89.
8. Santan Rodrigues, Melanie Silgado and Raul D'Gama Rose, *Three Poets* (Mumbai: Newground, 1978), quoted from Eunice de Souza (ed.), *Nine Indian Women Poets: An Anthology* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 31.
9. *Brunizem* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1988), p. 37.

10. Tariq Rahman, 'Taufiq Rafat', in Fakrul Alam (ed.), *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 323: *South Asian Writers in English* (Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006), p. 283.
11. Vinay Dharwadker, 'Poetry of the Indian subcontinent', in Neil Roberts (ed.), *A Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 275–6.
12. Ashley Halpe, 'George Keyt: an introduction', in Neloufer de Mel Kelaniya (ed.), *Essays on Sri Lankan Poetry in English* (Kelaniya: English Association of Sri Lanka, 1995), p. 31.
13. Nihal Fernando, 'Sri Lankan poetry in English', in Jaina C. Sanga (ed.), *South Asian Literature in English: An Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), p. 309.
14. Rajiva Wijesinha, *Breaking Bounds: Essays on Sri Lankan Writing in English* (Sabaragamuwa University Press, 1998), p. 4.

Postcolonial writing in India

ANANYA JAHANARA KABIR

Indian middle-man (to Author): Sir, if we do not identify your composition a novel, how then do we itemise it? Sir, the rank and file is entitled to know.

Author (to Indian middle-man): Sir, I identify it as a *gesture*. Sir, the rank and file is entitled to know.

Indian middle-man (to Author): Sir, there is no immediate demand for *gestures*. There is immediate demand for novels. Sir, we are literary agents not free agents.

Author (to Indian middle-man): Sir, I identify it a novel. Sir, itemise it accordingly.¹

The above exchange, which constitutes one of several frontispieces that frame G. V. Desani's maverick and freewheeling novel of 1949, offers a provocative opening for this essay.² Writing two years after the independence of India, Desani makes his 'author' and his initially blustering stance define the very essence of postcolonial necessity. Now is the time of immense social and cultural change, a moment pregnant with opportunity, which demands transformation of the mere fact of the novel into something far more meaningful: the 'gesture'. And yet this grandiloquence is rapidly brought down to earth by the brute realities of the market, which relentlessly declares its own chain of demand and supply. The author's quick turnaround, while ridiculous, is touchingly redeemed by the pragmatism that propels it. Moreover, it is an '*Indian middle-man*' who, in the name of the ordinary 'rank and file', imposes on the author these mundane yet unavoidable pressures. As the author, too, seeks initial recourse to the same 'rank and file', we note the unmistakable delineation of an indigenous, English-speaking, English-reading, postcolonial public sphere: this is a reading public that demands novels (not gestures) in English; it is indeed the rank and file, a version of the subaltern that may or may not speak, but that certainly wants to read;³ and its tastes are monitored by a figure whose Indian-ness Desani presents through the reduction of the highbrow career of the literary agent to the machinations of the middle-man. Yet the middle-man and the hapless yet resourceful author redefine, rather than reject, the political possibilities of postcolonial writing. Pragmatic these may be to the point of absurdity; but they are convincingly robust – as robust as the Indian English accents evident in the repetition of 'rank and file', in the

bombastic syntax punctuated with bureaucratese, in the over-obsequious recurrence of 'sir', and in the punning juxtaposition of 'literary agent' and 'free agent'.

Using Desani's *All about H. Hatterr* as a starting point for this essay on Indian postcolonial writing might appear additionally provocative given that Desani was born in Kenya, grew up in that part of British India now in Pakistan, spent his adulthood intermittently in Britain, and currently lives in the United States of America.⁴ This is a life determined, first, by the transnational trajectories of the British Empire at its apogee and, later, by the immense upheavals set into motion by the forces of decolonization that, for British India, included the historical fact of the Partition of 1947. The complex relationship between Desani and 'India', triangulated by the shadow of the British Empire, is, however, deeply representative of the Indian postcolonial author's relationship to the nation and its various antecedents, not least of all as it is sedimented in that author's choice of the English language and the form of the novel for creative self-expression. Straddling multiple porous boundaries – between colonial and postcolonial, India and Pakistan, India and the West, estrangement and belonging, mimicry and sly civility, and, finally, the politics of writing a novel about the novel and the irresponsibility of comedy – *All about H. Hatterr* encapsulates the issues and provocations inherent in that proliferating body of writing that we would seek to enfold under the title of this essay. This perspective allows it to gesture towards those genres that its own choice of form prevents it from representing, but whose spirit it might claim to capture: poetry, with its penchant for expressing a consciousness far more individualistic than that which prose writing would proclaim to express; non-fictional writing, including the autobiography, with its claims to serious and factual discourse about the nation undercut constantly by the shaping 'I'; academic writing, most spectacularly historiography and cultural criticism, that declares new modes of critical self-assessment for the postcolonial subject; and, of course, other novels, that would perhaps share less of this one's transparent and self-proclaimed nonchalance, but would proffer no less valid modes of surveying the postcolonial terrain. Underlying these diverse genres are the same exigencies of writing in, and about, a nation that has emerged out of a 'tryst with destiny',⁵ and summarized in the implicit question: what is the relationship between writing and the 'gesture', and who, or what, ultimately controls that relationship?

Inspired by the spirit of Desani's serious play, this chapter will chart its own course through these genres of postcolonial, Indian, literary expression. In the interest of manageability, I have taken this rubric to signal 'postcolonial

writing *in English* in India', although I shall consider writing in English as emerging in and through dialogue with what are variously termed India's 'regional', 'vernacular' or *bhasha* languages,⁶ several with modern literary histories that narrowly predate the established presence of English writing in India. This dialogue includes non-literary cultural production in these languages – most obviously the popular Hindi film industry ('Bollywood'), but also regional film industries as well as music, dance and theatre traditions of 'folk', 'classical' and regional varieties.⁷ To understand postcolonial English writing in India against this vibrant intertextuality minimizes the tendency, now rendered infamous by Salman Rushdie,⁸ to privilege it above writing in the *bhasha* languages, and assess it, instead, as one amidst a range of demotic modes of cultural production within a public culture characterized by fierce 'tensions and contradictions ... contestation and mutual cannibalisation'.⁹ In this rather non-Habermasian public sphere, contemporary writing in English has increasingly to jockey for demand in ways as indecorous as that presaged by Desani's imagined exchange between the middle-man and the author, and the writing that results is by no means uniformly that which will attract the attention or approbation of a Booker Prize panel. Mira Nair's film, *Monsoon Wedding* (Mira Nair, 2002) acknowledges the Booker Prize-winning celebrity author as a role model for young women that contemporary middle-class parents approve of; yet the fact that this acknowledgement is made within a cinematic representation which itself stands at an angle to Bollywood's hegemony makes it, at best, a tongue-in-cheek commentary on the cult of the postcolonial anglophone author. Postcolonial Indian writing in English is thus preferably assessed and enjoyed as one of India's several high-profile 'traditions', each of which occupies a particular niche within the nation's sociocultural map, and whose production and consumption is defined by cross-cutting affiliations of region, location and, most importantly, of class and socio-economic privilege.

Throughout this chapter, then, I shall consider postcolonial literary history as not merely a history of literature, or even a history inflected by considerations of literary production, but as a *history through literature*. What might such a history be? Keeping this question in the foreground enables us to view the history of Indian modernity, as it moves from the colonial past to the postcolonial present, through the lens of literary production in that much-contested agent of Indian modernity – the English language itself. I shall examine postcolonial writing *in* India by considering what such writing looks like in the space that is India, while, with its best-known authors currently living outside that space, it is shaped by 'the centrifugal force of diaspora,

exile and self-exile'.¹⁰ Finally, I shall attempt as full a mobilization of the term 'writing' as possible, with this chapter covering not only the novel, but also poetry, non-fiction and newer forms of 'writing' that are emergent today. My usage of the term 'postcolonial' must also be clarified: alongside its adherence to the general definition offered in this volume's Introduction, there is also a strongly proleptic quality to the 'postcolonial' as it operates in India: the 'postcolonial' is anticipated by writers particularly from the 1930s onwards, so that, looking back, writing from these years retrospectively forms the very threshold of decolonization. As the idea of 'Indianness' and the nation's achievement of sovereign status perform as strong identity markers, the 'postcolonial' as a temporal marker does operate here in an analytically informative and constitutive manner. Nevertheless, the chapter disaggregates systematically the term 'postcolonial' through an analytical overview of writing in English, in India, from the 1930s onwards. Firstly, it discusses the historical and material conditions during the formative centuries of colonialism that led to the traits and predilections discernible in postcolonial literary production. Secondly, it meshes broad historical developments with the formal preferences and shifts in Indian literary use of English. Finally, it considers how writing both supports and critiques hegemonic tendencies in the postcolonial nation. A concluding section assesses this writing through a simultaneous mobilization of the aesthetic and deconstructive critical impulses.

Before embarking, a word of clarification about 'India': 'the idea of India' is a modern creation that emerged through the agonistic relationship between colonial and anti-colonial forces, and that continued to be consolidated through postcolonial nationalism.¹¹ The Indian nation's sanctity and wholeness had to be constantly asserted, furthermore, because of its traumatic emergence through the twin processes of independence and Partition. In antagonism with the 'Islamic' nation of Pakistan, India was constructed as a 'secular', pluralist state, whose demographic Hindu majority would be able to eschew majoritarianism through an ingrown 'tolerance' of minorities.¹² From the 1990s, the notion of 'India' became openly contested as an older consensus surrounding its 'secular' nature gave way to a more aggressive assertion of Hindutva ('Hindu-ness') as the nation's ruling principle. Inasmuch as 'secularism' has been associated with an elite consciousness whose pre-eminent marker is fluency in English, the prominence of Hindu nationalist forces also signals the fracturing of this older elitism by the emergence of new grassroots power structures through the democratic process, which, ironically, has been robust enough *not* to be able to prevent or stamp out their growth. It is this peculiar strength of postcolonial Indian democracy that has ensured the space for

several different voices, including those that a liberal humanist position may not want to hear.¹³ The same pugnacious multiplicity has made possible the longevity and breadth of a postcolonial Indian literary tradition in English, and enabled its accommodation against a rich admixture of other traditions of cultural expression and production. Thus, although philosophically it is difficult to admit of a partitioning of literatures and cultures, it must pragmatically be acknowledged that, since 1947's creation of two separate nations, India and Pakistan, and, since 1971, the existence of Bangladesh, the territory of once undivided British India cannot be historically understood in postcolonial modernity except through the frame of the nation state (even if it is to disavow its necessity). Hence in this chapter, I avoid speaking of 'South Asian' postcolonial literary traditions when more often than not 'India' will be the clear referent, as the benevolent urge towards historical synecopation can devolve into a distracting amnesia with its own hegemonies and misrepresentations.

Colonial preconditions

'Oh yes,' he exclaimed, 'give me any book; all I want is a book.' The gentleman at last hit upon the expedient of cutting up an old *Quarterly Review* and distributing the articles among them.¹⁴

As a party of British gentlemen travelled down the Ganges to Calcutta by steamboat, hordes of 'native boys' clambered up the sides of their vessel, clamouring for English books: so recounted colonial administrator and writer Charles Trevelyan, in that highly influential tract I cite from above. Several points about this unexpected encounter and its somewhat surreal resolution (the dismemberment and redistribution of an issue of the venerable *Quarterly Review*) call for attention. Firstly, this parable about the power of the written word finds its way into another, equally powerful written text, but, paradoxically, by way of hearsay; on that steamboat, Trevelyan was not himself present. Secondly, the native thirst for knowledge is momentarily quenched by the disquieting act of cutting up an existent book and randomly reassigning its parts amongst this neophyte readership. Thus, although this episode has been used to frame discussion on the power of colonial translation,¹⁵ I consider it more illustrative of the unpredictable consequences of colonial desire to educate the native of India in, and through, English. Meaning is wrenched from its context, mutilated and recontextualized; this act responds to but by no means is shown as satisfying the colonized subject's indiscriminating and voracious longing for 'a book'.¹⁶ It is this all-consuming longing operating at the

interface of unequal power relations, and circulating through the matrices of a reappropriated textuality striated with the still-palpable effect of the oral, that I wish to posit as the overarching colonial precondition for postcolonial Indian writing in English. British colonial rule in India left its mark visibly, and aurally, in English's insinuation into the affective and pragmatic life of Indians. In the process, the language has been creatively transformed and reclaimed, Indianized and postcolonized. This two-way relationship is exemplified in the diffusion of 'English literature' in colonial India, and in postcolonial India's contribution to 'English literature'.

In 1835, Lord Bentinck's Education Act declared English as the official language and medium of education in India; in 1960, India's Sahitya Akademi declared English as an official Indian language.¹⁷ This chiasmus of colonial and postcolonial diktats brackets little over a century: English could become domesticated in India within this astonishingly brief period only because language and literature worked together through the materiality of the 'book' to consolidate the lineaments of colonial power. Likewise, they were seized together by the colonial subject for purposes of both self-fashioning and resistance, in a manner early glimpsed by the spectacle of Trevelyan's 'native boys' with their mangled *Quarterly Review*. Powering this development of English into a 'mark of status through a complex production of the colonial subject within multiple discourses and on multiple sites' is the very idea of 'literature', periodized and evaluated, as desirable and necessary to modern society.¹⁸ The story of the debate between two factions in early British colonial administration – the Orientalists, who wished to invigorate learning in India through supporting the indigenous linguistic traditions of Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit, and the Anglicists, who wished to do away with those declaredly antiquated traditions and propagate education in English instead – is now well known,¹⁹ together with both parties' agreement on the fundamental backwardness of Indian society and on liberal education, regardless of the language of instruction, as being the remedy.²⁰ That this very chapter is being written today, and in English, is a direct result of the Anglicists having won that debate. Their cause was furthered by the indefatigability of Charles Trevelyan and the eloquence of his brother-in-law, Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay, whose 'Minute on Indian Education' has become *the* emblematic document of the consolidation of colonial power in India through the mobilization of English. Its diffusion, as Macaulay infamously envisioned, would form 'a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect'.²¹ It was not merely language that was to effect this profound

change; its vehicle and its calculable consequence was the printed book that contained 'literature'.

As is clear in Macaulay's 'Minute', English was never considered in the abstract; it was always materially manifest in the written text as repository of knowledge, above all that of the literary kind. The relative value of cultures that the 'Minute' adjudged when it declared 'a single shelf of a good English library... worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia', pivoted on an imagination that saw cultures as congealed in literary production, literary production as contained in books, and books as filling shelves in libraries.²² Furthermore, the pedagogic models proffered by Macaulay were none other than Milton and Shakespeare, luminaries who symbolized the leverage of English culture into the Renaissance through exposure to 'the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans'; for, as Macaulay reasoned, 'what the Greek and Latin were to the contemporaries of More and Ascham, our tongue is to the people of India'.²³ Just as Europe had moved from the medieval period into modernity through the beneficial influence of the Classics – an influence calibrated through an evolving historiography of English literary production – so too would India's current medieval darkness move into its own modernity through native exposure to the compendium of knowledge and felicity represented in English literature.²⁴ Even as the pedagogic formalization of English literature was consolidated in the colonial domain, therefore, its value as equivalent to the Classics in the colony went hand-in-hand with the valorization of the modern. On the one hand, 'the literature of England is now more valuable than that of classical antiquity', while on the other, Macaulay 'doubt[ed] whether the Sanscrit literature be as valuable as that of our Saxon and Norman progenitors'.²⁵ The 'Minute' reveals this double valorization as born out of a delicate balancing act between the literary traces of England's own medieval past (seen as promising, but rough-hewn), the English literature that the natives were to be exposed to (only that of the Renaissance onwards), and the existence of copious quantities of 'native literature' that, as British Orientalists were rapidly realizing, had been handed down from antiquity in written as well as oral forms. The official entry of English literature into Indian pedagogy, then, was embedded in a matrix of relations with other literatures, other languages and other knowledge economies, within which the oral, the written, and the transmitted existed in myriad ways.

Macaulay's and Trevelyan's insistence on books, journals, shelves and libraries encodes the knowledge economy that had emerged through Enlightenment Europe. Within this episteme and the archive that it generated, English literature became a prominent component. Its relationship to the

imperial archive was fashioned out of the need to distinguish colonial from pre-existent forms of literary production within India, and its very utility as a yardstick tightened that relationship further.²⁶ In this context, crucial were those aesthetic and moral qualities seen as innate to a literature both modernized and with pedigree. As Partha Chatterjee comments, citing Gauri Viswanathan's influential characterization of literature as a 'mask of conquest', 'an entire academic discipline was invented for the teaching of English literature as the formative spiritual influence on a colonized elite'.²⁷ Chatterjee's invocation of the 'spiritual' foregrounds how, paradoxically, intrinsic to colonial modernization was the imagined catalysis of spiritual and moral uplift through the dissemination of English literature. Expectedly, there were complications inherent in the colonial endeavour to induce modernity through the 'linguistic re-inscription of the native world'.²⁸ While the value accorded to English literature effectively marked out the modernity of England and the concomitant non-modernity of India, the labours of the Orientalists, particularly the pioneering work of William Jones, had made evident the varied and layered literary traditions indigenous to India, of considerable antiquity, and enmeshed with values and practices that betokened a pre-secular interpenetration of the sacred, the political and the everyday. These 'repertoires' circulated not merely orally but also through a plethora of scripts descended from both Sanskritic and Perso-Arabic prototypes.²⁹ The evidence of a complex repertoire of scripts meant that colonialism's pedagogic machine could neither erase completely the material presence of Indian languages (as with lusophone and hispanophone colonization of the Americas) nor mobilize fully value-laden binaries between orality and writtenness (as in sub-Saharan Africa). Instead, British administrators resolved these contradictions by explicating India as a space of a literate, even learned antiquity on the one hand, but contemporary degradation, decay and despotism on the other. English, functioning in Chatterjee's words as the 'classical language of Bengal',³⁰ the first province to undergo thorough modernization through liberal arts pedagogy, was to lift the native out of his stupor. But the Orientalist fascination with and philological codification of India's own 'classical languages' pervaded that mission long after Orientalists had ostensibly conceded defeat to Anglicist goals.

What was to cast the longest shadow, however, was the introduction of the category of the 'vernacular' that emerged as new power relationships were set up between knowledge of, and facility in, English and those languages concurrently being spoken in India. If Sanskrit and Persian had the sheen of antiquity, what was one to make of languages such as Bengali, Marathi, Tamil and, most confusing to the British, the Hindi-Urdu-Hindustani linguistic

continuum?³¹ ‘On the one hand,’ therefore, ‘the native languages were placed in a relation of direct subordination vis-à-vis English. On the other, the currency of colonial translation made it appear as though, in principle, the English and vernacular publics could be endowed with symmetrical expressive and cognitive repertoires . . . In such a situation, the articulation of hegemony was bound to depend on a combination of skills in English and the vernacular.’³² Indeed, the very designation of these contemporary Indian languages as ‘vernacular’ brought them into this layered relationship with English. These tensions intensified and ramified with the proliferation of printing presses and the publishing industry in the colony; ‘the entry of English and print through the project of colonial education redefined the nature of literate and literary communities in South Asia . . . modern normative categories introduced via colonial encounters redefined and displaced existing cultural and cognitive hierarchies, besides generating new indigenised forms of regarding and representing the social and natural worlds.’³³ Missionary activity and East India Company demand had in fact led to the creation of typefaces for regional languages as early as the 1800s, well before the Department of Public Instruction undertook to propagate learning in English following Bentinck’s Education Act of 1835.³⁴ During the nineteenth century, different regional languages across British India steadily developed print cultures, carving out a complex map of public spheres poised at a tangent to that created by the concomitant spread of English.³⁵ If, as Macaulay had hoped, an elite class was created through the imposition of English in India, this class very seldom cut ties with other affective relationships embodied in the subject’s negotiation of these various print cultures and the worlds they represented. Thoroughly complicating Benedict Anderson’s influential linkage of national feeling with print capitalism, the diverse print cultures of British India created overlapping public spheres that were always already fractured by the affective and epistemic competition between English and other linguistic and cultural traditions, and between the printed word and vernacular oralities.³⁶

While exploring the genealogy of ‘Bazaar art’, a lurid, mass-produced genre of Indian visual culture, Kajri Jain provides a model of ‘vernacularizing capitalism’ that shatters assumptions of a ‘singular’ culture of capitalism and ‘the liberal subjects (bourgeois and proletarian)’ it creates.³⁷ Drawing attention to, first, ‘the processes by which heterogeneous constituencies of people are brought into networks of centralized commodity manufacture, circulation and consumption’ and, second, ‘the distinctive character that these capitalist networks take on through being forged in articulation with existing economic, political and social formations’, she argues how ‘the incorporation

of vernacular constituencies into a regnant capitalism enmeshed with bourgeois-modernist ideology' predicates 'the protean adaptations of the axiomatics of capital to varying local circumstances, or, in other words, the proliferation of multiple cultures of capitalism'.³⁸ This rebuttal of the Andersonian thesis – 'in its image-based avatar, print capitalism, like other forms of commodity manufacture, is not just about one imagined community called the nation; it can also be about many enacted communities and their intravernacular interactions' – recuperates the fraught term, 'vernacular', to posit the 'bazaar as an intravernacular pan-Indian commercial arena, both configuring and configured by the colonial economy and yet occupying a distinct place within it'.³⁹ The bazaar was the most fecund site for imagining both resistance to the colonial order and the native's disorderliness; Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* exemplifies this fascination that, as Ruskin Bond's *The Room on the Roof* attests, persists in postcolonial Indian writing; Chatterjee takes recourse to it when he reconstructs how, as 'modern power and the scientific practices of the disciplines spilled over their colonial embankments to proliferate in the native quarters . . . the intellectual project of modernity found new sustenance in those densely populated parts'.⁴⁰ Jain's emphasis on the bazaar's economies of vernacular capitalism, illustrative of Chatterjee's 'completely new forms' of colonial modernity, enables us to scrutinize anew the relationship between the worlds of English and the native 'vernaculars'. The printed mise-en-page 'was becoming a space where bureaucratic and commercial modernity could coexist with other ritual practices',⁴¹ but the typeface must also be seen as a vector of modernity that ruptured older modes of cultural valorization, most obviously calligraphy, associated with sacrality and monumentality. How did these multiple coexistences penetrate the page printed in English, and how were its hegemonic messages impacted by the page printed in Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi or Hindi, to name just a few languages for which scripts were available by the mid 1900s?

The coalescing of new, intensely contested collective identities around script communities, and their escalating importance within the anti-colonial movement by mid-century, furnishes one set of responses to these complex questions. In particular, the development of an Urdu-Persian typeface moved 'Nastaliq', that most beautiful and intimate of Persian-derived scripts reserved for poetic texts, into the world of printed material, including newspapers and pamphlets. Standardized and mechanically reproduced, the erstwhile 'bride of all scripts' circulated freely through newly created public spheres, helping transform existing norms of 'linguistic diversity, multilingualism and diglossia', converting 'linguistic repertoires' into 'languages'.⁴² Standardization led

to the complex separation of Hindi and Urdu, denoted by mutually intelligible scripts with starkly contrasting visual aspects. Script thereby became a ‘multi-congruent’ symbol of separate cultural and religious identity, a process that culminated in the Partition of India.⁴³ The ‘sharp dichotomy between the spoken words of the many and the written scripts of the few’⁴⁴ was also the dichotomy between the slippage between registers, dialects and accents that continued in the oral sphere, and the new constrictions propagated through print. Typeface accrued connotations of exhilarating modernity, while language’s oral forms retained vestiges of a premodern sacrality that contributed to the communitarian power of oral performativity,⁴⁵ but remained coloured by imperial attitudes towards the ‘vernacular’ and its associations of infancy and underdevelopment with oral forms of language. These complications to the ‘transition from the identity of language to the language of identity’ were most pronounced wherever ‘people continued to speak the same colloquial language in their daily interactions while the written forms were evolved to assume distinctively different appearances’.⁴⁶ Throughout British India, script in conjunction with particular vernacular languages accrued differently charged affective histories: while across north India, three scripts, Persian, Nagari and Gurmukhi, competed for the best fit to a slippery Urdu–Hindi–Punjabi oral continuum, Bengali and Tamil each solicited intense emotive responses from their native speakers through the medium of print, generating anti-colonial resistance through recourse to atavistic, even chauvinistic attachments.⁴⁷ As sacralities associated with language in oral and written forms were displaced and reassembled, English as a language without a premodern past in India but with an equally charged modern present, presented an interlinked but different set of expressive possibilities. To understand these, we need to unravel the relationship between language, form and genre; and it is to this issue that I will now turn.

Postcolonial India through the lens of form

‘...for the first thing we will do when we accept the machine will be to introduce the machine which clears dung without anyone having to handle it – the flush system. Then the sweeper can be free from the stigma of untouchability and assume the dignity of status that is their right as useful members of a casteless and classless society.’

‘In fact’, mocked Bashir, ‘greater efficiency, better salesmanship, more mass-production, standardisation, dictatorship of the sweepers, Marxian materialism and all that!’

‘Yes, yes, all that, but no catch words and cheap phrases. The change will be organic and not mechanical.’⁴⁸

Mulk Raj Anand’s classic novel of 1935 ‘describes’, in the prefatory words of E. M. Forster, ‘a day in the life of a sweeper in an Indian city with every realistic circumstance’.⁴⁹ Realism here works together with a strongly Gandhian message to communicate the need for internal change in a society anticipating decolonization and independence. But it is not merely the realist mode of narration that is mobilized in a novel that unflinchingly details the sordidness and misery of the sweeper Bakha’s life: it is also the English language and the novel form itself. Anand reveals the minutiae of the ‘untouchable’s’ lot to shock society out of its caste-based stupor while presenting, through Bakha’s own aspirations and the solution proposed at the end of the novel, modernity as that society’s redemption and cure.⁵⁰ Thus Gandhian radicalism *in conjunction with* the forces of modernity suffuses Bakha, and the novel, with optimism. ‘Bakha returns to his father and his wretched bed, thinking now of the Mahatma, now of the Machine’, and despite the unchanging rhythm of ‘his Indian day’ and the one that will follow, ‘a change is at hand’.⁵¹ Despite the faint absurdity of pinning such high hopes on a water-closet, there are no bathetic undertones colouring Anand’s presentation of the modernist poet who opines thus on the benefits of sanitation. The sarcastic catalogue of his less optimistic interlocutor is soundly rebuffed by the poet’s investment in the utopian possibility of organic change being effected through the acceptance of ‘the Machine’. The world that Anand wants to write into being is, similarly, one in which the realist novel in English would ‘organically’ mesh with the urge to eradicate hidebound and deeply iniquitous traditions that impede India’s progress towards the self-governance and modernity commensurate with the quest for independence.

The water-closet reappears half a century later in another landmark of Indian prose fiction: Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*. As the boy Saleem Sinai hides in the laundry-basket in the family bathroom, he inadvertently spies his mother Amina lowering her ‘dark mango’ of a rump onto the commode to answer a more trivial necessity than the call of her resurfaced lover, Nadir Khan.⁵² The gargantuan sneeze that emanates from Saleem at that moment reveals his presence to his mother and results in a colossal box on the ear, which instantaneously connects him to all the other ‘midnight’s children’ born roughly during the same moment as him: midnight, 15 August 1947. From one water-closet to another, clearly a lot had changed. As I demonstrated above, the flush system, which brings together the mechanising of waste-disposal

with the privacy of a modern, Western-style bathroom, is metonymically related to Anand's realist prose and progressive socialist agenda. Likewise, the invasion of Amina's privacy by her son despite the guarantees to that privacy offered by the modern bathroom, and, indeed, his ingenious infiltration of the bathroom's efficient organization (as demonstrated by his conversion of washing chest to sanctuary), are metonymically related to the magic realist rupturing of realism's certainties. The centrality of the 'Machine' to the narrative progression of these seminal Indian English novels thus offers us a glimpse into how each novel sits at a particular angle to the workings of modernity. This evolving relationship to modernity is further reflected in the divergences between Anand's and Rushdie's respective prose styles. The measured, unassuming accents of Anand's prose, supplemented by the inevitable glossary to explicate those terms that cannot be done away with, has yielded to Rushdie's stupefying and eclectic use of English, Indian English and popular Hindi words and expressions. The spare rendering of a day in the life of Bakha has been replaced by the 'huge baggy monster' of the 'new' Indian novel,⁵³ that begins with the departure of the protagonist's grandfather from Kashmir just in time for him to experience first hand that turning point of the anti-colonial struggle, the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh, and ends with Saleem poised on the brink of oblivion in 1980s India. But most importantly, in place of Anand's adherence to realism, sober and responsible, we are overwhelmed by the irreverence of Rushdie's freewheeling magic realism.

Yet some things remain constant. Both novels are optimistic, and while Rushdie's imagination admits to a complexity of emotion that layers optimism and pessimism, celebration and mourning, he shares with Anand an understanding of modernity's possibilities. Optimism, despite Rushdie's retrospective diagnosis of the anti-colonial movement as suffering from 'the optimism disease', is not weeded out of *Midnight's Children*: it is relocated from Bakha's 'wretched bed' to the postcolonial metropolis and from Gandhian radicalism to Nehru's vision of a pluralist India.⁵⁴ The formal equivalent of this commitment to the project of modernity is the continuing reliance on the novel form, in English, to express the belief that the imagination can bring about 'newness' in the now postcolonial world.⁵⁵ And despite (or because of) *Midnight's Children* proving to be a universally acknowledged turning point in Indian writing in English, it did not dislodge the novel from the prime position it has occupied in Indian writing ever since the mid nineteenth century. It is true that this position has been neither uncontested nor comfortably occupied. While, in Meenakshi Mukherjee's words, 'the sudden profusion, liveliness and visibility

of the new Indian fiction in English since the 1980s can be traced back to the success of [this] seminal novel', Amit Chaudhuri cautions:

after the publication of *Midnight's Children* and the rise of the Indian novel in English, Indian fiction in English has not only come to seem central to the idea of Indian literature in the minds of both the popular media and the academic intelligentsia, but has also edged out from everyday consciousness those indigenous languages and their modern traditions that seemed so important a few decades ago, and were so crucial to the evolution of modern Indian identity or identities. Neglected, too, is the narrative of how the poets and writers in English who preceded Rushdie practiced their craft when conditions at home and abroad were, in several senses, inimical to the enterprise they were involved in.⁵⁶

Notwithstanding these caveats, the novel remains a genre of Western letters that Indians have loved to read, write and indigenize ever since the Anglicists won the education war. Although colonial Indians preferred fiction in so-called 'bad' taste to the elevations of 'classic' novels,⁵⁷ they familiarized themselves thereby with an expressive practice that had no equivalent in India prior to its introduction along with the English language. Such was its power that nationalist authors such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in Bengal would turn away from early prose experimentation in the English language to write in their mother tongues, but they would not give up writing novels.⁵⁸ Thus, even while in colonial India 'English was not a major language of literary production [but] ... the language of administration and higher education ... the novel flourished in Hindi, Bengali, Marathi and other *bhasha*.'⁵⁹

The novel's popularity in India derives from this colonial context, whereby pedagogy and pleasure came together in contradictory ways to define the relationship between the Indian user of English and fiction. Prose was the vehicle par excellence for a modern, rational subjectivity, an association that, in keeping with the 'polyglot ease of communication' that characterized the creative intellectual of the high colonial period, was common to prose in English and in the vernacular languages. A hallmark of Bengali literary modernism from Rabindranath Tagore onwards was the 'division of labour' between *kavya* (poetry) and *gadya* (prose), through which prose had become aligned to 'reality, hunger, and the struggle for justice, and thus with the time of history-making and politics', while poetry 'bespoke an absence of realism, of a sense of distance from the political'.⁶⁰ This distinction also explicates the power of prose in English. Fiction, as manifested in the realist novel, opened up the world of the hypothetical – the probable rather than the implausible – and released it for a utopian self-fashioning that, because of the continuing

pedagogical motivations of prose, could be simultaneously self-critical. This combination becomes the dominant register for prose fiction as the anti-colonial movement gathered force during the 1930s, and was particularly manifested in the literary production of the highly influential All-India Progressive Writers Association (PWA), of which Mulk Raj Anand was a prominent member. Priyamvada Gopal observes that '[a]lthough social issues, especially those relating to women's education, the treatment of widows and caste reform, were already an integral part of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature in various Indian languages, tied to the rise of the realist novel in particular, the historical conjuncture of the transitional period [between colonialism and decolonization] brought a fresh sense of interventionary urgency to the writer', which crystallized in the PWA's 'critical realism'.⁶¹ For Munshi Premchand, doyen of Hindi literature and the PWA's mentor, literature had to both engage our 'inherent sense of beauty' and 'make us face the grim realities of life in a spirit of determination'. Realism, within this framework, 'is less a specific aesthetic technique than a philosophy that brings together an affective sense of justice, fairness and harmony with an understanding of all that violates that sense'.⁶²

The decades of the PWA's greatest activity, 1936–54, were also years during which Indian nationalism fructified into independence and the independent nation assumed a premier place in the decolonized world. While accruing connotations of earnest sobriety, realism paradoxically offered the narrative correlative of the heady internationalism of those years, when socialist, anti-colonialist and non-aligned movements converged. But while realism in the *bhasha* languages internationalized the narrative register, in 'Indian English' it closed it down. The three great practitioners of the realist idiom in English, Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan, all of whose careers continued into the early decades of the new nation, 'shared an unspoken faith in a distillable reality which could then be rendered through particularised situations'.⁶³ These situations showcased the realist narrative in English as an apt weapon within 'the terrain of struggle' into which 'the ideological field of the nation had exploded',⁶⁴ but their prose, compared to that of vernacular authors, was cautious, even timid, beset by 'an anxiety of Indianness [that] came out of their own desire to be rooted'.⁶⁵ Whether it is Anand's exposure of class and caste inequities, Rao's early Gandhian predilections and later gravitation towards Brahminism, or Narayan's loving portrayal of that quintessential Indian small town, Malgudi, unchanging and somewhat infantilized, in their work appears 'a greater pull towards a homogenisation of reality, an essentialising of India, a certain flattening out of the complicated and conflicting

contours, the ambiguous and shifting relations that exist between individuals and groups in a plural community'.⁶⁶ These symptoms of elite discomfort at the overlap between facility in English and class and caste privileges coloured early prose fiction in English, a medium dependent on that very facility to bring about social change. Illuminating here is the contrasting tenor of the memoirs, autobiographies and historiographical disquisitions of nationalist leaders, whose magisterial and confident prose style confirms that 'in the entire history of Indian reformism, from Rammohun to Vivekanand to Sir Syed to Tilak to Gandhi, there is always an attachment to and a competence in one or two Indian languages, but never any rejection of English as such; virtually all of them wanted it, not as a literary language but as a window on the most advanced knowledges of the world'.⁶⁷ The transparently pedagogic affiliations of discursive writing in English freed it from the anxieties that clouded English prose fiction, where the possibility of pleasure shadowed its worthy deployment within broadly progressive causes.

This dichotomy persisted through the 1960s and the 1970s. A flourishing anglophone journalism, exemplified in high-quality broadsheets such as *Imprint* and *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, contrasted with a modest fictional production in English striated with perceptible concerns about its class affiliations. This fastidiousness reaches its apogee with novelists Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal, who confine themselves to the mimetic plausibility of using English to dissect the restricted social worlds of the postcolonial anglophone elite.⁶⁸ This self-consciousness, seemingly orthogonal to the political power of that elite as embodied in Jawaharlal Nehru, the nation's first prime minister, actually nuances that power, revealing both the angst of its distance from the 'teeming masses' and its fear of change. From this perspective, the General Emergency (1975–7), when civil liberties and free speech were suspended by a patrician-turned-autocrat, Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter and political heir, constitutes a psychological watershed. Although the Emergency has not yet found extensive fictional representation,⁶⁹ its literary reverberations were felt a decade later in the burst of creativity heralded by *Midnight's Children*. The fiction of the 1980s and beyond is characterized by overabundance, prolixity, ambition and audacity. In many ways a late reflection of the Nehruvian consensus, with its constellation of secularism, pluralism, internationalist modernism and anglophone elitism, the novels of Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry and Arundhati Roy articulate, through their different marshalling of the inheritance of realism, a confident coming of age of a new generation of Indian anglophones. At one remove from pioneering nation building, they reflect most keenly its linguistic consequence: a decreasing

capacity to write in any vernacular. As an elite bureaucratic class moved around the new nation in the cause of what Indian English (and *bhasha* languages) call ‘service’, its children grew up in cities and small towns of regions different from that of their ‘origin’. This intranational deracination combined with the pedagogic imperatives of the state’s ‘three-language formula’, resulting in oral fluency in a number of languages, including the Hindi-Urdu argot of Bollywood cinema, but written mastery only of English. The rearranged relationships between English, Hindi and other vernaculars resulted in a new malleability and suppleness of Indian English prose in both fictional and non-fictional arenas. The same generation gave rise to a prolific band of internationally renowned historians, clustered around the ‘subaltern school’, anthropologists and literary critics.⁷⁰ These scholars, many of whom moved between elite academic institutions of the West and Indian metropolises, not only used English with virtuosity and ease, but, as most obviously seen in the cerebral and abstracted prose of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, contributed handsomely to the creation of new discursive terminologies and registers, not least of all that of the ‘postcolonial’ itself.⁷¹

Indian English’s postcolonial development as a literary and cerebral language was also significantly inflected by its deployment within poetry, whose rising trajectory coincides with that chronological gap between social realist writing and the post-Rushdie boom years: thus the masterful poem sequence, *Jejuri*, by bilingual Marathi-English poet Arun Kolatkar, appeared during the Emergency years, a period fallow from the perspective of fiction.⁷² The lively journalistic tradition earlier noted, supplemented by numerous little magazines and literary journals, provided nourishing fora for this ‘still vital, living, evolving tradition’.⁷³ Through the colonial period, from Toru Dutt and Michael Madhusudan Dutt to the nationalist Sarojini Naidu, Indian English poetry tended towards dedicated imitation of metropolitan models for poetry.⁷⁴ But, from the 1950s onwards, poets such as Dom Moraes, Nissim Ezekiel, Adil Jussawalla, Keki Daruwalla and Kolatkar (to name but a few) created a modernist and often minimalist, even surreal oeuvre, that used English without those anxieties apparent in contemporaneous prose fiction. This new ‘division of labour’ between prose and verse owes substantially to these representatives of a particular postcolonial demographic: families and communities (Parsees, Jews, Christians) who had been drawn very early into a mercantile modernization that existed most markedly in a symbiotic relationship to Bombay.⁷⁵ Their inherited ease with English enabled a profitable flexing of the language’s capacities through the estranging prism of poetry: ‘the peculiar excitement of the poetry that Ramanujan, Arvind Mehrotra or

Dom Moraes wrote in the 1960s and the 1970s derived not so much from their, to use Rushdie's word, "chutnification" of the language, but in part from the way they used ordinary English words like "door", "window", "bus", "doctor", "dentist" and "station", to suggest a way of life.⁷⁶ As Ezekiel argues, 'modern poetry is not used to do [sic] what prose can do; the propagation of ideas is not the job of verse.'⁷⁷ Poetry's relationship to the world of inner subjectivity creatively incorporated an awareness of class privileges and alienation from 'the mainstream' to illuminate its development within Indian English; in the words of Kamala Das, postcolonial India's pioneering poet of the female sensual, 'I am India, very brown, born in / Malabar, I speak three languages, write in / Two, dream in one.'⁷⁸ Thus 'the ability to use English unselfconsciously has been the principal achievement of Indian poets'.⁷⁹ A consequence of their 'accept[ance] of European modernity as the agent for the transformation of local sensibility',⁸⁰ this poetry has offered, since the 1950s, a complicating counterpoint to the struggles and triumphs of Indian English prose fiction.

Flashpoints: writing (and) the nation's narrative

Electricity poles – defunct.

Water tap – broken.

Children – too lean and short for their age, and with over-sized heads from which vivid eyes shine, like the guilty conscience of the government of India.

Yes, a typical Indian village paradise, Mr Jiabao. One day I'll have to come to China to see if your village paradises are any better.⁸¹

Regardless of form and genre, postcolonial writing in India has engaged, even if, as in the case of poetry, in 'gnomic and glancing' ways,⁸² with what we may term 'the nation's narrative': a certain agreement, evident in anti-colonial nationalism and inherited by the independent nation, that 'India' as an entity combines the promise of modernity with the backing of antiquity. Under this overarching understanding nestle corollary propositions: that India is blessed with a spirituality emanating from its Hindu and Buddhist heritage, and a tolerance that is reflected in the accommodating (and accommodated) nature of Indian Islam; that in diversity lies its unity – both these classic Nehruvian axioms; that, despite the modernity of its cities, there is something precious about the Indian village community – a view derived straight from Gandhi's convictions; and – this last one a more recent assertion – that, after the economic liberalization of the 1990s which decisively moved India from

socialism to a free market economy, the country is poised to become an Asian powerhouse. Indian English writing, operating under the meta-sign of modernity born out of colonial history and class privilege, has walked the tightrope between embracing and opposing these propositions. Thus, the Booker Prize winner for 2008, Indian author Aravind Adiga, remorselessly critiques two tenacious constructs, 'the typical Indian village paradise' and the utopian mobility of the city. The narrative trope of the protagonist's epistolary address to the Chinese Premier ironizes the current brouhaha over India and China's economic competition, lacing the already punchy prose with a kick of the absurd that lifts the novel away from conscientious social realist critique that focused on the village either as agent of or subject for social change. Despite the twist in this tale, the rags-to-riches story of the Machiavellian 'White Tiger of Bombay' cannot break out of Indian writing's abiding preoccupations with the binary between city and village. What this novel powerfully articulates is but its new avatar, born out of post-liberalization India's grotesquely visible disparity between middle-class consumption and underclass deprivation.⁸³

The superficial glitter of a hothouse globalization has been amply and variously reflected in contemporary Indian writing, from novels on Indian Reality Television shows and 'Indian chick lit' to a greater experimentation with form made possible by the increasing confidence of the Indian publishing industry.⁸⁴ For instance, the graphic novels pioneered by Sarnath Banerjee, whose referents range from Baudrillard to Bahadur (an indigenous comics tradition), transmit a quirky visual equivalent of the postcolonial postmodern.⁸⁵ In conjunction with the sixtieth anniversary of India's independence, non-fiction too has received a fillip. A dizzying cottage industry of books, often with titles invoking elephants and mobile phones, purports to analyse India's declared 'contradictions' with a view to prognosticating its dazzling economic future.⁸⁶ The more memorable of such books have not merely asserted India's immanent glories but probed and critiqued the socio-economic and cultural contours assumed during its half-century of postcolonial existence. Suketu Mehta's *Maximum City*, which explores Bombay, and Pallavi Aiyar's *Smoke and Mirrors*, which uses a journalistic stint in Beijing to generate a keenly intelligent comparison between India and China, are the most recent torch-bearers of a robust tradition of Indian self-searching through the traveller's comparative eye, whose earlier manifestations included the travel writings of Rabindranath Tagore as well as Vikram Seth's *From Heaven Lake* and Amitav Ghosh's *In an Antique Land*.⁸⁷ In general, though, Indians currently demonstrate an insatiable appetite for reading about themselves; even, perhaps, laughing at themselves.⁸⁸ Academics, accordingly, are soliciting generalist readerships: witness the

success of historian Ramachandra Guha's *India after Gandhi*, a mammoth chronicling of Indian history from a broadly liberal position. As Guha's earlier work, *A Corner of a Foreign Field* confirmed, this market includes space for the well-written sports history (which, in anglophone postcolonial fashion, is inevitably the history of cricket).⁸⁹ Most tellingly, non-fiction in English has become an arena *and* a tool for the playing out of intranational ideological battles, particularly the defence and resuscitation of a dying Nehruvianism, as demonstrated by the popularity of *Argumentative Indian*, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen's secularist dissection of the Indian psyche.⁹⁰

Nehruvian philosophy, which brought together socialism, secularism and pluralism, has, since its foundational text, *The Discovery of India*, had a symbiotic relationship with anglophone non-fictional writing. But it is anglophone fiction that, in providing a sustained space for its dramatic endorsement, has actually been 'integral to the articulation of a properly critical form of secularism' through the emergence of 'a secular canon' of Indian English literature during the 1980s and 1990s.⁹¹ The early novels of Rushdie, Vikram Seth and Rohinton Mistry, among others, 'narrate the story of India as a nation' precisely during 'the breakdown of the Nehruvian secular consensus' that, beginning with the Emergency years, 'was further threatened by the rise to prominence of an alternative national ideology, Hindutva, based on the supremacy of Hindu religion and culture.'⁹² These novels presented a united front against Nehruvianism's imminent dissolution, and the related rise of new middle classes drawn from 'vernacular-speaking' rather than 'English-medium' social constituencies. From a literary perspective, however, their responses diverge. Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, with its ridiculous anti-hero Saleem Sinai 'handcuffed' to the history of postcolonial India through magic realism and a pungent, hurtling prose style, is deeply affectionate towards Nehruvian secularism, but also conscious of the subsumption of minority histories and affective allegiances into the Nehruvian metanarrative of which Bombay is metonymic; these concerns carry forth to *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh*.⁹³ Mistry's novels bring a refined, old-fashioned realism to the delicate explorations of petty bourgeois Parsi families whose economic and social ascendancy during the colonial and Nehruvian period had been rendered progressively vulnerable under the transition to Hindutva – enabling him to commemorate thereby that community history while retrieving glimpses of Parsi sacralty.⁹⁴ In Seth's *A Suitable Boy*, set in the high Nehruvian 1950s, complexly braided stories of families and communities are controlled by 'the third-person omniscient narrator [who] subsumes [their] conflicting religious worldviews into his secular rationalist perspective'.⁹⁵ Pace Fredric Jameson's

notorious claim that ‘all third world literature aspires to the condition of national allegory’,⁹⁶ these authors rework the realist novel to represent mimetically the nation as refracted through their individual, decentred and multiply odd subjectivities. This homology revitalized the ‘new’ Indian English novel’s role within the contestations over national identity rampant since the Hindu Right’s demolition of the Babri Mosque in 1992: the twin seductions of mimesis and narrative confer on it a critical effectiveness that surpasses the role of English non-fiction outlined earlier.

An unexpected benefit of the implosion of the public sphere under the joint pressures of liberalization and Hindutva, as reflected in the manic coalition politics of the 1990s and the 2000s, has been the emergence of writers representing diverse perspectives arising from the space between the hegemonies of the Nehruvian consensus and the rise of the Hindu Right. This development is manifested in the increasing focus on small towns and regions peripheral to the north and western Indian heartland, not as latter-day versions of serene, ‘timeless’ Malgudi, but as flashpoints within long-term conflict zones: thus the northeast of India, as explored by the novels of Siddhartha Deb and Anjum Hassan, and the latter’s poetry anthologies; north Bengal, as presented in Kiran Desai’s Booker-Prize-winning novel; and Jammu and Kashmir, the subject of Basharat Peer’s powerful memoir and of Agha Shahid Ali’s poetry.⁹⁷ Using various forms (the novel, the poem, the memoir), these authors marry a deeply personalized, often quietly disaffected voice with an exploration of the politics of marginalization and state oppression that the nation has exacted from these histories that stand at an angle to its metanarrative. Literary writing in English becomes the means to engage a national and transnational audience in a way that supersedes the blind spots of political representation in ‘the world’s largest democracy’. These ‘lesser traditions’ intersect with stories almost submerged by Nehruvian secularism and latterly by Hindu chauvinism. While earlier, the Anglo-Indian author was the most visible bearer of this off-centre perspective,⁹⁸ it is the Indian Muslim whose struggle for survival increasingly occupies that position. The consequent narratives prise open older reifications. Thus, while Bombay, in synergy with its self-representation within the city’s film industry, has signified euphoric modernity, a novel such as Altaaf Tyrewala’s *No God in Sight* reveals the precariousness of ‘lower and middle-class Muslims resident in Mumbai’.⁹⁹ Although its collage of first-person narratives is superficially reminiscent of the interlinked stories of modernity, nostalgia and class violence within Vikram Chandra’s *Love and Longing in Bombay*,¹⁰⁰ Tyrewala updates the fraught metonymy of nation and city by foregrounding without self-censorship the increasingly difficult position of

the Indian Muslim who, specially when unprotected by class, encounters the city's dog-eat-dog capitalism from the position of the minority citizen in a radicalized public sphere.

This position of Muslim as minority derives from the ur-trauma of India, the Partition of India in August 1947.¹⁰¹ The triumph of independence and the optimism of decolonization have always been accompanied by the knowledge of Partition, first as a large-scale traumatic event collectively experienced, and subsequently as memory that cannot be publicly mourned for fear of betraying the tenets of postcolonial nationhood. This peculiar coexistence of trauma and triumph, public gain and private loss, that Partition unleashed, is a definitive marker of South Asian postcoloniality, and its Indian equivalent has found rich and varied literary expression in several languages, most notably Hindi, Urdu, Bengali and English.¹⁰² English literary responses to Partition reveal a genealogy comprising three distinct generations. The first, an initial generation of witness-authors, grappled with the immediacy of the destruction of cultures, regional geographies, and indeed of humanity itself that they had personally seen unfold. Its anglophone representatives differed from their vernacular counterparts in preferring the novel, with its explicatory 'padding' of cause and effect, to the more truncated and stark effects of the short story. Thus Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, a *Bildungsroman* of an idealistic young woman Laila from a feudal Muslim family of Lucknow, reinterprets Partition as a by-product of a larger conflict between tradition and modernity.¹⁰³ Likewise, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* uses naïve realism to present pre-Partition Punjab as a rural idyll whose communal harmony was disrupted by ill-digested modernizing processes, symbolized above all by the train.¹⁰⁴ The use of fiction within the search for answers was, however, eschewed by a second generation of authors who had been children or just born during the 1940s, and to whom Nehruvian self-censorship around Partition posed the more urgent imaginative challenge. Their responses can be seen as either a departure from realism (as with Rushdie's early novels) or a hyperrealism, as with Seth's *A Suitable Boy*, or indeed a more cloaked, allusive style of exploring the processes of remembering and forgetting, as seen in Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* and Amitav Ghosh's *Shadow Lines*.¹⁰⁵ Finally, a current, postmemorial generation, who were born well after 1947 but who have inherited the peculiar patterns of memorialization and amnesia that cling to it, attempt to make sense of their positions in contemporary India through that lens.¹⁰⁶ This emergent generation is using the memorial effects of Partition to retrieve anterior regional histories and to reconfigure thereby the post-Partition, severally displaced subject. Its interests converge with those of a peer group of

writers in English from Bangladesh and Pakistan, exploring through fiction the effects of Partition and of the war of Bangladeshi independence in 1971.¹⁰⁷

In several ways, in fact, writing in English has prised open post-Partition political borders and boundaries across South Asia. Authors have turned to precolonial histories to refute the nation's territoriality through imaginative reconstruction of alternative modernities: Salman Rushdie's *Enchantress of Florence*, like his earlier *The Moor's Last Sigh*, recuperates the early modern period as a moment of optimal contact between India and Europe; bilingual Marathi-English author Kiran Nagarkar's *The Cuckold* sets his narrative in the premodern Rajput courts.¹⁰⁸ Most strikingly, Amitav Ghosh's oeuvre has unfolded a philosophy of a new critical regionalism as a panacea to a modernity that was needed to other the non-modern in order even to critique itself. Countering postcolonial nationalism by renewing older cultural links fostered through precolonial sea routes, Ghosh posits the sea as antidote to the constrictions of nationalisms allied to the colonial modernity that followed European expansionism.¹⁰⁹ While these themes determined *In An Antique Land*'s emphasis on the Arabian Sea, Ghosh's philosophy has progressively emplaced the sea within the ocean: hence, in his most recent novel, *The Sea of Poppies*, it is the Indian Ocean that facilitates the narrative's widened historical and geographic scope. In *The Hungry Tide*, this vision heralds the boundary-defying river dolphin as the tale's protagonist; in *The Sea of Poppies*, a motley crew of 'ship-brothers' cross territorial and social boundaries via the Indian Ocean. Such novels retrieve and update the utopianism of the Bandung Era. If the Non-Aligned Movement was doomed by the conflict between an 'extra-territorial and universalist anti-colonialism' and a commitment to the nation, Ghosh seeks 'to rescue history from the nation' while articulating the most appropriate conceptual means linking the global and the local.¹¹⁰ Of immense relevance to this privileging of connectivity over segmentation is the river through which the ocean penetrates and shapes the hinterland's cultures and histories. The journey of the Ganges-Brahmaputra riverine system towards the Indian Ocean then becomes what historian Sugata Bose terms that 'something other than the "nation", narrowly defined, that intermediate[s] the levels of the global and the local'.¹¹¹ The conversation between Ghosh and Indian historians continues. Earlier, he took cues from the subaltern studies group; now, his writing resonates with the new Indian ocean studies emerging through the work of Bose and others.

This move to the ocean may be new, but the use of the river to interrogate the certainties of the nation is a long-standing trope in Indian writing: the locus classicus is bilingual Urdu-English author Qurratulain Hyder's magisterial novel *River of Fire* that traverses ancient, medieval and modern Indian

history through the master-trope of the river and the forest whose continuities confound time's vicissitudes.¹¹² The river has also been mobilized to construct microhistories of place, most memorably in Arundhati Roy's *God of Small Things*.¹¹³ In her evocation of Ayemenem, a small south Indian town on the banks of the river Meenachal, Roy taps into the mythic resonances of the relationship between river and culture to mount multiple critiques: on the petty oppressions of patriarchal family structures; on the still-rampant boundaries of caste; on the commodification of culture for tourism; and on the policing of regional economies by global players such as the World Bank as an answer to environmental degradation – all issues which, together with unrelenting critiques of nationalist majoritarianism, resurface powerfully in her subsequent non-fictional writing. Roy's activist turn, as indeed Hyder's philosophical ecumenism, must be contextualized against the history of South Asian feminist activism, which historically links writing, publishing and cross-border initiatives. The first oral history projects on Partition were pioneered by Urvashi Butalia and Ritu Menon, who were also the founders of Kali for Women, India's first feminist publishing house. These feminist initiatives resonate with women authors of Partition narratives, who fill the historical record from the oblique perspective of a woman's position. Kali and its successor imprints, Zubaan and Women Unlimited, have published fiction and non-fiction by women, originally written in English as well as in translation from various regional languages, and from all South Asian nations.¹¹⁴ Interested in the enduring impact of postcolonial conflict on women's empowerment, these publishing houses, in co-operation with a feminist network of writers, documentary filmmakers, theatre persons and cultural and political rights activists, have opened up and sustained spaces in India for cross-border diplomacy and responsible thinking. This matrix of political affiliations makes women's writing in India far more radical and assertive than fiction by Indian-heritage women writers in diaspora – writing that, devoid of that particular context with its concomitant urgencies and solidarities, often remains a repository of unreconstructed nostalgia and conservatism when imaginatively evoking the 'homeland'.¹¹⁵

The aesthetics of postcolonial confidence

These Errors Are Correct¹¹⁶

In postcolonial India, English has evolved from a language whose use was encoded with its status as an instrument of colonial control, to a medium of

expression that enfolds within its history the memory of that instrumentalization. Increasing numbers of Indians turn to the language for imaginative, aspirational and commercial transactions alike – a multivalency that places its postcolonial use at the intersection between English as an inherited colonial ‘gift’ and English as the contemporary language of globalization. During the early postcolonial era, fluency in English was associated with an elite postcolonial status whose bearers had inherited the colonial mantle of power. By the 2000s, English has arguably become truly ‘postcolonized’, its increasingly demotic use being both visible and audible. Television news channels, Bollywood films, advertisements and popular music are all arenas where ‘Hinglish’ and other unpredictable hybrid idioms flourish, spoken with an equally wide range of Indian English accents. Whereas previously, Indian authors writing in English had been reticent in allowing their prose to reflect such hybridization, after Rushdie and Roy such linguistic experimentation has become almost mandatory. Also apparent is a renewed engagement with regional affective histories by diasporic authors whose turn homewards produces fresh hybridities to articulate marginalized narratives.¹¹⁷ These diverse indicators of a resurgent confidence amidst writing *in* India are matched by an exponential increase in writing in English *from* India. A flourishing indigenous publishing industry regularly brings out titles in fiction, poetry, children’s literature, translations from other Indian languages, and the gamut of non-fictional writing, including academic scholarship. The material profusion of books in English, written, published and sold in India for national, international and pan-South Asian readerships, is consonant with a multifaceted cosmopolitanism that is engendered primarily within the postcolonial nation, although it may well, and indeed does, dialogue with cosmopolitanisms in the ‘West’, often triangulated through different diasporic constituencies. Certainly, this webbed profusion signals a new postcolonial political reality, whose confidence appropriates the old colonial equation between ‘the command of language and the language of command’.¹¹⁸ But what kind of writing is thereby produced, and how might we adjudicate upon it *aesthetically*?

Fiction, the largest category within this general output, remains consistently realist, though Indian writing has stretched the potential and remit of realism as a category.¹¹⁹ In the wake of *Midnight’s Children*, numerous authors experimented with magic realism, but a broadly realist tendency has continued to rule: even Rushdie’s recent writing has veered towards a historicist impulse. The tenacity of realism enfolds within itself different subcategories, such as the social realist and the magic realist: the overarching tendency is to narrate *within* rather than fracture the realist paradigm. Experimentation, if any, takes place

with the linear thrust of that received paradigm, producing typically the multiple, braided strands that strive mimetically to represent the chaotic totality of postcolonial Indian 'reality'. It is not always a 'huge baggy monster' that results. Eschewing the large scale, Roy's *The God of Small Things* breaks temporality into two parallel lines, switching tracks in the narration to confound the Aristotelian order of 'beginning, middle and end'; similar tricks with telling are played by Amitav Ghosh in his *Shadow Lines*. Such novels navigate between two sets of comforting assumptions – the sanctity of the bourgeois family and the postcolonial nation's coming into being – through a meandering realism that mimics the vagaries of individual memory. To these two impulses, we may add a third: the self-conscious search for a written prose style that recalled the mythic and the oral; this strand is exemplified in the early prose masters such as Raja Rao, although 'First World' critics have wanted to find it in Indian writers such as Salman Rushdie.¹²⁰ Different philosophic reasons thus yield a consistent aesthetic result. A penchant for multiple narratives and intersecting sub-narratives, together with the kinds of stories told and the language of this telling, rather than form itself, constitute the level at which the indigenization of the colonial takes place. Not a radical disbanding of deeper formal levels but the principles of proliferation and maximalism are in evidence, resonating with a vernacularization of style and content that has gathered cultural capital due to the changes in the postcolonial sphere noted earlier in this chapter, and that are now everywhere palpable because of Bollywood cinema's ever-growing influence. The vehicle for a high modernist internationalism that can accommodate creatively vernacular forms and themes remains poetry: from Agha Shahid Ali's meticulous experimentations with high-status poetic forms indigenous to various languages (the ghazal of Urdu, the *sestina* and *canzone* of Italian), Jeet Thayil's similarly wide-ranging versification preferences, and Seth's agility with the tetrameter evident in *The Golden Gate*.¹²¹

This break between fiction in English, which commands a visible transnational audience, and poetry in English, which remains the province of a smaller group of connoisseur-readers, suggests a Hobson's choice for the critic seeking to find a viable critical edge within postcolonial writing in India viewed as a composite. Although poetry remains more individualistic and experimental, its high-modernist associations and praxes imprison it within the proverbial ivory tower. On the other hand, the novel and its variant, the short-story cycle, thrive on general assumptions about the accessibility of prose fiction, but the latter's inherently populist stance has made it, ultimately, a weak force for ushering social change. The novel may seek to critique shibboleths, but it serves to maintain the fundamental status quo of class and privilege. In other words,

writing in English in India, as exemplified by its most visible product, the ‘new Indian English novel’, has struggled to reconcile the desire to express a strong social conscience with the knowledge of its own position as a compromised social text. This struggle renders the best of Indian writing both critically poised towards and intrinsically reliant on the formative doctrines of the nation. This writing moved from its early engagement with decolonization and Third World internationalism, to the 1970s, which encompassed the Emergency years and the beginnings of a new vernacularism, and to the last flush of Nehruvianism as articulated by the first generation of ‘young post-colonial Indians’ to become adults under the sign of the nation. In the 1980s, Indian writing was about taking stock of young India and the imminent dissolution of the Nehruvian consensus, about disillusionment with the death of secularism. From the 1990s onwards, in tandem with the economic forces of liberalization and globalization, fiction and prose non-fiction alike have been articulating the search for new gods and new doctrines for the nation. The Booker milestones, furthermore, interrupt this story with a ‘before’ and ‘after’ watershed: ‘before’, Indian writing in English was genteel, preoccupied with defining modernity and its internal others; the 1980s and 1990s have been about critiquing the nation, while during the 2000s there has been a move to think about the impact of globalization, particularly the environment, and the mobilization of common projects of postcolonial sustainability within diverse and overlapping interregional arenas, from the Indian Ocean to the South Asian. Most crucial here remains the engagement with modernity’s exhilarations as well as its violence, as most searingly manifested in the partitioning of South Asia into nation states.

Indeed, modernity in all its incarnations – colonial, postcolonial, postcolonial-postmodern – continues to be the ultimate context for understanding both the history of English writing in postcolonial India, and the history of postcolonial India through English writing. Nativist urges that animate the desire to write a ‘new’ India, as manifested most strongly in myths of the village, the region, or the small town, come already sieved through anti-colonial notions of Gandhian and Nehruvian utopias. The sustained engagement with modernity, moreover, produces silences, fragmentations, omissions and repetitions and returns within the text that demand symptomatic reading in order to unravel the deeper anxieties fissuring it. It is a red herring of sorts to reduce these anxieties to the simplified issue of the postcolonial appropriateness of using English. English is an intrinsic part of the imaginative resources of an Indian writer with its own history and lineage. Nevertheless, this is a certain *kind* of Indian writer, whose social position is circumscribed by the conditions

under which he or she has gained facility in the language, and whose writing is stamped by that inevitability. Thus, while it is true that there is decreasing 'anxiety' in the use of English in India, it cannot be denied that the language and its literary traditions entered the space that would become 'India' through the ruptures and impositions of modernity. The modernity associated with the life of English in India is a transplanted one, whereby to feel the language's historical roots was for a long time only possible through an affective engagement with English literary history in the metropole. This engagement remains a choice of individual authors.¹²² Yet the postcolonial trajectories taken by India and the democratic potential of its complexly differentiated public spheres have ensured that new, unexpected versions of modernity have flourished around postcolonial Indian writing, including a self-reflexive engagement with its declared relationship to 'spirituality'.¹²³ This modernity, and the alliances it permits between writers using English and their access to a series of overlapping vernacular life worlds, has now provided English in India with a thick enough history for the generation of indigenous affective engagements and newer pleasures. Hence postcolonial writing in India teaches us how postcolonial literary history must be read, above all, as a history of collective affect. In imagining a world beyond the violence and strictures of modernity, postcolonial writing in India can, and has offered moments of transcendence. Yet the attainment of a critical mass that can generate not only the outstanding, Booker Prize-winning work of 'world literature', but also the mediocre, the conservative, the simply pleasurable, and the forgettable, must also be considered a collective postcolonial achievement for this writing, and a certain coming of postcolonial age.

Notes

1. G. V. Desani, *All about H. Hatterr* (1948; New Delhi: Penguin India, 1986).
2. *Ibid.*
3. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the subaltern speak? Speculations on widow sacrifice', *Wedge*, 7.8 (Winter/Spring 1985), 120–30.
4. See Catherine Cundy, *Salman Rushdie* (Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 30.
5. This phrase is from the speech by Jawaharlal Nehru, first prime minister of India, at midnight, 15 August 1947. See Priyamvada Gopal, *Literary Radicalism in India: Gender, Nation and the Transition to Independence* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 16–18.
6. The best critical term for India's languages other than English is still being debated. 'Vernacular', although a term on its way to being reclaimed, as I indicate later in the chapter, is still too tainted by its colonialist implications; *bhasha*, as suggested by Ganesh Devy, *After Amnesia: Tradition and Change in Indian Literary Criticism* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1992), and the term preferred by some Indian scholars such as Meenakshi Mukherjee and Harish Trivedi, nevertheless leads to a tautological

- combination (since it means ‘language’ in Sanskrit and Sanskrit-derived languages), while ‘regional’ suggests a subordination to the supranational or ‘national’. I use all three terms, varying them according to context.
7. However, I do not discuss Indian postcolonial drama, which draws on too many divergent indigenous and international theatrical traditions to be comfortably accommodated within its scope. For an overview, see Shanta Gokhale, ‘The dramatists’, in Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (ed.), *A Concise History of Indian Literature in English* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2008), pp. 378–93.
 8. Salman Rushdie, ‘Introduction’, in Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West (eds.), *Mirrorwork: 50 Years of Indian Writing 1947–1997* (London: H. Holt & Co., 1997), p. viii: ‘Prose writing – both fiction and non-fiction – created in this [post-independence] period by Indian writers working in English, is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the sixteen official languages of India, the so-called “vernacular languages”, during the same time.’
 9. Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge, ‘Public modernity in India’, in Carol Breckenridge (ed.), *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 5.
 10. Rajeev S. Patke, *Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 11.
 11. Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997).
 12. Anuradha Dingwaney Needham and Rajeswari Sunderrajan (eds.), *The Crisis of Secularism in India* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2007); Neelam Srivastava, *Secularism in the Postcolonial Indian Novel: National and Cosmopolitan Narratives in English* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 39.
 13. Atul Kohli (ed.), *The Success of India’s Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).
 14. Sir Charles Trevelyan, *On the Education of the People of India* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1838), p. 167.
 15. Tejaswini Niranjana, ‘Translation, colonialism and rise of English’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25.15 (1990), 773.
 16. See Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), and Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995).
 17. On the Sahitya Akademi and postcolonial literary and linguistic politics, see Rashmi Sadana, ‘A suitable text for a vegetarian audience: questions of authenticity and the politics of translation’, *Public Culture*, 19.2 (2007), 307–28.
 18. Niranjana, ‘Translation’, p. 773; see also Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), and John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (University of Chicago Press, 1993).
 19. See Gauri Vishwanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (Oxford University Press, 1989).
 20. See Stephen Evans, ‘Macaulay’s Minute revisited: colonial language policy in nineteenth century India’, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 23.4 (2002), 260–81.
 21. Thomas Babington Macaulay, ‘Minute on Indian Education’, in John Clive and Thomas Pinney (eds.), *Thomas Babington Macaulay: Selected Writings* (Chicago University Press, 1972), p. 250; Niranjana, ‘Translation’, p. 778.
 22. Macaulay, ‘Minute’, p. 249.
 23. *Ibid.*, p. 243.

24. Ananya Jahanara Kabir, 'Analogy in translation: imperial Rome, medieval England and British India', in Ananya Jahanara Kabir and Deanne Williams (ed.), *Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages: Translating Cultures* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 183–204.
25. Macaulay, 'Minute', p. 243.
26. See Thomas Richards, 'Archive and utopia', *Representations*, 37.2 (1992), 104–35; Ann Laura Stoler, 'Colonial archives and the arts of governance', *Archival Science*, 2 (2002), 87–109.
27. Partha Chatterjee, 'Disciplines of governance', in Partha Chatterjee (ed.), *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 11.
28. Veena Naregal, 'Colonial bilingualism and hierarchies of language and power: making of a vernacular sphere in western India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34.49 (1999), 3447.
29. Robert Fraser, *Book History through Postcolonial Eyes* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 46–50, 53–77.
30. Chatterjee, 'Disciplines', p. 11.
31. See Rosane Rocher, *Orientalism, Poetry, and the Millennium: The Checkered Life of Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, 1751–1830* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983); Bernard Cohn, 'The command of language and the language of command', in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies*, vol. 4: *Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 276–339; Garland Cannon and Kevin R. Brine (eds.), *Objects of Enquiry: The Life, Contributions and Influence of Sir William Jones, 1746–1794* (New York University Press, 1995).
32. Naregal, 'Colonial bilingualism', pp. 3447–8.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 3346.
34. Tapti Roy, 'Disciplining the printed text: colonial and nationalist surveillance of Bengali literature', in Chatterjee (ed.), *Texts of Power*, pp. 30–62; on the development of the Bengali typeface, see Fraser, *Book History*, pp. 14–18.
35. Veena Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere: Western India under Colonialism* (London: Anthem Books, 2002); Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850* (London: Routledge, 2000); Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920–1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Chatterjee (ed.), *Texts of Power*.
36. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn (London: Verso, 1991).
37. Kajri Jain, *Gods in the Bazaar: The Economies of Indian 'Calendar Art'* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 37.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 80; Chatterjee, 'Disciplines', p. 8.
40. Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (1901), ed. with an introduction and notes by Edward W. Said (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989); Ruskin Bond, *The Room on the Roof* (1951; New Delhi: Penguin India 2008); Chatterjee, 'Disciplines', p. 8.
41. Jain, *Gods in the Bazaar*, p. 92.
42. See Orsini, *Hindi Public Sphere*, p. 21.
43. Paul Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (Cambridge University Press, 1974), quoted in Orsini, *Hindi Public Sphere*, p. 23.
44. Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty*, p. 100.
45. Orsini, *Hindi Public Sphere*, chapter 1.

46. Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty*, pp. 104, 135.
47. Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).
48. Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*, with a Preface by E. M. Forster (1935; London: Bodley Head, 1970).
49. E. M. Forster, Preface to Anand, *Untouchable*, p. 9.
50. See Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton University Press, 2001).
51. Forster, Preface to Anand, *Untouchable*, p. 12; on Gandhian philosophy, see Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).
52. Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (1981; London: Vintage, 1995), p. 82.
53. Amit Chaudhuri, 'Huge baggy monster: mimetic theories of the Indian novel after Rushdie', in *Clearing a Space: Reflections on India, Literature and Culture* (New Delhi: Black Kite, 2008), pp. 113–21.
54. On the 'optimism disease', see 'Hit the Spittoon', *Midnight's Children*, pp. 37–55.
55. Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Viking, 1988), p. 8.
56. Meenakshi Mukherjee, 'The anxiety of Indianness: our novels in English', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28.48 (1993), 2609; Chaudhuri, *Clearing a Space*, p. 112.
57. Priya Joshi, *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
58. Chaudhuri, *Clearing a Space*, p. 74.
59. Mukherjee, 'Anxiety', p. 2609.
60. Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Nation and imagination: the training of the eye in Bengali modernity', *Topoi: International Review of Philosophy*, 18.1 (1999), 32.
61. Gopal, citing Premchand in *Literary Radicalism*, pp. 2, 27.
62. Gopal, *Literary Radicalism*, p. 27.
63. Mukherjee, 'Anxiety', p. 2609.
64. Gopal, *Literary Radicalism*, p. 2.
65. Mukherjee, 'Anxiety', p. 2610.
66. *Ibid.*, 2608. See, for instance, Anand, *Untouchable*; Raja Rao, *Kanthapura* (1938; Oxford University Press, 1989) and *The Serpent and the Rope* (London: John Murray, 1960); R. K. Narayan, *Swami and Friends: A Novel of Malgudi* (1935; Greenwich, CT: Fawcett, 1970) and *Malgudi Days* (1972; New York: Penguin Classics, 2006).
67. Aijaz Ahmad, 'Indian literature: notes towards the definition of a category', in Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992), p. 26; Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (1946; London: Meridian Books, 1951). See Sunil Khilnani, 'Gandhi and Nehru: the uses of English', in Mehrotra (ed.), *Concise History*, pp. 151–76.
68. Meenakshi Mukherjee, *The Twice-Born Fiction: Themes and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English* (New Delhi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1971), p. 62.
69. Examples are Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995); Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*; and Manju Kapur, *The Immigrant* (Delhi: Random House, 2008).
70. Vinayak Chaturvedi (ed.), *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London: Verso, 2000).
71. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994); from Spivak's oeuvre see, for instance, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

72. Arun Kolatkar, *Jejuri* (Bombay: Clearing House, 1976); see Chaudhuri, 'Arun Kolatkar and the tradition of loitering', in *Clearing a Space*, pp. 221–34; and Patke, *Postcolonial Poetry*, pp. 197–205.
73. Bruce King, *Modern Indian Poetry in English*, rev. edn (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 9.
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Postcolonial writing in Australia and New Zealand

JULIAN MURPHET

Coordinates

A literary history of 'postcolonial' Australia and New Zealand is immediately confounded by the question of periodization, since although both ex-colonies long ago achieved formal independence from the British Empire, via Australian Federation in 1901, and New Zealand 'dominion' status in 1907, in 2009 the Queen remains the head of both states, and it was only relatively recently that anything like a postcolonial sensibility took root in the literary intelligentsia. As settler societies, whose dominant populations were those of British descent and whose nationalist values were deeply informed by many years of imperial rule, in the decades following their constitutional breaks from empire, both Australia and New Zealand generated literary cultures more properly described as neo-colonial or 'late' imperial.¹ That is to say, these literary cultures pursued their objectives within the general structures already determined by British cultural gatekeepers, for the simple reasons that a viable local publishing industry was impossible in Australia until the 1970s and deeply fraught in New Zealand (always the more literate nation) until the 1950s, and that the great mass of published material available in either country was British.² There can be little dispute that in the collective effort to establish a national literature, written in the English language but attuned to local realities and rising patriotic passions, each country had already begun, even prior to the politically decolonizing moves of the early twentieth century, to 'decolonize' its cultural matrix, to prepare a workable set of discourses, myths, genres and characters adequate to the postcolonial moment and capable of steering a new nation into conscious self-affirmation. To describe these literary processes as *a priori* postcolonial is, however, premature and non-theoretical, since there is little or no evidence of the kinds of textual practice that Kwame Anthony Appiah once described as definitive of the 'postcolonial text' – 'Postrealist writing; postnativist politics; a *transnational* rather than a *national* solidarity'.³

For that matter, settler colonies as a rule have never enjoyed 'classic' status within the purview of postcolonial studies, literary or otherwise, limping in all too often as also-rans in the great roll call of heroic postcolonial locations: the Indian subcontinent, northern Africa, western Africa, South Africa, Southeast Asia, the Caribbean. In Meaghan Morris's words, 'Dubiously postcolonial, prematurely postmodern, constitutively multicultural but still predominantly white, we oscillate historically between identities as colonizer and colonized.'⁴ This dubiety remains, despite the pioneering efforts of Australian critics Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin to position settler societies at the forefront of a renewed conception of the postcolonial.⁵ It persists for good reasons, not least the ongoing (albeit highly differential) processes of interior colonization practised by either government on its own indigenous population, and Australia's colonial practices in the islands scattered around its shores. That is, while the heroic wave of decolonization across the Third World only belatedly woke up to the miserable facts of neo-colonialism, the Antipodes had been living this dreary reality for many decades prior to that wave's cresting in the 1970s. And we continue to live it in altered modes, modes which do little to clarify a postcolonial self-image comprised of layer upon layer of inherited and imported signifying systems; since today's late imperialism is incontestably American, and the hard facts of military bases, free trade agreements, corporate mergers and the Washington Consensus are obliged to find their place within social and political cultures still orchestrated by parliaments, public broadcasters and the Crown. It is for these reasons among others that we need to think past a simply linear literary history of the postcolonial anglophone Antipodes, and to argue for an altogether different line of approach to the subject. It is during the 1960s that we can more confidently begin to speak of a decisive turning away from the congeries of neo-colonial protocols, genres, voices and forms in the production of literature that had held sway since 1900.

The 1960s have often posed the knotty problem of periodization;⁶ in this region doubly so. Why was it, after all, that what Bruce Bennett called a 'new dynamic' seemed to have arrived in Australian literature after 1965?⁷ Why did Maurice Shadbolt's 'Pacific sea-change', the 'stunning and perplexing change of climate', take place in New Zealand literature in the 1960s and 1970s?⁸ No doubt, one critical explanation for this electrifying jolt in the regional arm of literary history can be supplied by the colossal growth in gross domestic product during the long post-World War II years of stability, planned European immigration and Keynesian corporatism; as elsewhere in the advanced industrial world, the early 1960s represented the peak of what

historian Eric Hobsbawm called the 'golden age' of capitalism.⁹ Insofar as any literary culture is tethered materially to the circumstances of the wider economy – its distributed proportions of employment, disposable income, welfare, leisure time and literacy – the 1960s still represent a zenith in the expansion and consolidation of national literary traditions across the globe. But this will not yet have explained the extraordinary efflorescence of markedly 'Australian' and 'New Zealand' literatures within this dispensation – collective postcolonial acts whose conditions of possibility are to be located in a more international conjunction of historical states of affairs. On the one hand, the exorbitant expansion of the USA's cultural and military imperialism in the region, under the official auspices of the ANZUS Treaty (1951), rapidly came to outweigh the residual colonial ballast of Great Britain. And on the other, violent and 'heroic' decolonization itself became the single most important political reality in Southeast Asia, thus confronting the anglophone Antipodes with a regional, indigenous-based and militarily ultimately successful series of campaigns against an emergent empire that was now everywhere discernible as American.¹⁰ The conditions of postcolonial possibility in Australian and New Zealand writing are precisely these; and the different trajectories of either national literature from this same regional crisis are paradigmatic instances of the degree to which foreign policy, strategies of appeasement and degrees of political paternalism can profoundly affect the course of literary history.

History is not literary history, however, and while these powerful vectors coordinate the field of ideological and political struggle in the post-Vietnam era, they neither prescribe nor even orient the specifically formal manoeuvres that writers will adopt to 'manage' these forces through literary labour.¹¹ The most significant issue internal to the conduct of literary history is that of form, and formal questions cannot be decided along an empty temporal continuum, since forms overlap and become interlaced with scant regard for the abstract decorums of historiographic protocol. It is neither interesting nor accurate to pursue a literary history in a strict chronological arrangement of names and dates, since what is at stake in the literary negotiation of the very complex and contradictory structures of feeling outlined above is precisely an uneven development of formal resources, generic registers and markets of distribution. Forms of British descent evolve satiric and critical mutations; brash American genres emerge suddenly to contest long-established, class-based patterns of literary consumption; and Third World rhetorics and modes of formal rupture shadow these last like the political unconscious itself. If the moment of Vietnam fomented a postcolonial problematic within these

national imaginaries, it did so by fetching up certain formal elements from the archive and from the peripheries, consigning others to oblivion, and mixing old and new together in a variety of hybrid forms. Postcolonial literary history is the reconstructed record of these uneven developments in the present, and of the revenant appearance of texts once forgotten and now crying out for reassessment and reworking – as, for instance, Stephen Muecke would ‘remake’ Katharine Susannah Prichard’s emblematic interracial tale *Coonardoo* (1929) in 1993.¹² It obeys no linear clock, but the erratic pulse of decolonization itself, with its cruel setbacks, dramatic accelerations, unexpected affiliations and what ‘flashes up in a moment of danger’ from the neglected past.¹³ It can only be tackled as a history immanent to textuality – which is the very opposite of a formalism, since it demonstrates how texts create and posit their own histories, within the framework of what Jameson called ‘*the ideology of form*’, that is, the determinate contradiction of the specific messages emitted by the varied sign systems which coexist in a given artistic process as well as in its general social formation’.¹⁴ It is in this direction, above all, that a postcolonial literary history must move.

Australia, Vietnam and indigeneity

In Australia, the crystallization of an avowedly postcolonial problematic was forced by a saturation of the ideological field, from 1962 onward, by the very question of Vietnam – the Menzies government’s siding with the USA on the matter of military intervention against the Viet Cong; the conscription of men of fighting age; and a mass mobilization of youth against the war, schooled in the American anti-war movement itself. It was under the auspices of the US image economy that this younger generation came into self-consciousness: American films, American jazz and pop, and American protest traditions, even as it was an American war in Indochina that catalysed their dissent. The baby-boom generation, in the name of a Vietnam most had never visited, revolted *en masse* against the opportunist paternalism of their national government and, though it was not yet a defined concept, forced the opening of a *postcolonial* literary sensibility. It was a generation that invented its own predecessors, not out of the blue, but out of the intense ideological and relational fidelities of their present. Literary history was substantively transformed by those fidelities into an intertwined matrix of serviceable and non-serviceable, anti-imperial and pro-imperial, formal and ideological elements in the indigenous literary record. Nor is the term ‘indigenous’ incidental in this context, since the pivotal awareness in any political commitment to the Vietnamese was

of their indigenouness to their own land and consequent rights to self-determination – a realization that then led inevitably to an open avowal of solidarity with the still-colonized, shattered remnants of an Australian indigenous, ‘Fourth World’ community in far-flung compounds and wretched settlements across the landmass. Australian literature became postcolonial, and discovered its own postcolonial traditions, at the moment it looked into the dark heart of a war of decolonization and neo-imperialism in Vietnam, and saw there the ravaged reflection of its own colonial unconscious.

The abolition of the ‘White Australia’ immigration policy in 1966, and the historic referendum granting full citizenship rights to Aboriginal Australians the year after, could not contain the energies released by this electrifying convergence. National government could not provide an adequate frame to what was being kinetically activated. As Anne Brewster points out in this volume (Chapter 16(b)), Australian ‘Aboriginal political identity developed within a global context of protest, shaped by the Black and Red Power moments in the US; by the liberation struggles in Africa, Papua New Guinea and South America; and by global indigenous affiliations under the banner of the United Nations.’¹⁵ It is precisely this galvanizing *nationalization* of rising international currents of indigenous and Third World resistance, mediated through the anglophone consolidation of Black and Native militancy in the USA – itself shaped by the internal reaction against the super-power’s Vietnamese adventure – that made of the mid 1960s the epochal ideological and political watershed that it was in Australia’s history. ‘The Black American experience’, wrote Scott Robinson in 1972, ‘was the most profound exogenous influence on Aboriginal political activism in the 1960s.’¹⁶ What had lain dormant, but latent, in the pulverized Aboriginal communities across the continent, now gained a focal point and a protocol for enunciation: a repressed epic of dispossession and genocide could return from the vaults of history as a singular voice. The affirmative reclaiming of the signifier ‘Black’ was an ideological tonic in this reversal. Having served African Americans as a slogan of pan-African unity on the home soil of industrial slavery (as the authors of *Black Power* put it, ‘pride, rather than shame, in blackness’¹⁷), the epithet now became available, through actual engagements and moments of contact between representatives of the two groups, for Aboriginal nationalism. ‘Black’, from being in Kevin Gilbert’s words ‘almost an expletive’, but now embodied in a collective political agency, attained a nationalist inflection that chimed with that of the Viet Cong – with whom the Black Panthers and others had already identified politically.¹⁸ Indeed, Huey Newton’s Black Panther Party for Self Defence

advocated not only armed resistance, but a push towards a borderless ‘inter-communalism’ of all the world’s ‘coloured people’.¹⁹ In that spirit, Roosevelt Brown, chairman of the Caribbean and Latin American Black Power Movement, was invited to speak about internationalist Black Power to Aboriginal groups in Redfern, Sydney, in 1969. Activists Gary Foley, Roberta Sykes and Denis Walker professed to be shaken by the visit ‘out of our apathy and complacency’.²⁰ The culminating periods of Kevin Gilbert’s notorious pamphlet, *Because a White Man’ll Never Do It*, are the quoted words of Malcolm X.²¹ Summarizing all of this, Jennifer Clark writes:

Black Power gave Aborigines a new language, a new way of looking at their own growing movement, a confidence to appreciate the black perspective and a desire to assert it. Black Power also offered participation in something bigger and bolder than any individual protest – inclusion in the worldwide black revolution. Black Power was understood in international terms, where all coloured people fighting for liberation against the shackles of colonisation could find solidarity with others.²²

Clark documents the explicit articulations of Third World internationalism by the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League, which wrote in 1969 that ‘many of the coloured peoples who lived under white colonial rule have gained their independence and coloured minorities in multi-racial nations are claiming the right to determine the course of their own affairs in contradiction to the inferior state under which they had lived’.²³ Thus did decolonization, and the contemporary nightmare of Vietnam specifically, dialectically unfold itself as a mode of ideological empowerment of the most deprived of Australian minorities. Dismantling the established framework of spontaneous identification with Britain, these perverse realizations of what Ravi de Costa calls ‘indigenous transnationalism’ inscribed geopolitical tensions on the undecidable skin of notional Australian identity. ‘The Australian nation-state’, de Costa argues, ‘is a space criss-crossed by ideas, values and norms that have arisen elsewhere and have influenced indigenous activism. The “Aboriginal predicament” thus cannot be understood if thought of as a strictly national matter.’²⁴ Which is another way of saying that, when Gary Foley, Kevin Gilbert, Charles Perkins and Michael Anderson, shaken out of their apathy by a visiting Caribbean Black internationalist, set up their tents on the open ground before the Houses of Parliament in Canberra on 26 January 1972, the event – one of the most shattering and important in Australia’s history – was immediately transnational, indeed, in some ways non-national. For what was being articulated, in a manner that subsumed into itself all the dislocations and identifications

implicit in our brief summary above, was the universality of an empty place; as Foley put it, 'this is an embassy: the Prime Minister's statement yesterday effectively makes us aliens in our own land, so like the other aliens we need an embassy'.²⁵ Drawing hundreds of indigenous Australians to join its heterotopic pan-Aboriginality, the Tent Embassy broke the imaginary yoke of Britain once and for all, and made emphatically real to all Australians the radically postcolonial space into which the dialectic of revolutionary change had impelled them. Australia henceforth could only be construed through the 'shared experience of dispossession and collective difference' that the Tent Embassy had erected against the very edifice of neo-imperial power: a parliament committed to napalm and atrocity among the huts and villages of a great peasant people. That shadowing and contest of incompatible imaginary fortunes shaped the ideological landscape of a generation.

This febrile structure of feeling, defined by tensile contradictions and unthinkable consequences, was not conducive to extended literary treatment. On the contrary, the great period of efflorescence it stimulated was characterized by brevity, fragmentariness, neo-romantic rhapsody and satiric surveys, as distinct from the well-wrought artefacts that typified the preceding moment of modernist writing. In poetry, the bohemian lyrics of Michael Dransfield, or the Whitmanesque cadences of Dorothy Hewett's surreal romantic feminism, characterize an era of postclassical inversions and punctual detonations. In theatre, the street shenanigans and political inflammations of La Mama in Melbourne and the Nimrod in Sydney channelled off-off-Broadway American currents, fused them with Brechtian avant-gardism and fed an Australian vernacular into the fierce currents of anti-Vietnam cultural struggle.²⁶ What deserves the epithet postcolonial here is the remarkable sense of unmooring from a British centre of cultural gravity. It was this dramatic uncoupling from the old imperial teat that fractured the formal architectonics of contemporary writing, and in prose fiction privileged forms like the short story. Nowhere is this tendency better on display than in Frank Moorhouse's spirited collection, *The Americans, Baby* (1972), which takes the pulse of the nation in the form of a series of stories loosely unified by the presence of American characters on Australian soil. The tone throughout is that of an almost jaded disenchantment with 1960s ideological conviction, though simultaneously it carries a deep radical surcharge sustained by the continued abutting against 'American' materials. The confrontation is not uniformly negative, and in the wittiest of the tales, 'The American Poet's Visit', which concerns a trip to a Sydney-based countercultural cell by American poet Kenneth Rexroth – who complains that 'Everything here is some sort of damn imitation

of America', and tells the comrades to 'do their own things' – the first-person narrator is led to reflect:

We have nothing of our own to do. . . , nothing. We are culturally incapacitated and dependent. Everyone has known this in his heart now for some time. Actually we're Anglo-American. A composite mimic culture. Miserable shifts. Then I observe that, in a sense, all cultures are interdependent and derivative and that perhaps we are a remarkably rich synthesis. Perhaps we should go with the synthesis instead of painfully pursuing a unique nationalism. Exercising once again my capacity for finding countervailing partial truths for consolation.²⁷

Cultural dependency morphs into enlightened syncretism in a prototypical 'consolation' that will become all-too familiar as the postcolonial hypothesis takes root in the subsequent two decades. Surrendering the allure of a 'unique nationalism' is no mere rationalization of an imbricated cultural imperialism, however, it is tracked throughout Moorhouse's collection as perhaps the only responsible ethical position in the face of the nation's campaign in Vietnam. Generically, of course, the mode here is comic and satiric, the formal vestment of choice for writers like Moorhouse, Michael Wilding, Peter Carey and John Forbes, who used this watershed moment of the early 1970s to 'decolonize' the national literary infrastructure via a tactical demolition of the apparatus of censorship.²⁸ Sex is a subject matter here, but above all in an allegorical sense; the generational defiance of residual colonial decorum turned on the fortunes of the pleasure-seeking body, the weapon of choice in the war against standards now felt as stiflingly foreign. The question is, as Moorhouse was well aware, to what extent were this struggle and the form it assumed already 'Americanized' through and through. Postcolonization and recolonization sit uncomfortably close to each other in this peculiar torsion.

The pseudo-form of the short story was the privileged vessel for forcing a transcendence of the colonial imaginary without actually formulating it as such. Christopher Koch's estimable *Highways to a War* (1995) aside, there is as yet no great Australian Vietnam novel, which is a sure sign of a transitional unconscious at work here: our inability to narrate the shift from a neo-colonial to a postcolonial polity betokens a sizable blockage in the nation's political imaginary. But Judith Wright, one of our very greatest poets, can act as the bellwether in a literary historical context; her 1970 collection, *Shadow*, contains perhaps the most pressing evidence of a sea-change in Australian self-consciousness. In poem after poem that self-consciousness is persistently 'othered' by a Vietnamese presence. In 'Fire Sermon', her riposte to T. S. Eliot's august quietism, we read:

‘Sinister powers’, the ambassador said, ‘are moving
into our ricefields. We are a little people
and all we want is to live.’

But a chemical rain descending
has blackened the fields, and
we ate the buffalo because we were starving.

‘Sinister powers’, he said;
and I look at the newsreel child
crying, crying quite silently, here in my house.

I can’t put out a hand to touch her,
that shadow printed on glass.
And if I could? I look at my hand.

This hand, this sinister power
and this one here on the right side
have blackened your ricefields,
my child, and killed your mother.²⁹

These lines bespeak a threefold seismic disturbance of the site of poetic utterance. First, the verbatim translation of a decolonizing appeal to the basic right of national existence; second, the evocation of the transnational space of mediation, the televisualized newsreel footage circulating on a global distribution network, turning on the spectacle of neo-imperial aggression; and third, the pun on ‘sinister’ which directly yokes that violence with the writing hand of the poet and thus with the poetic vocation *tout court*: the hand which reaches empathetically for the TV shadow is the hand that crafts the poetic line from silence, and which (through the ballot box) indirectly kills mothers and orphans children. This is as ‘postcolonial’ a mode of utterance as you could wish for, since it destabilizes the point of enunciation by way of a transfusion of nationalist rhetoric from the ‘Third World’, that eventually worms its way into the first-person lyric voice of the poem, which can then write, without quotation marks:

Let me out of this dream, I cry.
I belong to a simple people
and all we want is to live.³⁰

Such identification is arrived at by sheer formal craft, not blithely assumed. More significant is the manner in which this transmutation of poetic discourse by the language of anti-colonial struggle has affected the very wellsprings of

nationalist self-consciousness and myth-making. In her important diptych, 'Two Sides of a Story', Wright juxtaposes a traditional nationalist hymn to the nineteenth-century explorer Edmund Kennedy with a much longer and moving apostrophe to his Aboriginal companion, Jacky Jacky or Galmahra, sole survivor of the ill-fated final expedition to the far North. This poem excavates a buried utopian message at the very core of the misunderstood relationship between white explorer and black guide; an inscrutable hope in need of reanimation in the Australia of Vietnam and the belated recognition of Aboriginal Australians as citizens in 1967:

But you, Galmahra? I try to see into your eyes,
as frank and dark as the depths of your Hunter River.
You loved him, certainly; you wept as you buried him,
and you wept again, when your own escape was over.

But why? I imagine you slowly gaining hope –
hope that increased as the Expedition failed –
knowing yourself at last the trusted guide;
hope that somehow your life-pain would be healed,

that the smouldering flame in your heart might meet his eyes
and be quenched in their comforting blue; that you both might ride
through a nightmare country, mutually forgiven,
black logical as white, and side by side.³¹

This utopian strain is not without its own ideological blinkers, but it stands head and shoulders above any easy sentimentalizing of difference pure and simple, of the 'Aborigine' as a figure of nostalgic and apolitical veneration. Wright's discovery of love and mutual forgiveness between black and white in the 'nightmare country' of a sublime intractability is deeply informed by the spectacle of imperial unforgivableness in Vietnam, and reaches out for a lost germ of 'trust' between colonizer and colonized that might inform the future comport of a nation poised to include, if it could not yet apologize to, its internal hostages.

In a clear indication of how postcolonial retroaction unearths and shapes its own tradition, Patrick White's *Voss* (1957) is lit up by Wright's poem as a great statement in the ongoing argument over what colonization meant in a country most of whose landmass was worthless to empire, but which it was nevertheless paramount to declare 'nullius'. *Voss*'s eponymous protagonist, a German Romantic of the first water, who imagines 'Australia' as the vast blank canvas for his own ego's self-transfiguring masterpiece, attains to that same 'nightmare country' into which Kennedy and Leichhardt, Wills and Burke, once

vanished. The novel is a parable of the consequences attending to any blanket imposition of a European ‘philosopheme’ (such as ‘Romanticism’) onto an already inhabited landscape, a populated space marked out by places invisible within the philosopheme’s distribution of the sensible. The diabolism of the German is no match whatever for the continent’s indifferent and pitiless interior, which roasts him alive, subjects him to the inglorious of mutiny and then vouchsafes his being held hostage to a paradigmatic black inhospitality: at the culmination of his quest, where the dream of an inland sea has succumbed to the brute reality of an infinite desert, the bubble of Voss’s vaulting ambition is lanced by a flurry of Aboriginal spears. But this grand dimension of the text, its conscious inflation to the status of national epic, is counterpointed by a very different generic register, romance. For while the masculine essence is spending itself uselessly in the barren interior, the womb of Voss’s ‘beloved’ Laura Trevelyan shrivels up in the suburbs of Victorian Sydney where she adopts the orphaned daughter of a servant and eventually manages a girls’ school, dreaming of a proper vocation for Australian culture. The ironies are so many, and so pregnant, that we are apt to overlook the underlying comic point that this is a novel of the grotesquely missed encounter, of an arrant treachery to others dressed up as a pious fidelity to self. Such would be one adequate allegorical definition of colonialism itself, and it is thus rather disingenuous of Graham Huggan to write that White ‘is a prisoner of the very white-settler mythologies his novel ostensibly debunks’.³² A more considered verdict would be that his generic crossbreed, the bastard offspring of epic and romance, dismantles the very mythologies that either genre subscribes to, in the name of a comic paraphrase of colonial adventurism.

The dynamic interplay between neo-imperial self-consciousness and an emergent fidelity to an indigenous cause is properly inextricable, and has filtered down in one way or another into all literature written since the mid 1960s. The ineluctableness of postcoloniality in Australian writing is to be located here – in the fertile dialectical sense that Third World decolonization can only have rewritten, from the ground up, the manner in which ideology, writing and ‘nationalism’ were performed, thanks to its overtones in indigenous politics. In a diary-based text such as Helen Garner’s *Monkey Grip* (1977), for instance, whose ostensible topic is love and heroin addiction in the bohemian quarters of swinging 1970s Melbourne, it is impossible to deny the postcolonial flavour of a certain infiltration of the semiotic universe: shrines erected to Mao in squatters’ dens, frequent consultations of the I Ching, sexual liberation predicated on Southeast Asian forms of political rebellion, an inevitable period of incarceration in a Malaysian prison on drug charges – indeed,

the entire text is saturated with the pro-Viet Cong spirit of opposition to conscription, even if it deflects its discourse from any explicit engagement with policy as such. The very form of the text, its disconnected jottings loosely assembled in chapters, could be taken for a pointed refusal to acquiesce to 'Western' notions of literary cohesion and shapeliness. The mood of the text is moral rather than political, but this is a morality issued in defiance of anything recognizably Anglo-Australian at the time, and in solidarity with distinctly Asian protocols and habits.

Australia in Asia

When the Whitlam Labour government was elected in 1972, two things happened of decisive import to the field of literary production. First, troops were withdrawn from the theatre of operations in Vietnam; and second, a policy of 'self-determination' replaced a blinkered subservience to the Crown. Australia was thus dramatically repositioned in its region, and began accepting waves of emigrants from Asia, on the back of a new official policy platform of 'multiculturalism'. Where 'Asia' had for a very long time been adduced as the nation's most despised and feared cultural 'other', in order to manage the seemingly impossible ideological task of convincing generations of Australians that they were 'nearer' to Europe than they were to Asia, now that signifier was ripe for refashioning. A genre of writing appeared best described as a local variant of 'late imperial romance', featuring the Graham-Greene-like 'figure of the journalist who travels to Asian 'hotspots' for a story and becomes embroiled emotionally and imaginatively in foreign situations'.³³ The best-known instances of this genre are C.J. Koch's *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1978), Robert Drewe's *A Cry in the Jungle Bar* (1979), and Blanche d'Alpuget's *Monkeys in the Dark* (1980) and *Turtle Beach* (1981). Not long after the exhaustion of this genre, however, a much more interesting and productive generic species took root, which fully deserves the modifier 'post-colonial', since its emphasis fell not on foreign shores, but on home soil. Its quintessential gesture, from within a national literary formation still constrained by the legacy of 'White Australia', was strategically to contaminate that homogeneous racial substance with deep traces of its most reviled and ideologically antagonistic other: 'Asia'. That this equally imagined entity had all along been leaving its peculiar stain on the Australian landmass and psyche – like the 'foot of a Jap soldier washed up in a two-toed rubber boot' on Tim Winton's western shore in *Cloudstreet*³⁴ – was left to the post-Vietnam generations to discover in earnest, and in a range of generic vehicles, none of them

particularly ‘native’ and indeed most often arrived at via a significant formal detour through non-anglophone Europe. The author of what Graham Huggan describes as ‘the best known single work by an Asian Australian writer’, Brian Castro’s *Birds of Passage* (1983), smuggles a fictional sheaf of crumbling yellow papers into the tight space between the glass and the rear wood panel of a nineteenth-century standing mirror.³⁵ These pages, written over by the nineteenth-century character Lo Yun Shun (Shan) with Chinese ideographic script, are discovered by the Australian-born Chinese Seamus O’Young in the country house of his adoptive parents; and, because he ‘can’t read Chinese’,³⁶ he puts himself to school in the language. Thus is set in motion a remarkable series of interpenetrations of past and present, Chinese and English, writing and experience, responsibilities and renunciations, all turning on the status of these papers as testament to the ur-presence of Chinese immigrants in colonial, Gold Rush-era Victoria and New South Wales: a time when one man in ten is Chinese, and the ‘whites feel threatened by the sheer force of the foreigners’ numbers’.³⁷

The elegance of Castro’s structure, the way in which his text first alternates between two equipotent first-person voices, and then progressively dismantles the distinction between them, so that the narrative of Shan is pushed into inverted commas, then the third person, with less and less stylistically to tell it from Seamus’s narrative, is that of a postmodern rebus. Far from settling into a simplistic parallel between past and present, the relation between the contemporary narration and that of the scripted journals describes both a generative and an exploitative arc, according to which ‘Not only am I the *author*, the originator [of Shan’s journals], but I am his *progenitor*, having impregnated myself with these fictions.’³⁸ The chiasmic relations are taken to their perverse limit on a riverbank where Shan encounters the intolerant violence of ‘white Australia’ at the hands of an Irishman and a Spaniard, and finally sees watching him his ‘reader [our narrator]: a wriggling, blind, white-haired man spawned by the future on a river bank’.³⁹ It is a postcolonial apotheosis whose results are that Seamus can be ‘reborn’ as a baby suckling at the breast of his Germanic neighbour, Anna Bernhard, and that Shan can return to China to become a Buddhist monk, having putatively spent some time ‘with a decimated and forlorn tribe of Aborigines’⁴⁰ – a gesture that mirrors Seamus’s earlier fleeting moment on a train, sitting opposite an Aboriginal woman: ‘The native and the foreigner: there was something of both in us.’⁴¹

Indeed, Australia, as anything but an ‘imagined community’, indeed more as an intensification of Patrick White’s internalized landscape and metaphysic of desolation, will have been the central void around which the paradoxical

torsion of either character's story turned. As we hear of Shan, 'He was on a different path now, in control of his destiny, and he brought with him something of the void he had experienced in Australia, the silence and the stillness that helped him to accept his microscopic role in the eternal recurrences of nature.'⁴² While for Seamus himself, 'I am a being hedging around nothingness, my centre arid, desolate, unfulfilled.'⁴³ The enduring negative capability of Australia as a sublime trope of *terra nullius* is here focused through the lens of French theory, and confirms various tendencies towards a 'European' textual nexus – an affinity with Kafka, Callois and Queneau, references to Auschwitz – which finally unsettle any too-easy binarism between the assumed essences of China and Australia. Indeed, Castro's protracted reaction against this text's all-too typical reception as 'expressive' of his own ethnically hybridized state, in a series of withering satires of dominant Australian genres afterwards, seems perfectly justified given the careful deconstruction to which the very notion of expression is exposed in the brief span of this first novel.

Finally, it would appear that the text finds itself (like many another post-colonial work, including David Foster's *Moonlite* (1981) and Rodney Hall's *Just Relations* (1982)) reanimating the historical moment of the Gold Rush. In Castro's case, this is not only for the thick history of Asian history in the region that it confirms, but moreover for the extraordinary opening it briefly entertained towards internationalist class solidarity under the flag of 'Eureka'. Australia's greatest and most electrifying native moment of democratization is channelled into the Irish character Clancy's contradictory reflections on the Chinese miners, which swing from racist hatred to sweeping fraternal inclusiveness:

There was common ground between the two of them . . . He wanted to express the ideas of a brotherhood he had crudely formed in his mind; a brotherhood that made no distinction between race or religion . . . 'There's enough idealism to be harnessed, enough of a sense of brotherhood to make it work. But we've got to break down the distrust. Everyone must accept each other and care. We've got to communicate, organize.'⁴⁴

The echoes here of a more contemporary discourse in 1983, that of official multiculturalism, are hard to ignore; and so too are the egregious bad faith and self-serving, hypocritical chicanery that went with so much of that discourse. But along with that distasteful residue is the deeper utopian feeling that Eureka will always have harboured as an event in which the Federation and beyond that the still unachieved republic and a future radical democracy were proleptically demanded by thousands of uneducated Ballarat miners:

'There's been a lot of talk about an Australia, a country, a united Australia Felix', Clancy went on, his voice rapturous, trembling. 'Yes, that's my ideal. It's waiting to be created. A pastoral paradise without greed or fear.'

'We velly cold, velly far flom home.' The Chinaman's voice rang out like a wolf's lament.⁴⁵

Between these two perfectly legitimate and possibly irreconcilable utterances, Castro posits his historical fable as a series of imaginary lines of flight: the purple idealism of the one and the assumed 'Orientalism' of the other delineate a missed opportunity as much as they do a determinate antagonism. Into this breach is hurled the trope of *terra nullius* as an existential alibi against making the effort that Clancy's vision entails.

Castro has substantially revisited (further to evacuate) the supposedly 'authentic' site of his earlier text's production as 'the primary sources of the imagination of your race(s)', in his recent 'fictional autobiography', *Shanghai Dancing* (2003). At a critical late point in the text, our narrator, as unreliable as ever, addresses an academic seminar in Hong Kong on the 'Limitations of Translation':

I was speaking about Chinese voices, about how to translate distress. Does trauma feed invention instead of truth? ... I began to speak about the *trans-erene*. About the voices of the dead. It was in this building in my childhood that I first felt it. *Transonance: a silken passage of sound produced in one organ of the body through the substance of another*. The dead are in us, I said, in the form of ancient languages which live within our own. Like hearing the heart through the lungs. The transerene had been a separation, returned to us as if we were sensitive to it; buried kinships. But how could you translate all the worlds that had fallen in between? There was no way I could reveal this divinity. *I am not here!* I shouted.⁴⁶

In a critical piece published after this book, Castro has urged, 'literature itself needs to be revived through stimulation between margins and nations so there is a reconsecration of innovation, not a bland hypermarket of globalisation'.⁴⁷ These two statements demonstrate the degree to which Castro's speaking position has discovered its own rich semantic transonance between the axis of cultural and geographic separation and the axis of historical time. The task has been to make writing, rather than a naïvely conceived identity, visible again.

Writing becomes visible above all as a material platform upon which to execute new acts. It is thus a testament to the solidity of Castro's achievement that it should have served as the motive cause of perhaps postcolonial Australian fiction's most exquisite product, Alex Miller's novel, *The Ancestor*

Game (1992). Here, our larger narrative of postcolonial generic and discursive pollination in the nascent age of empire or multinational capitalism attains a kind of zenith of complexity. For it is not simply that Miller has seized hold of latencies inherent but not exploited in Castro's militantly dualistic framework of Australian self-estrangement, it is that he has used it as a springboard into a properly multiple and transnational zone of writing, whose putative origin in an Australian problematic (the 'rise of Asia') is the ironic quilting point of a work preoccupied with ancestral passages to and fro between Scotland, Ireland and Hamburg, Shanghai, Amoy and Hangzhou. The novel hypnotically evokes 'the ambivalences and ambiguities of migrancy, feelings of dislocation, longings for return, and the possibilities of multiple geographic and cultural belongings' among a clutch of outsider friends living on the fringes of Melbourne in the 1970s, where the protagonist teaches English to non-English speaking children.⁴⁸

The novel's narrator, Stephen Muir, a frustrated writer of Scots-Irish descent who cannot seem to find within himself those 'extensive and complex landscapes rich with meaning and mystery' that would justify the writer's quest to find them, discovers them instead in his uprooted friends Gertrude Koch and Lang Tzu: 'it seemed to me that Lang and Gertrude might occupy the vacated homelands of my interior, which were in danger of being colonised by the chanting spectre of my father', the dead lyrical Scot from whose funeral Stephen has just returned.⁴⁹ That is to say, in place of the 'colonizing' voice of the anti-colonial Scots patriot father (the core values of neo-colonial 'Australia'), Muir substitutes the decolonized voices of two utterly displaced migrants, one of German and the other of Chinese extraction – or rather, the voices of their ancestors, since neither has anything particularly resonant to say. It is this 'fiction'⁵⁰ of authenticity that the novel's looping texts within texts, its hybrid generic frame, prosecutes without once pretending to be anything more than an elaborate game of writing. That game is itself inevitably 'colonizing' in its own way; the very attempt to know or to become the 'other' whom one's own vacancy has fetishized into a symbol of ontological substance is perforce loaded. When Muir writes that, in writing about Lang he 'had inserted [himself] into the interstice created by [Lang's] absence',⁵¹ then that is only an admission of the inevitable politics of transcription and the writing body's imperial inhabitation of the other's imaginary frame. But this is the very zero degree of postcolonial writing today, the bare minimum of reflexivity about the act of writing without which texts can never raise themselves beyond the bad immediacy of generic and ethnic automatisms. With this admission in place, the novel's extravagant and seductive recreations of early

twentieth-century Hangzhou are to be read as ‘Not China but an Australian fiction of China, like Gertrude’s Australian fiction of Germany’.⁵² ‘Australia’ progressively nominates a place, not of geographic or geopolitical solidity, but of fictional lability, ‘a kind of phantom country lying invisibly somewhere between East and West, [where] you may find a few of your own displaced and hybrid kin to welcome you’.⁵³

Yet that temptation is the lure of idealism. The materialist corrective to it is issued in the very form of the text itself, a veritable palimpsest of formal and generic motivations each nestled in the other like so many Russian dolls, and each internally displaced by some minimal difference that will have turned its ideological presuppositions inside out. The most ancient generic layer on show is that of pastoral, yet it is a pastoral deeply altered by the fact that its central shepherd, indentured on a Victorian farm, is none other than Lang’s great-grandparent, the ‘first’ Feng – a one-eyed Chinese orphan who has set sail for the Great Southern Land on the tail-end of a devastating famine.⁵⁴ The Arcadian mode is further postcolonialized by the polyphonic situation to which it gives rise: a pseudo-utopian ‘mateship’ shared by Feng, a young Koori youth called Dorset who has spent years in London and has gentlemanly aspirations, and an incendiary Irish nationalist, Nunan, who without much linguistic commonality manage to produce a ‘constructed ... lingo comprehensible only to themselves’.⁵⁵ The evocation of the fraternalism of Eureka first gestured towards by Castro in a not dissimilar context is then pursued in striking allegorical directions when, out of their ‘friendship and understanding and harmony’,⁵⁶ the Aboriginal Dorset is commandeered and then killed by a party of landed gentry; and in their quest to find him and bury him, his comrades are the first to strike gold near Ballarat. The wealth of the great house of Feng, whose rampant modern materialism eats into the precious aesthetic traditionalism of the Hangzhou artist whose daughter Feng II marries and who thus sires Lang himself, is thus a profoundly ‘Australian’ wealth in the most striking of material senses: a vomiting up, within the borrowed precincts of pastoral, of the landscape’s very intolerance towards its own indigenous betrayal.

None of which can really have prepared the ground for what, in 2008, announced itself under the proper noun of Nam Le as nothing less than the effective internationalization of Australian literature under the aegis of the Asian immigrant. The momentous short-story collection, *The Boat*, is the work of a 29-year-old child of refugees from the Vietnam War, who grew up in Melbourne and later landed in the fabled Iowa Writers’ Workshop, but whose response to the multicultural, ‘identity-politics’ agenda in both countries’

literary establishments has been to reject all vestiges of essentialism in his prose, and to promote at all costs the capacity of writing to displace, disorient, disturb and dismantle identitarian conservatism. The expected 'expression' of a damaged migrant identity has been disciplined and curtailed, and then exiled into seven other damaged and migratory voices, in an attempt to map nothing less than the fraying contours of our globalized present. For Nam Le is an 'Australian' writer freed from all geographic or geopolitical limits, a truly postcolonized voice, fractured into the kaleidoscopic mode of a short-story collection without any spatial or temporal consistency, without any gender, class or racial consistency, and without any consistency of style, person or scope. Indeed, as we range from the barrios of a mid-size Colombian city, to a colonoscopy in an up-market Manhattan surgery, to the hills outside Hiroshima in the agonizing days just prior to Little Boy's infamous descent, to the teeming streets of Tehran on the night of a major festival, we marvel at the extent to which writing has here been pressed into the service of an old-fashioned, almost Naturalist responsibility towards the totality of forces which circumscribe the world.

All of this is couched within the highly self-reflexive frame of an opening story in which a young Vietnamese-Australian writer in the Iowa workshop hosts his ageing father on a visit from Melbourne, and a closing story in which an illegitimate young Vietnamese boy dies in the final stage of a harrowing, illegal mid-1970s boat passage from South Vietnam to Malaysia. It is the first of these two tales in which the ideological presuppositions of the collection are promulgated. The protagonist (who bears strong resemblances to what we know about Nam Le himself, thanks to the marketing of the book) and some fellow students at the Writers' Workshop engage in a spirited conversation about the temptations of 'ethnic lit':

'I know I am a bad person for saying this', my friend said, 'but that's why I don't mind your work, Nam. Because you could just write about Vietnamese boat people all the time. Like in your third story ... You could *totally* exploit the Vietnamese thing. But *instead*, you choose to write about lesbian vampires and Colombian assassins, and Hiroshima orphans – and New York painters with haemorrhoids.'⁵⁷

Such are the perceived parameters within which the ethnically marked writer is obliged to make her way in today's infinitely branded and commodified world, where essence and appearance coincide along the axis of ethnic identity. The reaction is inevitable, and one would think, politically urgent – the temptation to 'exploit' the 'Vietnamese thing', in the very collection in our hands, is

dislocated by the roster of alternative identities here rehearsed. We are catapulted into Colombian slums and elsewhere on an errant trajectory through the present and recent past, until finally returning in the final, title story to that tale about ‘Vietnamese boat people’, long promised and indefinitely postponed. For Le, it is the frailty of the human body itself, its proneness to disease, to pain, to love and to death, that both curtails the extent of ideological domination and suggests a plane on which a wealthy New York artist dying of colon cancer, a Colombian barrio youth about to detonate a grenade in his own pocket and a Vietnamese boy vomiting up his last under the poisonous tropical sun are mere modalities of a single substance. That this could equally well be said to be the dominant ideology of today’s postpolitical consensus – an ideological paradigm called ‘animal humanism’ by Alain Badiou⁵⁸ – does not detract from the formal use to which it is put here, placing a palpable moratorium on any facile attempt to define ‘Australianness’ in abstraction from the horror to which it will have given rise in the very physical attempt to reach it in a political line of flight from a properly Third World postcolonial site. Australia’s self-congratulatory account of its tolerance towards the ‘boat people’ is placed, as it were, under the moral censure aroused by a consciousness of the nation’s various ‘detention centres’, where thousands of other refugees have been imprisoned in camp life since the Howard government first started turning the clock back on its regional commitments. ‘Mere life’, as Giorgio Agamben calls it, seems a reasonable frame of reference for an honest account of Australia’s aggressively recolonizing agenda towards its refugee and indigenous populations.⁵⁹

Pastoral becomes gothic

The *locus classicus* of pastoral as a class mode of utterance, the country house, knows no application in the Australian context that is not always and already ‘haunted’. In Raymond Williams’s classic account of ‘pastoral and counter pastoral’, we read how the country house poem, as an eloquent expression of the ‘relation between the country houses and a responsible civilization’, characteristically reifies moral and social values in a vision of the landscape dispensed around the house and its spuriously ‘organic’ relations between lords and peasants.⁶⁰ Such relations do not obtain in the Australian scene, since as John Kinsella points out, Williams ‘is not talking about the homestead that threatens indigenous presence, that is the focus of crop failure and drought’.⁶¹ Indeed, in Australia’s colonized landscape, the house ‘becomes the claim, the fortress, the bastion, as much as the hearth, retreat, and enclave.

It is a declaration of colonization and occupation.⁶² And it is in the midst of this invidious chemistry that the rural homestead looms up out of Australian pastoral as something more than architectural, to become properly *unheimlich* and temporally out of joint. Australian gothic sinks its stubborn roots in this topos above all, which allows it to resonate with the melancholy emptiness of the very landscape itself, depopulated of its indigenous peoples, and saturated with their blood. For surely the predominant trope of Australian postcolonial literary history is that of the ‘undead’ Aborigine, a local variant of what Victor Li splendidly calls ‘necro-idealism’: a hand-wringing admission of guilt on the part of white writers, a figure in which the return of the repressed truth of genocide and innumerable atrocities takes the form of Keneally’s ‘chant of Jimmie Blacksmith’ – a forlorn indigenous cry, haunting the enclosed territories of station and farm, and above all the homestead itself.⁶³

An adequate account of this return of the repressed in Australian literary history – the persistence with which novels and other narrative forms turn upon the exposure of a traumatic moment of violent encounter, territorial dispossession, and outright mass murder between European and Aboriginal ancestors – would need to address the knotting of two interlinked formal processes: the critical deconstruction of British generic materials; and the avid importation of American genres such as the ‘road’ novel, urban crime fiction and the western. It is not just that the ‘return of the Aboriginal repressed’ keeps transpiring in postcolonial Australian fiction – it is that it happens, for instance, within the extraordinary demonstration of the insufficiency and impropriety of the Victorian comic novel form undertaken by Peter Carey in *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988), where, after hundreds of tantalizing pages, just at what should be the climax, the comic machinery stumbles blindly upon a barbaric episode of colonial atrocity against Kooris in the bush. Or, it is that the ‘return of the repressed’ takes place within and against the imported conventions of a ‘gothic novel’, as in Andrew McGahan’s *The White Earth* (2004), where the dilapidated gothic mansion of a nineteenth-century pastoralist is haunted by ghosts of an entirely different order, as the young boy staying there uncovers a gruesome past of native dispossession and genocide under the contemporary shadow of Mabo.⁶⁴ But this same mansion can reappear in the Australian domestication of the American road romance novel, as with Alex Miller’s *Journey to the Stone Country* (2002), where not ghosts but a teeming nest of white ants ‘haunts’ the great proprietorial dream with the spectres of massacres past; and where a Jangga witch curses the interracial couple with a spiteful history lesson. Or, in the devolved imaginary of John Kinsella’s Western Australian ‘wheatbelt gothic’, another nineteenth-century mansion

is poetically excavated for the ‘prison cells’ beneath it, where eventually we discover the inevitable ‘black warrior’s skin / stretched out against the wall. / Body heat tarnishing / architecture, the space / beneath, within’.⁶⁵

Gothic rises up into the landscape as a specifically literary registering device for the invisible and increasingly forgotten history of atrocity and murder with which the ‘white earth’ has been stained. Consider how Kinsella explicitly adduces the term within the discursive substance of a poem entitled ‘Wheatbelt Gothic or Discovering a Wyeth’:

the mid-West Gothic of a lone tree stump
that appears to beckon in its loneliness – open space
as collusive as a vaulted cathedral in Europe,
and the well as much a receptacle of guilt
as the cathedral’s font.⁶⁶

Such *contretemps* disjoint even the avowedly postmodern sensibility of John Tranter, Australia’s most advanced poet of the period. His prevailing ‘urban’ optic is not immune to the sense that the broader countryside is haunted; and not simply by the undead Aborigine, but that spirit admixed with the very violent force that dispatched it:

You drive past the tree split by lightning
holding up its arms, a piece of burnt wood

in the figure of a ghost watching the forest
as the rain colours the world dark grey and glossy,
something is waiting under the branches, an alien spirit,
the ghostly revenant invaders feel, their own reflection
projected on the ruin they have made.⁶⁷

Genocide, barbarity and betrayal were the flipside of every enlightened attempt to spare the Aborigines the indignity of their own backwardness. What haunts the landscape is, as Tranter says, the revenant of white Australia’s own savage history.

In an ambitious attempt to trace the persistence of gothic tropes and signifiers back to the very origins of Australian settler and convict life, and following in the footsteps of David Malouf’s emblematic postcolonial novel *Remembering Babylon* (1993), Kate Grenville’s successful novel *The Secret River* (2005) charts the foundation of a riparian settler enclave along the banks of the Hawkesbury River, north of Sydney, in the early 1800s. Here William Thornhill, convict riverman and exile, attempts to realize the gentleman’s pastoral dream on a fertile and beautiful ‘thumb of land’, that just happens to

be a sacred gathering site for the region's numerous Kooris. Spending some time in uneasy truce with the visitants and their all-night corroborees, Thornhill erects his humble home and starts a garden, but raided by the Kooris, he eventually sides with his belligerent white neighbours, and mounts a murderous purge of all but a few remnants of the great tribe who once called his homestead home. Grenville ends her detailed but rather pedestrian historical novel with a pointed account of Thornhill's rapid rise to riches and a grand estate, the old man himself looking out over a vast canopy of trees, scanning the foliage for a telltale sign: 'Sometimes he thought he saw a man there, looking down from the clifftop . . . He knew they had that capacity for standing in the landscape and simply being. He stared back, and reminded himself how patient they were, how much they were part of the forest . . . Finally he had to recognise that it was no human, just another tree, the size and posture of a man. / Each time, it was a new emptiness.'⁶⁸ As an aching myth of origin of Australian pastoral and the nation itself, this poignant, empty gaze from the great house is the wellspring of gothic itself, since any happiness erected on such vacancy and genocidal violence is always '*Too late, too late*'.⁶⁹ Its time out of joint, truly uncanny, the recreated colonial gaze is already haunted by its postcolonial doubts and lacerations.

The monstrous form of 'writing back'

If Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* has any relevance to an Australian literary history, it is in the sense of her generous according to the hideous 'creature' a basic right of reply to the monological act of creation. When in that superlative fiction of the Enlightenment the creature addresses his maker, he does so in a crazy-quilt of generic registers and aggressive 'unmakings' of the very rhetorical infrastructure of thought. It is just so that the 'empire writes back' in Australian literature since the 1965 watershed, returning boldly to Europe only to shout *j'accuse* at its indifferent face, and call it to account for the botched job of our own identity. It has done so, indeed, with ever-increasing accents of anxiety and desperation since the children of those non-Anglo-Europeans who flocked to Australia after World War II came of age and began teasing away at the issue of national identity from within a multicultural frame of reference. By the mid 1990s, as Luke Slattery put it, Australians were 'desperate for the authentic authorial voice of contemporary multiculturalism', without anticipating the inevitable rider that such 'authenticity' was a potent fiction bred by our own government's sentimentalizing of complex demographic trends.⁷⁰

The infamous ‘Demidenko affair’ is one of Australian cultural history’s more monstrous, proceeding from this aforementioned hunger for authenticity, by way of fraud and scandal, only to arrive at a prodigious disavowal and the curious vanishing act of the novel itself – *The Hand That Signed the Paper* (1994) – from the literary marketplace, despite a clutch of prestigious awards and citations. The affair concerns the successful performance of Slavic ethnicity by an Anglo-Australian woman, Helen Darville, who, masquerading as Ukrainian immigrant Helen Demidenko, authored a ‘fictionalized’ account of her own alleged family history of persecution under the hands of Soviet Jews, and a subsequent reactive role in the Holocaust. This perverse act of ethnic transvestism divulged an unpalatable history that had already become a part of Australia’s own; it did so by violating the sacred borders of identity that the multiculturalist policy agenda had already erected around discrete communities within the immigrant mix. The generic springboard of this backhanded act (a historical novel in which ‘the first-person narrator deliver[s] an authentic story, the alleged eyewitness accounts underpinning the foreign’⁷¹) is so familiar as to be helplessly mired in cliché, but the promise of the genuine, the real, overwhelms whatever limitations cripple the form – until such time as the promise is withdrawn, and the whole edifice collapses into a heap of trite and cynical engineering.

By far the most explosive and monstrous literary performance of the post-colonial moment, however, and perhaps of all Australian literary history, is that perpetrated by the gay Greek writer, Christos Tsiolkas, in his unswervingly radical and unpalatable *Dead Europe* (2005). Tsiolkas first made his name with *Loaded* (1995), his contribution to the Americanocentric ‘grunge lit’ genre whose beachhead here was Andrew McGahan’s *Praise* (1992), and subsequently contributed a strident working-class, Greek and gay voice to the Australian theatre. *Dead Europe*, however, is a beast of another stripe, constructing a complex generic interzone between ruthless contemporary critique, and a fabulous magic-realist narrative strand. The result is a toxic meltdown of all assumed values surrounding ethnic particularism, and a traumatic revisitation of the postmodern, ‘pastless’ present of empire by the unstilled spectres of the Holocaust – anti-Semitism providing the key for unlocking the cosy multiculturalism of liberal Australia and Europe alike. As the improbably named Greek-Australian Isaac travels across the blasted, Americanized landscape of the new Europe (‘The Stars and Stripes were all over Prague. They flew from backpacks and from the fast food cafeterias that fed the tourist hordes. The ubiquity of the Stars and Stripes was a dare, a defiant fuck-you to the rest of the world’⁷²), drifting in and out of gay sexual encounters, and photographing

what he sees, he develops the symptoms of vampirism, and sees more than he bargained for exposed in his pictures. As the parallel narrative of mountain-side Greek village life in the World War II years converges with Isaac's own, his photographs become stained with the horror of what globalization cannot present – its disavowed class antagonisms, racial hatreds and sexual violence – and his appetite for blood sends him on a murderous quest for the Real of Nietzschean affirmation. Just as Nam Le had propelled his Vietnamese-Australian point of enunciation onto a global stage, Tsiolkas projects his Greek-Australian situation onto the screen of empire itself, where it reverberates with a vast cosmic emptiness, a lack so deep that it can only find a foothold in the legacy of the dead Communist father, who counters the peasant mother's anti-Semitic diatribes with his account of the true tragedy of the Holocaust – 'the Nazis destroyed the Jewish proletariat'⁷³ – and bestows the name Isaac on his only son. That Australian literature can today locate its mission squarely within the largest conflicts and tragedies of the twentieth century, and develop new formal resources in order to assume that responsibility, is a testament to its accelerated postcolonial trajectory, according to which neither British nor American genres, but European formal histories alongside Asian protocols and 'impersonalities', generate the most productive matrices of contemporary literary work.

New Zealand's postcolony

The core historical difference between the colonies that eventually made up the Australian Federation and the colony of New Zealand lay in the Crown's respective attitudes to native title; this distinction was then modulated and inflected by the different roles each state would play in the Vietnam conflict of the 1960s and 1970s. If, as I have averred, Australia's Vietnamese trauma had to do with a shocking recognition of an unwelcome mirror image in the horrors of that neo-imperial war, then such was never likely to have been the case in New Zealand, where since 1840 a legally sanctioned treaty had prevented the more extreme results of genocide, cultural decimation and wanton land theft – so characteristic of the Australian Aboriginal experience – from occurring. Which is not to say that the 170 years since the Treaty of Waitangi have not seen their share of barbarous affronts to Maori culture and society; it is simply to register the stark political contrast between a state without a native title treaty (or, until 2007, even an apology) and one with. Above all, it is to specify the peculiar dynamics of New Zealand's postcolonial watershed of the 1960s in terms of a 'native' retroaction, a motivated indigenous reclaiming of the terms

and parameters of a document already some century and a quarter old. The treaty having lapsed, recurrently, from the official public arena since 1840, the 1960s mark the epoch at which any further lapsing was unthinkable. In the words of Chadwick Allen, the treaty's 'disavowed discourse is *reified*, reclaimed from impotent abstraction and once again rendered concrete. To rephrase Bhabha's definition of colonial mimicry as "almost the same, *but not quite*", we might define indigenous re-recognition as "exactly the same, *but then some*".⁷⁴ And the proximate cause for this aggressive reification and dogged literalism was, again, Vietnam, with its spectacle of imperial invasion and scorched earth. Maoris were galvanized by the American anti-war movement along with most of New Zealand's Pakeha (European) population, leading to a situation in which although, again like Australia, it was the first war fought by New Zealand as anything other than Great Britain's ally, so too was it decried and condemned on an unprecedented scale. Indeed, at its peak level of involvement, in 1968, the New Zealand forces in Vietnam only numbered 543, as compared with Australia's peak 1969 commitment of 7,672. Yet even given this relatively modest contribution, the wave of protest from the Pakeha literary intelligentsia was ferocious and concerted, targeting American regional military might as a shared object of vituperative repudiation. David Mitchell's venomous double-lyric 'my lai / remuera / ponsonby', in his *Pipe Dreams in Ponsonby* (1972), was iconic in its condemnation of US atrocities against Asian peasants; its more open declaration stood behind the relatively veiled imprecations of Allen Curnow's *Trees, Effigies, Moving Objects* (1972) and C. K. Stead's more plangent *Walking Westward* (1979). A vigorous anti-war and anti-imperialist sensibility stitched together the former isolation and small-group sensibility of New Zealand high modernism, into a united front of solidarity with the besieged Third World. We shall see below what strange fortunes this front was to have when it picked up the aftershocks of US countercultural effervescence, and appropriated the formal matrix of 'future fiction', in a unique brand of postcolonial New Zealand fiction.

First, however, it is critical to realize that, in a still more definitive way than for Australia, Vietnam forced an epochal shift in national self-consciousness by the early 1970s, and it did so above all by reinstating the Treaty of Waitangi as the core civilizational text of the nation per se. The struggle against military intervention in Vietnam precipitated a moment of Maori and Pakeha convergence around their shared stakes in the treaty, and the shared project of nationalism itself, in a much more affirmative manner than the stark irreconcilability of Parliament and the Tent Embassy could in Australia. Of course, that project was simultaneously divergent, since the rising tides of Third

World, and therefore Fourth World, nationalism of which Vietnam had been a pivotal regional test-case, led the Maori 'concretion' of the treaty's terms down a path of indigenous sovereignty. Urban movements like Nga Tamatoa pushed for a national acceptance of Maori language, culture and political presence. A 1975 protest march from one end of the North Island to the other resisted the steady expropriation of Maori land, and in the same year the Waitangi Tribunal was set up to contest creeping infringements of the treaty itself. In such ways did neo-imperial war, and concerted resistance to it, revitalize indigenous politics and reinstate the framework of native title established by an enlightened process of colonial dialogue in 1840. The results have been New Zealand's peculiar and largely successful policy of 'biculturalism', a strategic overturning of both old-fashioned assimilationism and separatist nationalism. If a variety of institutions have been developed to maintain this centaur-like national identity, what remains to be established is the extent to which the institutions of literature have been similarly disposed. By and large, literature has since 1965 bifurcated into two distinct streams, the Maori and the Pakeha, with the great mass of postcolonial literary critical attention being conferred on the former, while the Pakeha tradition has remained more steeped in British waters than is the case in Australia.

In a situation such as this, allegory becomes a well-nigh inevitable supervenient form; not, in Fredric Jameson's contested sense of 'national allegory' (as in, 'All third world texts are necessarily. . . allegorical'; 'they are to be read as . . . *national allegories*'⁷⁵), but much more complexly in the sense of a bifurcation of nationalism itself. In the heady aftermath of 'biculturalist' agenda-formation, literary texts spontaneously allegorized the critical separation between Maori and Pakeha property relations and law, turning again and again on the treaty's second article which guarantees all Maori people authority over their lands, homes and treasured possessions. When a nation's rediscovered founding text at once guarantees such native title *and* protects the colonial land-grab underway, any critical return to it will reflect that contradiction as the *sine qua non* of 'national' postcoloniality. Sovereignty here is two. And it is with such antinomial formulations that New Zealand postcolonial literature has pursued the propositions of its fate, along formally bipartite lines, but with maximal opportunities for deconstructive manoeuvres. For that reason, however, the very postcoloniality of these axes of determination has eluded conceptual attention and clarification; to the extent that, on the one hand, a young Maori scholar of considerable intellectual gifts can maintain the twin axioms that 'the situation of indigenous Maori within a majority settler society ensures that there will be no full liberation, no "after" colonialism' *and* 'the

critical conversation of postcolonialism, or colonial studies, or colonial discourse studies – however invigorating and pertinent for white majority settlers, an international academic audience, or others – is much less relevant to the Maori movement, which involves generating structures for sustaining themselves in an environment quite opposed to their survival as Maori'.⁷⁶ While, on the other hand, a notable Pakeha scholarly venture such as the *Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature* (1998) omits 'postcolonialism' as an entry or even an indexable term. While it defines and suffuses the very conditions of possibility of much New Zealand writing today, the concept of postcolonialism has fallen symptomatically between the cracks of a playing field structured by biculturalist tectonics.

With this in mind, we can return to that heady moment of postcolonial consolidation in the aftermath of successful anti-war campaigning in the early 1970s, when a host of Pakeha writers, including Janet Frame, C. K. Stead and Michael Henderson, spontaneously allegorized the 'condition of New Zealand' through the lens of Vietnam. To read over three novels in particular – Frame's *Intensive Care* (1970), Stead's *Smith's Dream* (1971) and Henderson's *Log of a Superfluous Son* (1975) – in the context just rehearsed is to bear witness to an emergent palimpsestic conception of New Zealand as always and already Vietnamese, subject to the vagaries of imperial whim, and animated by a resurgent tide of indigenous, Fourth World nationalism. *Intensive Care*, Frame's only extended venture into future fiction, reaches that point only after the completion of two preparatory stages in the complex narrative structure: a first book concerning Tom Livingstone's nightmarish experiences in World War I and his subsequent return home to Waipori City; and a second, contemporary book, concentrating on his daughter Pearl and brother Leonard. Only this historicized account of the profoundly brutalizing effects of modern imperial war can properly prepare the novel for where the third book takes it, into a futuristic Waipori City presided over by a purified Huxleyan technocratic functionalism, where an American-directed 'Human Delineation Act' hovers over all citizens like a eugenic sword of Damocles. This biopolitical cleaver will separate genuine humanity from the subhuman ranks who still attend and impede it: those closer to animals, along with those deformed or diseased. By implication, the cleavage is precisely racial, and is enforced through 'sensitive' mass murders on behalf of the state; it is a situation in which two parties 'were no longer on talking terms, their conversation had been made into a quarrell [sic] that was settled by killing'.⁷⁷ The shadow of Vietnam, and of the nascent bicultural national sensibility, looms large over a novel which spends its invective against a force simultaneously American and

local: a fascism of the soul made good on the stage of politics again. Meanwhile, Stead's *Smith's Dream*, clearly taking impetus from Frame's humid imaginative vision, envisages a New Zealand prostrate under the thick heel of a dictator, Volkner, who deploys American troops to manage the population. Stead's accent is distinctly conservative, however, and the anxieties are no longer Frame's on behalf of the ill and different, but have to do with a generalized unease with managed life per se.

We had begun to fear, not only for ourselves but for our country too, and often the two fears conflicted. All our fixed habits and allegiances seemed to be threatened. The familiar patterns of our lives were broken. It was as if a child, bored with the accustomed picture, had arbitrarily composed the jigsaw in a new way, pushing together alien fragments, so that we woke to find ourselves bedfellows with our oldest enemies or menacingly confronted by our dearest friends.⁷⁸

Imperial interference, troped as child's play, redraws not only the literal but the psychogeographical map of the near future to such an extent that all loyalties are at peril; the allegorical application of the national 'jigsaw' to Maori-Pakeha relations are all too clear. Finally, Henderson's protagonist Osgar Senney in *The Log of a Superfluous Son* undergoes a veritable series of inner fissures and distanciations due to the tremors and aftershocks of the Vietnam War; this New Zealand is one already at the mercy of American economic imperialism and complicit in its military crimes. The sense of national transition is definitive in all three novels, ushering in a properly postcolonial cognizance of the irresistible rise of a new global imperialism.

Ian Wedde's work, irradiated from within by the rays of mid-twentieth-century US avant-garde poetics, is notable for its happy demonstrations that 'language can . . . be subtly resistant to the standardising influences of international communications systems and the received orthodoxies of languages of administration and education'.⁷⁹ In a centrifugal line of flight from the 'ideological state apparatuses' of a lingering colonial past and the immediate imperial present, Wedde's poems especially luxuriate in a performative no-man's-land of language, situated between orthodox locations and locutions. In 'refrain ha ha', which holds its nose against the 'political aroma of arsehole' emanating from 'the places where you are forgotten before birth', Wedde commemorates the Viet Cong through the preferred military jargon of the War:

Victor Charlie Victor Charlie
what do I have to tell you.
I want to spend all of my moonlight

in your pale cathedral to hear
 the screech of fins changing direction
 when my hunger impacts
 into your surface tension.⁸⁰

The poem, like so many, opens up its horizons of address to an indiscriminate multitude for whom the VC may stand as representative, welcoming this horde to

...where the treeless mesas
 crumble to the plain: that is my birthright
 & it is yours too
 and if any of us really owned it
 we might as well drown ourselves in its dust
 & wait for the albatross to come along & peck out our final visions.⁸¹

Language here clears a Romantic space free from all property relations, where the land itself claims all comers as its own; in the context of the revived debates about article 2 of the treaty, this utopian strain eludes the hard path of political negotiation in a voluntarist rush for the commune of Earth.

Wedde's historic 1985 anthology of New Zealand verse is notable for its 'obvious and problematical' inclusion of substantial Maori contents;⁸² but perhaps still more for the degree to which the Pakeha materials are then by implication suffused with the magnificent Maori cadences positioned around them. Alan Brunton's whimsical and anarchic verse form catches on certain contents here, such as:

(oh Jerusalem!)
 (oh Calcutta!)
 and the wide world groans
 my fingers get tired of hanging on,
 there is no feeling in my bones
 welcome to the drink,
 friend
 a foreign city is beautiful seen from the hills
 but seen from the ghetto it's a pile of shit

(somewhere precursory to this:
war is a cow
with an udder of thorns)⁸³

The effect is pivotal, demonstrating how inclusion in a 'biculturalist' volume such as this disposes the purview of the poem within a properly global horizon,

just as a Maori poet like Pita Sharples can refer to Black Power/Mangukaha in her own plangent apostrophe to her brother, 'The Space Invaders Machine'.⁸⁴ It is a power of arrangement that, by positioning the Pakeha poet Allen Curnow directly after Arapeta Awatere, electrifies some of his greatest mid-century poems with a clandestine postcolonial *esprit*. The well-known final lines of 'House and Land' – 'what great gloom / Stands in a land of settlers / With never a soul at home'⁸⁵ – resounds with a far deeper melancholy when read after Awatere's sombre 'Lament for Kepa Anaha Ehau':

Now you are gone,
wise man of words,
who will recite the family tree
rooted in heaven
of Te Arawa people?
Will Muriika speak?
Will Te Papa-i-ouru?⁸⁶

Wedde's insights as editor here are profound, and give to Curnow's great sonnet on 'The Skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch' a new, stately allegorical gravity, straining, 'fallen', into the postcolonial future:

The eyes of children flicker round this tomb

Under the skylights, wonder at the huge egg
Found in a thousand pieces, pieced together
But with less patience than the bones that dug
In time deep shelter against ocean weather:

Not I, some child, born in a marvellous year,
Will learn the trick of standing upright here.⁸⁷

Here, the indigenous-extinct and the fallen-settler have their shattered communion redeemed by the wondering, raceless eyes of a child-to-come: a 'marvellous' advent of justice deferred, and conjured by the hand of poetry. With a similar spirit of overcoming the long provincial days of literary New Zealand's genuflection to the 'mother country', Denis Glover is anthologized according to a value system predicated on the future tense:

I do not dream of Sussex downs
or quaint old England's
quaint old towns –
I think of what may yet be seen
in Johnsonville or Geraldine.⁸⁸

Even Janet Frame herself, an anglophile capable of spontaneous recitations of Keats, Wordsworth and Blake, is 're-Framed' by the juxtaposition of her long complaint poem 'Letter' against the Romantic Maori nationalism of Merimeri Penfold. Penfold's direct indictment of Pakeha land laws ('Oh men are beaten, beaten, beaten down / By the laws, the land laws, the strangers! / Oh strangers, why, why?')⁸⁹ takes up the utopian slack of Frame's verse, and tightens it around the central knot of indigenous politics. Frame's cosmopolitan purview is ironically infused with the humanitarian glow of a liberal 'united nations' postcolonialism:

My geography book is out of date. Following the new
recognition of humanity by humanity,
the miles of mountain chains everywhere
(you remember their paralysed snowcapped vertebrae)
have been made free, while rivers too have claimed their share
in the new deal, have changed their flow and no longer obey
the command of the geography book I once knew.⁹⁰

And it is just this Panglossian abstraction that is then undone by Penfold's breathless performance of Wedde's injunction that language 'draws sustenance from location':⁹¹

Here are the homes of speech: Maungawhau, Maungarei,
Maungakiekie, Rangitoto, grasped by many,
Contested by multitudes – battles fought,
And battles lost! Oh what terror!

Strangers, come, settle like godwits
On the landing-place! It is Tamaki-makau-rau!
They land at Waitemata, climb Maungawhau,
They alight at Manukau, mount Maungarei!
The forest of Tane falls, the marae of the new men lie here!⁹²

It is impossible to deny the sustenance Frame's poem draws from this concrete list of Maori place names, battles between colonizer and colonized, lands lost and forests fallen. Against the satiric presentation of 'free' mountain chains and liberated rivers in the postcolonial dispensation, Penfold's exclamatory enumeration of the 'homes of speech' restores blood and bone to the liberal abstractions of empire. The juxtaposition enriches the Pakeha verse with what it alone cannot in good conscience name: the sounds of the language going under. Wedde's anthology is the indispensable postcolonial document of its place and time, and re-engineers the divisive cultural politics of biculturalism to effect both canny and uncanny transpositions between the two cultures.

There are of course internal limits to the sorts of transposition made possible by the postcolonial conjuncture, and these limits will have had determinate roots in the long period of provincial neo-colonialism. The most notorious test-case for what was now permissible in the biculturalist New Zealand literary scene was that of Keri Hulme's 1983 novel, *The Bone People*. The extraordinary international visibility of this text, without doubt New Zealand's most-read contemporary book, led W. J. T. Mitchell to use it as a bellwether in his 1992 survey of the fortunes of postcolonial criticism: 'When Keri Hulme, a Maori-Scottish feminist mystic from the remote west coast of New Zealand's south island, wins Britain's most prestigious literary prize with her first novel. . . , we know that familiar cultural maps are being redrawn.'⁹³ The novel itself, a melodramatic 'family' saga pressing at the very boundaries of that institution, concerns a Maori widower (Joe) who adopts a Pakeha foundling (Simon), and their gradual absorption into the world of a part-Maori woman (Kerewin) who, having won the lottery, retires to a Yeatsian tower overlooking the ocean. Traumatic violence punctures the pedestrian prose, and pushes the narrative towards a supremely unlikely symbolic resolution in which 'Joe, Kerewin and Simon are now the "bone people" – a new multicultural group, founded on Maori spirituality and traditional ritual, who offer transformative hope to a country stunted by the violence of its divided colonial legacy'.⁹⁴ But far more was at stake in the novel than this crudely utopian synthesis towards which it laboured. In perhaps the most notorious incident patrolling the divide between Pakeha and Maori elements, C. K. Stead launched an attack not only on the novel's aesthetic merits (an attack here was probably warranted), but on Hulme's very right to offer herself as Maori at all. Stead's grounds for complaint were racial (only one out of eight of Hulme's grandparents was Maori), linguistic (Hulme never spoke Maori at home) and cultural (Stead 'judged Maori cultural elements in the novel "willed", "self-conscious", "not authentic"').⁹⁵ The elephant in the room had been outlined, and that had to do with the radical absence of any 'authenticity' in the identities of very many of New Zealand's self-styled Maori writers. As Sandra Tawake enumerates,

Not a single one of the writers of recent fiction from the Pacific is positioned 'inside' a single fixed cultural community. Albert Wendt was born in Samoa, educated in New Zealand, married to a Pakeha . . . New Zealander for twenty-five years, served for a number of years on the faculty at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji and now holds a chair at the University of Auckland. Witi Ihimaera, a New Zealand Maori, was educated in New Zealand, was married for more than twenty years to a Pakeha New Zealander, and was a career

diplomat with the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, serving as New Zealand consul in New York and Counsellor (Public Affairs) at the New Zealand Embassy in Washington DC. He is now at the University of Auckland. Alan Duff was born in New Zealand of a Maori mother and a Pakeha father . . . Keri Hulme is by blood one-eighth Maori, but in her own accounting 'by heart and mind' a member of the Maori community in New Zealand.⁹⁶

The exemplary postcoloniality of this situation consists in the inability to ascribe essence to any of its elements. So interpenetrated and mutually implicative are the Maori and Pakeha strands of this tapestry, that it would be foolish to repeat Stead's gesture of invigilating borders that are by definition porous, ragged and opaque.

The upshot has been more and more allegory, higher and higher degrees of internal dislocation and disjointedness. Consider finally the extraordinary series of postcolonial and neo-colonial displacements that could lead Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip*'s (2006) young 'native' narrator to summarize her utopian world-making activities in the long historical no-man's-land between 1990 and 1997 on Bougainville island as follows:

The world Mr Watts encouraged us to escape to was not Australia or Moresby. It wasn't even another part of the island. It was the nineteenth-century England of *Great Expectations*. We were working our way there on assisted passage, each of us with our own fragments, with Mr Watts as helmsman sorting and assembling them into some coherent order.⁹⁷

The dramatic reversal of anti-colonial truisms implicit in this statement, whereby the textual ruins of an exhausted British cultural imperialism can be felt as an intensely indigenous and 'authentic' fetish-object, depends entirely on the deftly realized 'historical context' the novel creates for itself. As the Bougainvillean secession from Papua New Guinea comes to a head, and the Australian government (on behalf of Rio Tinto's considerable copper mining interest on the island) sends logistical support to aid Port Moresby's military campaign against the insurgents, neither greater Papuan nor Australian 'post-coloniality' offers anything but late-imperial belligerence and arrogance to the island's village children. So it is that the sole remaining 'white' residue of a vanished imperial race, Mr Watts (by way of Wellington), introduces to them the astonishingly absorbing world of the 'greatest novel by the greatest English writer of the nineteenth century', *Great Expectations*; and this improbable and libidinal 'return' to a ficto-historical metropolitan centre, an apprehension of which none of the children could have entertained hitherto, existentially

attenuates the violent neo-colonialist imperatives of Papua New Guinea (and Australia) towards the Bougainville Revolutionary Army. But this is, so to speak, New Zealand, the nation that finally brokered peace and independence for Bougainville in 1997, regarding Australia and Papua New Guinea through the ethical lens crafted by Britain's greatest sentimentalist, and doing so moreover in a manner that refuses to do anything so vulgar as *take sides* in the seven-year struggle between the indigenous BRA and Port Moresby's 'redskinned' mainland troops. 'They were different from us', the narrator notes of the consanguine rebels. 'They had turned into creatures of the forest', raucously inebriated and threatening rape.⁹⁸ The displaced isolate, Mr Watts, meanwhile, radiates his 'natural authority'⁹⁹ in all situations, an embodied and anachronistic avatar of Dickens's own benevolent style under the tropical sun, capable of beguiling militants with his Scheherezade-like confabulations out of Dickensian source-texts and villager redactions. Revisionism shades into outright cultural imperialism as the island's last white man holds everyone and everything native ('Even the trees listened') captive to his unmatched narrative powers – 'seduced', 'enthralled', 'with the respect they once reserved for prayer', by 'his Pacific version of *Great Expectations*'.¹⁰⁰ Enthralled, that is, until the mainland army returns to murder him, raze the village to the ground, and precipitate the narrator's eventual flight from her mother's island to the 'enlightened' territories of Australia and New Zealand. It is here that, allegorized into the very central figure of this chapter, we sense her scrutinizing the literary histories of both nations, the crumbling cultural inheritance of Dickensian England (otherwise exemplified in Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs* (1997) and Richard Flanagan's *Wanting* (2008)) and the dominant new structures of US commercial literature, and applying a political and well-nigh ethical charge to the reading of those 'postcolonial' objects in her literary gaze. It is from the displaced, refugee perspective of the indigenous Pacific and Australian peoples that our literatures will survive or fail the test of their own deeper commitments to the heroic processes of decolonization that first stimulated their definitive break from the British yoke.

Notes

1. See Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology* (New York: Praeger, 1962).
2. See Judith Brett, 'Publishing, censorship and writers' incomes, 1965–1988', in Bruce Bennett *et al.* (eds.), *The Penguin New Literary History of Australia* (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin Australia, 1988), pp. 454–66; Bruce Bennett, 'Literary culture since Vietnam: a new dynamic', in Bruce Bennett and Jennifer Stauss (eds.), *Oxford*

- Literary History of Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 245–7; Delys Bird, 'New narrations: contemporary fiction', in Elizabeth Webby (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 183–5.
3. Kwame Appiah, from *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*; excerpt reprinted in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.), *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 123.
 4. Meaghan Morris, *Identity Anecdotes: Translation and Media Culture* (London: Sage, 2006), p. 34.
 5. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2002).
 6. See, for example, Fredric Jameson, 'Periodizing the 60s', *The Ideologies of Theory, Essays 1971–1986*, vol. 2: *The Syntax of History* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 178–208.
 7. Bennett, 'Literary culture since Vietnam', p. 239.
 8. Maurice Shadbolt, 'Afterword', *Figures in Light: Selected Stories* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1978), pp. 237, 241.
 9. See Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991* (London: Abacus, 1995), pp. 225–401.
 10. Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992), p. 28.
 11. See John Marx, 'Postcolonial literature and the Western literary canon', and Andrew Smith, 'Migrancy, hybridity, and postcolonial literary studies', in Neil Lazarus (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 83–96 and 241–60.
 12. Stephen Muecke, 'Coonardoo 1993', in Geroge Papaellinas (ed.), *RePublica*, 2 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1995), pp. 135–46.
 13. Walter Benjamin, 'On the concept of history', trans. Harry Zohn, *Selected Writings*, vol. 4: 1938–1940, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 391.
 14. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 98–9.
 15. Anne Brewster, 'Aboriginal writing in Australia and New Zealand', in this volume, Chapter 16(b).
 16. Quoted in Max Griffiths, *Aboriginal Affairs, 1967–2005: Seeking a Solution* (Dural, NSW: Rosenberg, 2006), p. 28.
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Indigenous writing in Canada, Australia and New Zealand

16(a) Indigenous peoples' writing in Canada

DANIEL HEATH JUSTICE

Words of power

'Words are sacred', Anishinaabe poet and editor Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm reminds us. 'They can transform. Words can change peoples' attitudes, their thinking, their construction of reality, their actions. Words can change the world. As can silence'.¹ To understand the literatures of Indigenous peoples in Canada, one must recognize the power of words, especially when their source is rooted in the peoples who have called this land home for thousands of years, and whose voices have all too often been passively ignored or actively silenced since the onset of European invasion in the sixteenth century.

In the continuing colonial context of Canada, where Aboriginal peoples make up just over 3 per cent of the entire population, the very existence of Indigenous words is a reminder that this is, indeed, a colonized land, and that its first peoples have not gone away or resigned themselves to silence. If anything, their words – in writing as well as ceremony, song, and performance and visual art – affirm the growing representational strength of Native peoples in this land, a strength born of both expansive vision and continuing struggle. The resulting expressive archive – richly realized and diverse in form, purpose and content – constellates a very different understanding of Canada than that assumed by its settler citizens.

Names and beginnings

In 1535, French explorer Jacques Cartier mistook the word *kanata* – a Wendat (Huron) term for 'town' or 'settlement' – for the entire area under the political authority of Donnacona, the powerful Wendat chieftain of Stadacona (what is now known as Quebec City). The roots of present-day 'Canada' are embedded

in that transcultural misunderstanding between Indigenous peoples and non-Native visitors, a recurring characteristic of the continuing paracolonial relationship between these two collectivities (or, to invoke other Canadian political contexts, two 'solitudes'), and one that contextualizes the broader production and reception of Native textual expression since that time.

This chapter offers some introductory observations about Indigenous literatures – broadly understood as the encoding of creative expression in voice, body and material text – its protocols, notable features and histories, particularly in English. It cannot possibly give a representative picture of either the substantial archive or the diverse range of writers who have produced it, and who continue to be instrumental in honouring its established traditions while also adding new ideas, voices and styles that attend to this time and place; it can only gesture in broadest strokes to the many thousands of writers and tens (hundreds?) of thousands of diverse texts written, published and performed by Native writers in Canada. For the purposes of the larger collection, these brief observations are also attentive to (though not entirely subsumed within) the relationship of Indigenous peoples and their writing to the Canadian settler-state and its population. Whereas the term 'postcolonialism' provides a number of helpful tools for understanding the particularities of this relationship, it is limited in its applicability to this specific colonial context; instead, I offer 'paracolonialism' (coined by Anishinaabe theorist Gerald Vizenor) as a term more suited to the material and intellectual struggles of the Indigenous peoples of this land, a term with particular currency among Indigenous literary scholars.

Terminology and protocols

But what do we call this literature? Is it First Nations, Canadian Indian, Aboriginal, Indigenous, Native? Each term clarifies some meanings and interpretive insights while obscuring or entirely erasing others. Like any ostensibly identifiable literary tradition, terminology is important as much for what it includes as what it leaves out. And for the writing of the first human peoples in Canada, the issue of terminology is particularly important, as this issue encapsulates the paracolonial context of Canadian society today. Just as Cartier assumed that a specific word with a localized meaning represented a more generalized expanse of territory, so too have certain terms – 'Indian' most prominent among them – been used by various constituencies of the settler population of Canada to collapse the diverse cultural, cosmological, political and geographic specificities of over 600 Indigenous nations into a single,

homogeneous and more easily legislated concept, most often to the detriment of the peoples being thus defined. Native peoples and their nations are thus erased, and the colonialist construct of the 'Indian' is put in its place.

It should therefore be of little surprise that Native writers and activists have, in affirming their own perspectives, aesthetics and worldviews, paid particular attention to the ways that they identify themselves in the world, as well as to the oppressive and assimilative ways that non-Native Canadians have used terminology and its associated epistemic presumptions to interpret, define and contain Indigenous 'difference'. Maureen Konkle points out that when

the knowledge about Native peoples has construed them as different and sought to account for their difference ad infinitum, and when Native intellectuals have recognized that that knowledge about their difference is the means to justify political oppression, it should come as no surprise when efforts are made to counter and stop the flow of misrepresentations. Native writers have been doing this since they have been writing in English.²

Given its representational, political and legal power, terminology has been (and continues to be) a point of significant intellectual and political intervention by Indigenous peoples in Canada, as in Okanagan writer Jeannette Armstrong's poem 'Indian Woman', where she confronts the violent disregard embedded in racist and sexist English terms:

I am a squaw
a heathen
a savage
basically a mammal

I am a female
only in the ability
to breed
and bear papooses
to be carried
quaintly
on a board
or lost
to welfare

I have no feelings

The sinuous planes
of my brown body
carry no hint
of the need

to be caressed
desired
loved
Its only use
to be raped
beaten and bludgeoned
in some
B-grade western.³

Considering the shared context of these many communities as colonized populations experiencing similar levels of political, economic, intellectual and cultural dispossession, the use of some form of collective term in describing this textual archive is perhaps inevitable in the present discussion, but some terms are more useful and more accommodating of Native distinctiveness than others. 'Canadian Indian literature', now much out of favour, is problematic in at least two ways: first, it privileges a proprietary and paternalistic relationship (*Canada's* Indians); second, 'Indian', though still sometimes used as a term of self-definition by some Native individuals and communities (especially in western Canada), tends to be a legal term more commonly used in federal and provincial governmental policy and practice.⁴

Recognized in section 35 of the Constitution Act of Canada (1982), *Aboriginal peoples* is the term most commonly used today to refer broadly to all Native peoples in Canada who have genealogical and historical ties to the land pre-dating European settlement, and it is therefore (along with *Native*) the term I prefer when referring to the literary archive produced by writers identified with the three broad categories of Aboriginal peoples: First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Though still controversial and not universally accepted, this is the most inclusive collective term specific to the Canadian context.⁵ (*Indigenous* similarly encompasses this context while also gesturing toward global connections between Native peoples of various countries and continents.)⁶

While these general categories may serve to facilitate cross-cultural conversations, they can also serve to erase the specificities of community that inform and shape identity and identification. We can speak of a broader category of 'Aboriginal literatures', while also attending to the specific national literary traditions of particular communities. Thus, rather than being simply generically 'First Nations', most commonly First Nations status is realized specifically through one's national affiliations, such as Mohawk, Dogrib, or Ojibway, even more specifically to particular localized communities of Mohawks, etc.; as individuals and communities are increasingly self-identifying through

their own languages, not by names given by Europeans or other Native communities, they might choose *Kanien'kehá:ka* ('People of the Flint') instead of Mohawk (from an Algonquian word meaning 'cannibal'), *Tlicho* instead of Dogrib, or *Anishinaabeg* ('the Original People') instead of Ojibway (a term with various proposed etymologies, including 'puckered' for a distinctive moccasin stitching technique).

Each of these specific peoples possesses distinctive literary traditions of their own, the study of which has come to be known (especially in the US, but increasingly in Canada) under the broad definition 'Indigenous literary nationalism' (a provocative intellectual movement to which I return at the end of the chapter). On the other hand, due to increased urban dispersal and legislative policies that have disenfranchised many Native peoples, especially those of mixed ancestry, a growing number of Aboriginal individuals have few established links to specific communities, or associate more closely with an urban, pan-Native identity, and thus self-identify as Native in different ways than those of nation-specific traditions. Changing economic, social and political realities bring changes and challenges in terminological taxonomies and processes of identification, and a responsible scholarship engages these complexities.

For general reference, the self-defined term *First Nations* has largely replaced 'Indian' in common parlance, and specifically highlights the nationhood status and political distinctiveness of Aboriginal communities that have treaty relationships with Canada. (*Status* or *Treaty* Indians are those individuals defined by federal legislation as Indian, primarily through the terms of the Indian Act; those of Native ancestry who are not official members of those communities, or who are members of non-treaty communities, are known as *non-Status* Indians.) *Métis* is a more contentious term, but its most specific reference is to the culturally, geographically and linguistically distinctive peoples descended from Cree or Anishinaabe (Ojibway) women and European (generally French and Scottish) fur traders in what are now Manitoba and Saskatchewan or, more generically (and controversially), anyone of mixed Native/European ancestry (and who may also, in other contexts, be considered non-Status Indians). *Inuit* refers most broadly to the Aboriginal peoples of the Arctic and circumpolar north, although its use as a collective noun, too, is problematic, as it most accurately describes only one (albeit large) linguistic group in the north, and does not specify the Inuvialuit, Iñupiat and Yup'ik peoples, or include the Alutiiq and Aleut of southwest Alaska. (To complicate this matter, in Alaska, the more archaic and Algonquian-derived term *Eskimo* is still commonly used by some of the Native peoples of that area.)

The confusions, contradictions and conflicting definitions for these various Indigenous groups gives some idea of the challenges faced by Native writers in articulating their own identities and aesthetic priorities in Canada: 'I lost my talk / The talk you took away', Mi'kmaq poet Rita Joe writes. 'So gently I offer my hand and ask, / Let me find my talk / So I can teach you about me.'⁷ Engaging the colonial lexicon offers readers an introduction to the broader conditions and political contexts of Aboriginal peoples' textual production. So too does participation in those cultural and rhetorical protocols common to the literature, particularly the acknowledgment and understanding of community affiliation. While individual writers create mostly individualized works of art that communicate particular ideas into the world, the individualist aesthetic ethos that accompanies the 'art for art's sake' creed of the *fin-de-siècle* Decadents of European letters carries little currency in Aboriginal writing, which more commonly follows a communal aesthetic rooted in what US Cherokee literary critic Jace Weaver calls 'communitism', a syllogism of *community* and *activism* that is 'part of a shared quest for belonging, a search for community. It is the valorization of Native community and values and a commitment to them that may be, in part, politically unconscious.'⁸ As part of that communitist impulse, and as an affirmation of accountability to a community to whom they claim affiliation, most Native writers explicitly locate themselves and their art in relation to their specific families, communities, nations, or broader tribal relations. In honouring this representational protocol, readers will note that Indigenous writers and scholars throughout this chapter are consistently paired with their affirmed tribal/national affiliation(s).⁹

'Oral traditions' vs 'literatures': an arbitrary division?

Although this chapter focuses on specific historical moments important to the archive and literary traditions in the history of Native writing in Canada, it is important to highlight the fact that materially encoded Indigenous North American literatures have roots in this hemisphere as diverse and ancient as the peoples who produce them. (And as the cultures themselves straddle and often ignore colonially imposed borders, so too do many of the sources and considerations of this chapter, even though the primary focus is on Canadian contexts.) Yet much of the literary criticism of Native creative expression has often focused heavily or even exclusively on its relationship to and features of orality. This is perhaps understandable, given the significance that oratory and

oral storytelling still play in both political and creative dimensions of Indigenous cultures around the world, and certainly here in Canada, as Penny Petrone writes (echoing Akiwenzie-Damm's assertion that opens this chapter):

Central to the ancient oral traditions was the power of the *word*, spoken, intoned, or sung. Whether Cree or Ojibway, Iroquois or Micmac, Haida, Tlinglit, or Hare, Loucheux or Montagnais, each in story, speech, or song made the *word* sacrosanct – of far greater importance than people in literate cultures were generally aware of. The *word* carried the power to create, to make things happen – medicine to heal, plants to grow, animals to be caught, and human beings to enter the spiritual world. Through this sacred power of the *word*, [Aboriginal peoples] sought to shape and control the cosmic forces that governed their lives.¹⁰

The power of Native words and wordcraft, rather than simply being the means and methods of communicating various ideas and perspectives, has always been of interest to both Native participants and non-Native observers, though often for very different reasons. This is as much the case with language use in Indigenous mother tongues as with the more broadly understood practices and protocols of 'oral tradition'. Grassroots and institutionalized scholarship in Indigenous language preservation has highlighted the important role of oral traditions in maintaining traditional languages and their associated worldviews, and this importance has ironically been confirmed by the historical attempts by European authorities to specifically target Native languages for elimination to facilitate assimilation and cultural erasure, as with the well-documented testimonies of Aboriginal residential school students who received severe beatings for speaking their Native tongues.

Although the relationship between literature and *orature* (a term proposed as an equivalent to 'literature' by Delaware writer Daniel David Moses and literary critic Terry Goldie) is complex, the strict division of the two categories in such discussions seems both arbitrary and erroneous, especially given the fact that textualization has a long and honoured communicative history in the Americas. Certainly, contemporary Native literature is often recognizably 'literary' to a wider audience in the form of novels, poems, short stories, plays and essays, but older forms of writing that continue both alongside alphabetic and oral literatures include a more expansive range of manifestations and materials. In spite of Petrone's 1990 insistence that Native peoples historically 'employed a few mnemonic devices – wampum belts and strings, board plates or bundles of notched sticks – these were no substitute for words',¹¹ J. Edward Chamberlin argues for a deeper interconnection between

the *word* and the *text*, with these other Native literary productions richly manifest in 'non-syllabic and non-alphabetic' forms, including 'woven and beaded belts and blankets, knotted and coloured strings, carved and painted trays, poles, doors, verandah posts, canes and sticks, masks, hats and chests', which all 'play a central role in the cultural and constitutional life of these communities, functioning in all the ways written texts do for European societies'.¹² Native peoples have rarely, if ever, been strictly 'oral' in their creative expression, neither today nor in the past; even the most well-meaning claims to the contrary generally assume the culturalist binary of Native primitivism and Western sophistication – an untenable binary at best.

The complementarity of the oral and the textual in early Indigenous literatures is, as Lisa Brooks (Abenaki) observes, aptly demonstrated by the category of 'treaty literature' as a distinct genre indigenous to eastern North America, which 'preceded European writing in Native space'.

It consisted of an oratory protocol guided by mnemonic wampum belts and birchbark scrolls that contained the records of international exchange. These graphic texts could be read only by 'rememberers' trained in recording and recalling the words associated with them. However, when Europeans came to council, they brought their own political customs and forms of recording, even as they were obliged to adopt Native conventions. Thus, published treaties represent the interaction between indigenous council protocol and European political discourse, between Native oratory and the written literature of the 'encounter'.¹³

The literary, then, does not supplant the oral, but works alongside it, with each reinforcing the gravitas and authority of the other, neither existing in a strictly authoritative state on their own.

Similarly, Akiwenzie-Damm observes that 'literature', as a category of culturally valued creative expression, was not alien to Native peoples before the arrival of Europeans; indeed, the category itself is adaptive to changes and dynamic enough to encompass a diverse range of Indigenous creative processes as more widely understood today:

Others may have named these forms, but many have been a part of our cultural expression since long before the newcomers arrived on this continent. Before it was named 'poetry', our ancestors composed poetry in the form of songs and prayers. Before it was called 'creative non-fiction', our ancestors told tales of personal and historical events in a style that was poetic and complex in its beauty. Our literatures come from our own sources both in style and content; although, of course, because we exist and operate in the world, we are influenced by other art forms from other cultures and traditions. Our literatures are part of a cultural continuum that continues to grow and develop.¹⁴

Akiwenzie-Damm does not claim a primordial, essentialist purity of Native creative expression; she does not assume that a particular form is any more or less Native than another. Instead, what she and other Native writers argue is that *form* is not determinative of Indigenous *content* or *purpose*, whether manifested as a ceremonial chant, a story dance, a short story, a theatre monologue, or a blog. Different creative forms certainly have different constitutive protocols, features, capabilities and functions, but all offer Native peoples a way of sharing their individual and communal perspectives, values and aesthetics with each other and with the world.

The paracolonial perplex

Yet that process of sharing is complicated for Native writers by the embedded reality of domestic colonialism in Canada; as the general Canadian readership is primarily non-Native, this reality imposes both real and symbolic obstacles to the publication, reception and economic sustainability of Aboriginal literature in Canada. As Agnes Grant puts it, Native writing ‘is often disturbing to mainstream readers because it comments on the experiences of being [A]boriginal within an atmosphere of rejection by the larger society’.¹⁵ While some writers have been championed by a mainstream readership – Thomas King (Cherokee), Eden Robinson (Haisla/Heiltsuk) and Joseph Boyden (Métis), the latter winning Canada’s most prestigious literary award, the Giller Prize, in 2008 – the vast majority of Native writers in Canada struggle to find viable and sustainable venues for their work. As a result, most Aboriginal literature is relegated to specialty presses and bookstores, ethnic literature displays, special Native units in elementary and secondary school curricula, or the few (but increasing) Aboriginal literature courses in university.

Given this context, for many Native peoples – writers and otherwise – the term ‘postcolonialism’ is burdened with the echoes of colonial apologetics and the still-common denials of the experienced realities of genocide and institutionalized racism. In the Americas, colonialism continues; if anything, it has become an assumed part of the sociopolitical fabric that marks any claims to Indigenous political, social, economic, or intellectual sovereignty as being ‘special’ rather than inherent Indigenous rights. And the term itself often assumes a particular historical and intellectual genealogy that ironically traps Indigenous peoples within a colonial nexus, as the aforementioned Cherokee writer and literary critic Thomas King avers when he states that ‘the idea of post-colonial writing effectively cuts us off from our traditions, traditions that

were in place before colonialism ever became a question, traditions which have come down to us through our cultures in spite of colonization, and it supposes that contemporary Native writing is largely a construct of oppression'.¹⁶ While questioning King's assumption of a causal tracing between 'post' and 'colonial', Australian critic Gerry Turcotte affirms King's larger argument that '*however* the interpretation of post-colonialism is structured, there is no escaping the fact that at least one eternally present reading of the compound word (with or without the hyphen) suggests that Native writing (and culture) "begins" with European contact'.¹⁷

Ato Quayson notes in the Introduction to this volume that, while settler colonialism is certainly one current of the larger colonial enterprise, it is realized through its own distinctive characteristics, and creates a different matrix of relations and conflicts depending on the histories, geographies and experiences of the peoples involved. Settler colonialism and the experiences and responses of the associated Indigenous populations, then, might best be considered within a structure of 'paracolonialism' – ongoing, heavily institutionalized, and intimately realized in identity, body and community. According to rhetorician and theorist Malea Powell (Eastern Miami/Shawnee):

because the processes of colonization have continued unremitted in Indian country for over 500 years, it is difficult to describe American Indians as either 'postcolonial' or 'neocolonial' peoples. The occupying force has not been, nor will it ever be, withdrawn. So in understanding the relationship between colonizer and colonized in North America it is essential to understand our situation in what [Anishinaabe theorist Gerald] Vizenor describes as 'paracolonial' terms, a colonialism beyond colonialism, multiple, contradictory, and with all the attendant complications of internal, neo- and post-colonialism.¹⁸

Similarly, Shari Huhndorf argues in reference to Indigenous literatures of the US that,

despite the fact that Native writers and critics share fundamental concerns with other colonized peoples, postcolonial scholars have largely ignored American Indian literatures. This reflects a broader scholarly neglect as well as an overarching focus on nation-states in postcolonial studies, a pattern that differs from the Native American situation, which remains defined by continuing, direct forms of legal, political, and economic control.¹⁹

Foregrounding the ambivalent and vexed significance of both the term and the critical positionings of 'postcolonialism' to Indigenous textual expression

does not dismiss the relevance of this literature to the project at hand, for there is surely much to be gained by understanding Native literatures of North America in relation to transnational issues of imperialism, resource exploitation, and socio-economic oppression – which became global, in large part, as a result of the European frenzy for wealth that emerged from the colonization of the Americas.

Early interactions

It was that colonial enterprise that first brought the cosmovisions of the Indigenous peoples of this hemisphere into conflict and communication with those of Europeans.²⁰ There was no uniform experience of ‘first contact’ for Indigenous peoples – some found the newcomers to be intriguing and interested emigrants and trading partners, while others, especially those who encountered Norse settlers around 985 CE on the coast of present-day Labrador and Newfoundland, found the Europeans to be presumptuous and violent invaders. All quickly learned that the visitors generally had long-term plans to stay, and worked to adjust accordingly, generally either to directly oppose the invaders, or to incorporate Europeans into their own sociopolitical and economic contexts. Native peoples and Europeans alike were generally ethnocentric, but it was Europeans who, embedded in monotheistic cosmovisions of exclusivism and religio-social exceptionalism, were dedicated to erasing the difference of the Other, either for reasons of ostensible charity (to save their souls) or naked self-interest (to gain access to land and resources). There was certainly no sense, as has subsequently been claimed by apologists for colonialism, that Native peoples believed Europeans to have a higher degree of ‘civilization’ or cultural sophistication;²¹ indeed, while Europeans possessed new technologies and offered a variety of useful trade goods, they were often perceived by their Aboriginal interlocutors as being temperamentally immature, physically fragile and hygienically unsound. The Wendat (Hurons), for example, found the French to be both spiritually naïve and physically repulsive, particularly their lack of regular bathing and predilection for facial hair, which the Wendat considered to be evidence of intellectual deficiency.

Yet it was the complex relationship between the Wendat peoples and French missionaries in what is now south-central Ontario that brings us the most substantial textual archive of early Indigenous expression in this period of profound change, albeit one that is severely and quite problematically mediated by its French transcribers. Of both published and unpublished sources, the Recollet friar Gabriel Sagard’s *Le Grand Voyage du Pays des Hurons* (compiled

1623–4, and which, in its original form, included a Wendat phrase book) and various Jesuit-authored texts, most especially the multivolume *Jesuit Relations* (1634–50), offer rich ethnographic and linguistic details about the peoples of the Wendat Confederacy. These invaluable texts include detailed grammars of the Wendat language alongside linguistic commentaries, as well as a number of transcribed speeches by Wendat orators regarding the clash of cosmovisions as Recollet and then Jesuit missionaries worked with increasing aggression to replace Indigenous beliefs, cultural practices and behaviours with their own.²² This campaign and the social divisions it created, when added to the economic, political and spiritual disruptions caused by European diseases such as influenza and smallpox, ultimately led to the 1648 military devastation of the mission, Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons, the murder of many of its Jesuit inhabitants, and the dramatic dispersal of most of its Christianized Native inhabitants by non-Christian Wendat and Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) forces.

We can see here a stark example of what had, by that point, already become something of a grim pattern: a particular group of non-Natives endeavouring to impose their ideologies and social practices on their Native hosts; a Native community being divided and its diplomatic relations with other peoples being stressed or broken by these philosophical, political and biological intrusions; a forceful Indigenous response, often drawing on resources from sympathetic allies; and the subsequent struggles of the community to heal the resultant social divisions and resist further fragmentation and the loss of lands frequently associated with the process.

As Native peoples became fluent in European languages (in the Canadian context, generally French and English), they utilized those languages alongside their mother tongues to defend their territorial rights and communities from further degradation. In the early years of European colonization, when these foreign powers were limited to the eastern part of the continent and were primarily engaged with Iroquoian (Haudenosaunee, Wendat) and Algonquian (among them Anishinaabeg, Mi'kmaq, Abenaki and Lenape/Delaware) speaking peoples, Native peoples held the balance of power, and Europeans often found themselves drawn into local political and economic machinations while intending to use their Native contacts in their own transatlantic power struggles. Even when, in the eighteenth century, they began moving further into the interior to engage various other nations, among them other Algonquian peoples, as well as Na-Dene and Siouan speakers, the French and English alike found themselves dependent upon Native trading systems and, especially, oratorical and diplomatic protocols, to access desired resources, and they ignored those protocols to their great cost, as the administrators of

New France (Quebec) learned in 1684 when they attempted to limit the Haudenosaunee position as intermediaries between Anishinaabe trappers to the north and English colonists in the south. The resulting bloody conflict lasted until 1701, when the Confederacy signed a treaty with New France that reinforced their trading rights in the previously contested territory.

Diplomatic conventions and their textual manifestations were very well established in the Americas well before the arrival of Europeans, but they became increasingly important as colonial pressures on Native communities escalated. Being multilingual had always been beneficial in matters of trade and diplomacy, and it took little time for enterprising Native people to become fluent in one or more European tongues, and then to express themselves in writing. Indeed, political concerns were then, and have remained, among the most pressing issues eloquently addressed by Native writers in Canada, in their own mother tongues as well as English and French.

To take one of many examples, Mohawk war leader Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea, 1742–1807), the son of Wendat refugees who were adopted into a Mohawk family, became an eloquent opponent to the expansionist activities of the American colonies. Convinced that ‘the only sustainable route to the protection of Mohawk lands was a firm alliance with the [British] Crown’,²³ Joseph and his sister Molly (Degonwadonti, a highly respected and influential Mohawk matron and wife to Sir William Johnson, the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs) were among the most eloquent pro-Tory Haudenosaunee leaders, and together they provided rhetorical, military and strategic support to the Crown and its troops.

Joseph and Molly were as well versed in English and the European law of nations as they were in the complex political protocols of Iroquoian and Algonquian diplomacy. Joseph’s extant writings – generally in the form of elegant, forceful correspondence in defence of Native rights to other political leaders, both Native and non-Native – demonstrate a keen attention to stylistic concerns such as metaphor and allusion, along with an unerring sensitivity to hypocrisy and irony, as in this excerpt from a letter he wrote to Indian Commissioner Thomas Eddy questioning the relative merits of Eurowestern definitions of ‘civilization’ and ‘savagery’:

I was, Sir, born of Indian parents, and lived while a child among those whom you are pleased to call savages; I was afterward sent to live among the white people, and educated at one of your schools; since which period I have been honored much beyond my deserts, by an acquaintance with a number of principal characters both in Europe and America. After all this experience, and after every exertion to divest myself of prejudice, I am obliged to give my

opinion in favor of my own people . . . In the government you call civilized, the happiness of the people is constantly sacrificed to the splendor of empire. Hence your codes of criminal and civil laws have had their origin; hence your dungeons and prisons . . .

But for what are many of your prisoners confined? – for debt? – astonishing! – and will you ever again call the Indian nations cruel? Liberty, to a rational creature, as much exceeds property as the light of the sun does that of the most twinkling star. But you put them on a level, to the everlasting disgrace of civilization . . . Great Spirit of the Universe! – and do you call yourselves Christians? Does then the religion of Him whom you call your Saviour, inspire this spirit, and lead to these practices? Surely no. It is recorded of him, that a bruised reed he never broke. Cease, then, to call yourselves Christians, lest you publish to the world your hypocrisy. Cease, too, to call other nations savage, when you are tenfold more the children of cruelty than they.²⁴

While exposing the fault lines between the stated ideals of European settlers and the lived realities of settler brutality and land greed, Brant does not simply reverse the civilized/savage binary – he questions it entirely, along with the entitlements that are presumed to accompany ‘civilization’, understanding that a debate based on arbitrary and self-serving terms that place Europeans at the apex of cultural sophistication can only work to the detriment of Native claims and rights. Sadly, the victory of the fledgling United States meant a devastating loss to the British-allied Haudenosaunee; as a result, some followed Brant to the lands of Grand River valley, across the new US/Canada border from the Haudenosaunee Senecas in New York state, while a smaller group followed Mohawk Captain John Deserontyon (Odeserundiye, 1740–1811) to settle near the Bay of Quinte, on the north side of Lake Ontario.

Alongside and often interpenetrated with the political sphere in Aboriginal writing of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was the religious/spiritual sphere. While many Aboriginal peoples zealously maintained their traditional cosmovisions, and others found a syncretic path that blended indigenous values with various Christian theologies, a growing community of Native Christians began to develop, one that found empowerment in the words of the humble carpenter from Bethlehem – words that were, in the four Gospels at least, often directed against powerful oppressors on behalf of the downtrodden and despised. The archive of this last group is significant, especially in Ontario among those trained by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, primarily Anishinaabeg (Ojibways). (Other missionary groups included, particularly in the Prairie Provinces, the Anglican Church Missionary Society and the French Roman Catholic Grey Nuns of St Boniface

in Winnipeg, Manitoba.) As Petrone points out, the Anishinaabeg Methodists of southern Ontario were particularly prominent, becoming ‘the first literary coterie of Indians in Canada, and the first to write extensively in English’.²⁵ They were advocates for both religious conversion and Native rights, which often put them at odds with both traditionalist Native groups and with non-Native audiences.

For example, Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby, 1802–56), the first Anishinaabe ordained a Methodist minister, began publishing the first Anishinaabe translations of Christian scriptures and hymns with his brother John beginning in 1828. Deeply invested in British cultural and religious mores – and whose writings demonstrate what Maureen Konkle describes as a ‘certain inflexibility of thought, an apparently complete rejection of anything that departs from the norm of Christianity’²⁶ – Peter Jones was also a tireless advocate on behalf of his community of converts, the Mississaugas of Credit Mission (now New Credit), especially regarding their exclusive land title to a protected land base. For Jones, there was nothing innately inferior about Native peoples; though highly critical of non-Christian practices and beliefs, he saw conversion as a means by which Native peoples could gain access to all the privileges of British citizenship while still maintaining authority over their own lives and affairs. Yet he found his political efforts constantly frustrated by administrative bias among provincial government officials, his religious efforts and promotion hampered by bigotry in the British Wesleyan hierarchy (which had merged with the more Native-friendly Canadian Methodist Conference in 1833), and his Anglo-Canadian cultural accomplishments minimized by the desire of non-Natives to see him speak in traditional ‘Indian’ regalia rather than the tailored suits he preferred to wear. Other prominent members of the Methodist Mississauga community included Jones’s maternal half-brother, George Henry (Maungwudaus, c. 1811–88), a celebrated orator and world-travelling performer, and George Copway (Kahgegagahbowh, 1818–69), a notoriously self-promoting writer and speaker (whose ministerial credentials were revoked after an embezzlement conviction), who gained international attention for his autobiographical writings, and is particularly significant to Aboriginal literary history of Canada for being the first Native person to publish a book-length autobiography in English, *The Life, History and Travels of Kah-ge-ga-gah-Bowh* (1847). Copway, like Jones, Henry and other members of this Christianized ‘coterie’ – Peter Jacobs (Pahtaysagay, 1805–90) and Henry Bird Steinhauer (1820–84) among them – offered in their various writings a shared assertion of the capacity for Native peoples to successfully change and adapt to Eurowestern values and institutions, a praise of the highest ideals Christian virtue, and a strong critique of Anglo-

Canadian hypocrisy in setting up obstacles to Native acculturation based on racial animus. Where they differed was the extent to which they diminished or emphasized Native difference in arguing for justice in the far-from-ideal reality of nineteenth-century Anglo-Canadian 'civilization'.

When, in 1867, the British North America Act came into effect to create the confederated Dominion of Canada, with the national motto *A mari usque ad mare* (From sea to sea), the optimism that white Canadians had about westward expansion was not one generally shared by the Aboriginal people within those claimed territories. Land cessions that accompanied the treaty-making process in the prairies and far west – and the resulting influx of non-Native settlers, railroads and the decimation of the great bison herds – were met with various methods of resistance by Native orators and writers.

In present-day Manitoba, as the Hudson's Bay Company planned to sell its claims to the Northwest Territories, the Métis arose in protest, arguing for recognition of both their cultural distinctiveness and of their title to the lands they had long inhabited alongside Crees, Assiniboines, Sioux and Blackfoots, and various non-Native settlers. The Red River Resistance, in which the Métis and their allies (both Native and non-Native) declared a provisional government that represented their own interests, not simply those of eastern Canadian politicians and business leaders, became the first great test of the confederated Dominion, and the interest of the United States in laying claim to the destabilized region led Sir John A. Macdonald to negotiate with the Métis, resulting in the Manitoba Act of 1870. With that Act, the province of Manitoba was born, but the results were hardly encouraging for the Métis and other Native peoples, for with its passage (and British Columbia's entry into Confederation the following year) came a transcontinental railway, various land cession treaties and an influx of non-Native settlers who had little respect for the land claims of Native peoples who inhabited the area. The 'Northwest Rebellion' erupted in March 1885 as a response to increased dispossession, political marginalization and material destitution. By the time the most famous (and controversial) of the Métis leaders, Louis Riel – an accomplished poet as well as a political and religious visionary – was executed for treason in November 1885 (and its other famed leader, Gabriel Dumont, was exiled to the US), the Métis had emerged into Canadian consciousness as a distinctive political and cultural people, even in military defeat. This articulation of their nationhood, and the subsequent trials they faced as dispossessed 'road allowance people' with no protected land base of their own, continues to influence Métis writing today, just as the words of the imprisoned leaders of the parallel First Nations resistance movement, Cree warriors Big Bear (Mistahimaskwa, c. 1825–88) and Poundmaker

(Pitikwahanapiwtyin, c. 1842–86), have reminded generations of Native writers of the significance of the struggle for justice, even in the face of overwhelming odds.

The increasing intrusions of Anglo-Canadian mores and religio-economic values against Native peoples in western Canada – including the outlawing of the West Coast nations’ potlatch ceremony in 1884 – was not isolated to the west. The entirety of the Canadian government’s attitude toward Native peoples became fixated on ending the ‘Indian problem’ for good, largely by forced assimilation, often accompanied by punitive legislation and policy that punished First Nations peoples (primarily, but also Métis and Inuit peoples) for maintaining any ties to their traditional cosmovisions and value systems, but particularly those that seemed to conflict with patriarchal, Anglo-Christian (and sometimes French Catholic), heterosexual and capitalist practices, behaviours and beliefs.

As Canada increased its land and resource claims westward and northward, and Christian missionaries worked to further the Canadian government’s cultural and economic priorities, most notoriously through the residential school system, Native writers continued to write in response to the disconnect between the supposedly cherished values of Christian Canadian ‘civilization’, and the hard-lived reality of that ‘civilization’ on Aboriginal peoples. Among the most eloquent of these voices was the Mohawk poet and orator E(mily) Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake, 1861–1913), descendant of high-ranking Loyalist Mohawk and Anglo-Canadian families, who found great success as a writer and public speaker, and who found, like Peter Jones, that her white Canadian audiences had particular expectations of an ‘Indian’ poet that she capitalized upon in her performative dress – she would often spend the first half of a public address in generically ‘Indian’ buckskin, the second in high-table evening attire. Although sentimental and romanticized Canadian pastorals make up much of her poetic corpus, Johnson was quite familiar with the struggles not only of her own people but the privations forced upon the Native peoples of the prairies to the west. In her first published poetry collection, *The White Wampum* (1895), named for the path of peace in Haudenosaunee wampum texts, Johnson offers an ironic challenge to her readers, for any simplistic expectations of peaceful passivity are shattered in lieu of a much more complex understanding of the need for hard truths to be told *and heard* for true peace to exist. In addition to some of the nature writing so admired by many critics of the time (including the much-anthologized ‘The Song My Paddle Sings’), Johnson also offered biting condemnations of Canadian hypocrisy, as in this excerpt from her poem ‘The Cattle Thief’, in which a Cree woman indicts a

posse of white settlers after they murder her starving father for stealing their cattle:

You have killed him, but you shall not dare to touch him now he's dead.
 You have cursed, and called him a Cattle Thief, though you robbed him first of
 bread –
 Robbed him and robbed my people – look there, at that shrunken face,
 Starved with a hollow hunger, we owe to you and your race.
 What have you left to us of land, what have you left of game,
 What have you brought but evil, and curses since you came?
 How have you paid us for our game? how paid us for our land?
 By a *book*, to save our souls from the sins *you* brought in your other hand.
 Go back with your new religion, we never have understood
 Your robbing an Indian's *body*, and mocking his *soul* with food.
 Go back with your new religion, and find – if find you can –
 The *honest* man you have ever made from out a *starving* man.
 You say your cattle are not ours, your meat is not our meat;
 When *you* pay for the land you live in, *we'll* pay for the meat we eat.
 Give back our land and our country, give back our herds of game;
 Give back the furs and the forests that were ours before you came;
 Give back the peace and the plenty. Then come with your new belief,
 And blame, if you dare, the hunger that *drove* him to be a thief.²⁷

Johnson's awareness of the events leading to the 'Northwest Rebellion' is manifest in 'A Cry from an Indian Wife', where the speaker urges her husband to resist Canadian oppression, even though she is also fearful of his possible death, and also sympathetic toward the mothers and wives of the white men who her husband may kill. 'Go forth, nor bend to greed of white men's hands', the speaker implores. 'By right, by birth we Indians own these lands, / Though starved, crushed, plundered, lies our nation low . . .,' and finishes with the caustic line 'Perhaps the white man's God has willed it so'.²⁸ While the last line in isolation may be read as a surrender to manifest destiny, it in fact follows a lengthy indictment of the dishonourable actions of the Canadian government and the wilful disregard of Native sufferings by the Canadian population, thus explicitly questioning the integrity of any deity who would support such treacherous people. That Johnson's reputation at the time was focused primarily on her romantic Canadian wilderness poems is hardly surprising; what is more surprising to some commentators is that, in such a climate, Johnson continued until her retirement not simply to write political poetry, but to perform it in public.

As the nineteenth century came to a close, and Canadian Indian policy continued its unrelenting assaults on Native nationhood, identity, lands and

even physical bodies, Native writers continued to offer counternarratives to the insecure triumphalism of Canadian jingoism. And as worldwide conflicts loomed on the horizon and brutal struggles over civil rights promised to shake Canada's southern neighbour to its core, Aboriginal writers would continue to find solidarity and strength through the power of the written word and the growing links between oppressed peoples in Canada and throughout the world.

Twentieth century and beyond

The assimilationist directive of Canadian policy would continue throughout much of the twentieth century and become the driving philosophical force behind Canada's interactions with Native peoples, as succinctly evidenced in 1920, when Duncan Campbell Scott, then Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, announced: 'Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department.'²⁹ Many of the methods used to effect this erasure of Native presence in Canada were crude and largely ineffectual in the process of 'absorb[ing] [Native peoples] into the body politic' – instead, they were quite successful in creating a multigenerational underclass that was almost entirely alienated from that 'body politic', with individuals and families, in many cases, wholly or partially alienated from their own communities, homelands, languages, traditions and/or identities.

For example, one of the most notoriously bigoted aspects of the Indian Act related to its inequitable treatment of Status men and women who married outside their communities. If a Status man married a non-Status (generally non-Native) woman, she and any children she may have had previous to the marriage automatically gained Indian Status; on the other hand, if a Status woman married a non-Status man, she along with her children, if any, automatically lost Indian Status – and was often required to leave the community.³⁰ Similarly, many people lost Status by becoming Canadian citizens. Citizenship could be attained through voluntary means (including attaining a university degree or serving in the military) or made compulsory by Indian agents based on an assessment of the individual's mental fitness; it was 1960 before general enfranchisement without loss of Status was made legal in Canada.

The Indian Act was – and in many ways, still remains – the omnipresent administrative force in the relationship between First Nations and the Canadian nation state. Its terms, both original and revised, manifest a deeply embedded paternalism by Canada (represented as competent and parental

trustee) in its relations to First Nations (represented as incompetent and childlike wards). Yet, even with the problems inherent within this inequitable and condescending colonialist relationship, the situation for Métis and Inuit communities was in many ways more difficult, given that they were excluded from the Indian Act's ostensible (but erratically exercised) land and resource protections. As Métis historian Olive Dickason notes, the proudly independent Métis, absent the rights of First Nations peoples 'who [having] signed a treaty had reserved land that could not be alienated', had become, in large part,

a landless minority – 'road allowance people', living on the fringes of both white and [First Nations] communities – wandering from job to job, their traditional way of life being steadily restricted as agriculture and resource development became dominant ... By the early twentieth century, most Metis were barely eking out a living even in good times; the difficult years of the Great Depression during the 1930s provoked disaster.³¹

The deprivations of the 1930s and 1940s led to the creation of Métis associations that have advocated on behalf of Métis land, resource and cultural rights; though enshrined in the Constitution as one of the three Aboriginal peoples of this land, they have often found that recognition to be more rhetorical than substantive, and continue to work to strengthen their communities from within and to develop a stronger presence among Aboriginal political and cultural organizations across Canada and beyond.

For the Inuit, who had lived in small and mobile family-based communities throughout the north for thousands of years before the intrusion of Canadian colonial policies, the twentieth century brought coercive settlement directives from the south (following on missionary incursions of the nineteenth century that included rigorous conversion and prohibition on traditional ceremonial and cultural practices) that had a profound impact on Inuit life, autonomy and identity in the north. The mission schools of the nineteenth century were superseded by federal institutions by the 1960s, and these institutions generally eschewed teaching in Inuktitut and mandated English-only education as part of its larger inculcation of Anglo- and Franco-Canadian social mores. The hunting traditions of older generations have been gradually circumscribed by the forced settlement of previously mobile communities, and this coupled with environmental devastation in large part caused by global climate change have made hunting, fishing and whaling less viable for broad subsistence than it was in the past. High unemployment in the north, along with a diminishment of traditional subsistence opportunities and an increase in political advocacy by Inuit themselves, has resulted in many Inuit from diverse

demographics migrating to the south, with only some able to return home with any frequency.

Yet, while these various political, institutional and ideological forces pushed against Native peoples, Aboriginal voices were both responding to Canadian paternalism and asserting their own vision of a present and future that would include a strong and vibrant Indigenous presence. The first half of the century, as Petrone notes, ‘was a barren period for Native writing’ – or, more accurately, *published* Native writing – for a number of reasons, including ‘the growing power of white control ... government policies that were based on the assimilation and suppression of [N]ative cultures; a [N]ative population overwhelmed by the deluge of immigration [that] placed [Native peoples] in ever more humiliating subjugation; the Depression and an increase in poverty; lack of unity ... and the commonly held belief that [Native peoples] were dying out’.³² Native communities were facing attacks from all sides and struggling to survive.

But it was 1969 – when Pierre Elliot Trudeau’s Liberal government put forward the now-notorious White Paper to eliminate Aboriginal rights and status (as part of an ostensible mission to bring equal citizen status to Native peoples through assimilation) – that heralded a broader public revitalization of Native literary voices. The White Paper was flatly rejected by Native people, who weren’t even consulted in its formulation; it was, as Dickason notes, a moment when Aboriginal peoples ‘achieved something approaching unanimity for the first time since the arrival of Europeans, and probably for the first time ever’.³³ Partly encouraged by the political rhetoric of the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the US, Native peoples – from leaders to grassroots activists and everyday individuals – found strength in numbers as they roared out their opposition to the White Paper and its assumptions. Trudeau’s retreat on the White Paper demonstrated that, while a small portion of the population, Native peoples had powerful voices, and they began to share those voices and their own stories with a population that was clearly in need of an education.

From 1969 to roughly 1990, an era of extraordinary scholarly and creative production brought not just the so-called ‘Indian Problem’ into broader Canadian consciousness, but also many Native scholars, poets, novelists, essayists and political leaders into conversation with one another, and with the settler population, to challenge the paracolonial presumptions and foundations of the Canadian state. Prominent writers of political commentary, fiction, poetry, history and autobiography from this period include Howard Adams (Métis, *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View*, 1975), Jeannette Armstrong (Okanagan, numerous works including *Slash*, 1987),

Maria Campbell (Métis, numerous works including *Halfbreed*, 1973), Harold Cardinal (Cree, *The Unjust Society*, 1969) and Basil H. Johnston (Anishinaabe, numerous works including *Ojibway Heritage*, 1976, and *Indian School Days*, 1988).

Two events in 1990 added even further public attention to and interest in Native writing: the tense armed standoff between Mohawks and provincial police and federal troops in Oka, just outside Montreal, Quebec, after a land developer attempted to build a golf course over graves in unceded Mohawk lands; and the nearly single-handed scuttling of the Meech Lake Accord by Manitoba legislator Elijah Harper (Oji-Cree), which would have acknowledged the special sociopolitical status of the settler province of Quebec while withholding such recognition of First Nations. The subsequent Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples provided voluminous testimonial and textual evidence not simply of Aboriginal peoples' experiences with the unchecked paracolonialism of the Canadian nation state, but also offered another rich storied archive from hundreds of Native people from across the country.³⁴

Aboriginal writing and the decolonization imperative

Following Oka, the strong stream of Indigenous writing became a steady rush far too extensive to explore in detail here. In brief, however, it is clear that Aboriginal writers from many communities, though often struggling to find viable venues for their writing, are now represented in every media form, every genre and every region of Canada. Their work is published in mainstream, speciality and community publications (such as newspapers, newsletters, small-press publications, and increasingly blogs and websites), Aboriginal-specific publishing houses (such as Theytus Press in British Columbia, founded by Jeannette Armstrong, and Kegedonce Press in Ontario, founded by Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm), as well as university presses and Canada's most prestigious publishers, such as McClelland & Stewart and Douglas & McIntyre.

Elsewhere, I have argued that Indigenous literary expression, both by its narrative characteristics and by its very existence on a continent dominated by paracolonialism and its effects, is fuelled by 'the decolonization imperative', which is, simply put, 'the storied expression of continuity that encompasses resistance while moving beyond it to an active expression of the living relationship between the People and the world'.³⁵ Such an imperative is amply manifest in the textual archive of Aboriginal writing in Canada. We are in an extraordinary time of Indigenous literary production, one that, for all its

challenges, is testament to the insistence of Native peoples to speak their truths, embody their values, and express their sovereignties in dignity and freedom from the surveillance of the paracolonial enterprise.

The list of Aboriginal writers is long and distinguished, and the following names give only a small picture of the rich archive now available. In addition to the continuing body of writing from earlier writers such as Armstrong, Campbell and Johnston, the range of creative expression extends from the essays, novels and short stories of Robert Arthur Alexie (Gwich'in), Beth Brant (Mohawk), Thomas King (Cherokee), Lee Maracle (Sto:lo), Beatrice Culleton Mosionier (Métis), Rachel A. Qitsaulik (Inuit), Eden Robinson (Haisla/Heiltsu) and Richard Van Camp (Dogrib), to the spoken-word and traditional poetry of Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm (Anishinaabe), Marilyn Dumont (Cree/Métis), Lenore Keeshig-Tobias (Anishinaabe), Armand Garnet Ruffo (Anishinaabe) and Gregory Scofield (Métis), to the traditional stories and visual art of Alootook Ipellie (Inuit) and the plays of Marie Clement (Métis), Tomson Highway (Cree), Daniel David Moses (Delaware), Yvette Nolan (Algonquin) and Drew Hayden Taylor (Ojibway). Critical scholarship during this period by Taiaiake Alfred (Mohawk), Kim Anderson (Cree/Métis), Marie Battiste (Mi'kmaq), Kristina Fagan (Labrador Métis), James (Sakéj) Youngblood Henderson (Chickasaw), Bonita Lawrence (Mi'kmaq), Neal McLeod (Cree) and Cheryl Suzack (Anishinaabe), among others, has added significantly to the interconnections between Indigenous epistemologies, narrative strategies, political concerns and the ways in which various literary forms function towards Native purposes.

In 1991, internationally renowned Métis architect Douglas J. Cardinal asserted the following:

There is power in every individual because there is power in the word. Humans are very powerful in this way. To turn the realm of thought, which is abstract potential, into a thing in the physical world, through word, is powerful creativity as a natural act. The essence of creativity in all things is what makes the universe shift. It is to cause something to become from nothing. The word in that way is powerful. When we speak a word we declare something. We create it and then it can be. It can become action. So it is a sacred act. We as humans are extremely powerful in this way.³⁶

Today's literature by Native writers collectively offers a powerful textual archive affirming not only the continuing existence of Indigenous peoples, but the transformative ability of Indigenous artists to both imagine and invoke the continuing transformative power of Native expression; older (and increasingly diverse) texts are continually being read for new insights into the

complex ways that Indigenous writers have always expressed communitist principles. There is no single voice, no single perspective, no single vision of what 'the power in the word' means, and that is to the good of the literature, for the complexity of the writing is a direct reflection of the complexity of Indigenous humanity, and a direct challenge to simplistic colonialist fantasies of monocultural 'Indians'.

Reflecting on the communitist impulse of Indigenous literature, Acoma Pueblo poet Simon J. Ortiz asserts that story 'substantiates life, continues it, and creates it'. 'Indeed', he elaborates, 'without it, the oral tradition would not exist as significantly as it does today, and there would likely be no basis for present-day Indian writing, much less Indian people. But because of the insistence to keep telling and creating stories, Indian life continues, and it is this resistance against loss that has made that life possible'.³⁷ Whether told in the longhouse, the assembly hall, or the classroom, embodied in sand, hide, bone, stone, shell, tree trunk, bark, paper, television or computer screen, or articulated through codex, formula book, song, treaty, letter, memoir, history, genealogical record, poem, novel, comic book, play, movie, or web page, and in spite of all the brutal burdens imposed by the paracolonial enterprise, Indigenous writers affirm the continued significance of Native subjectivities in this land, and among these many peoples. Similarly, Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm observes that 'Aboriginal literatures and oratory are of the land and from the land. They are the land from which all other literatures in this place now known as Canada spring forth. Without this land, there is no Canada, and without the literatures of the people of this land, there is no true Canadian literature'.³⁸

This, then, is what Indigenous literatures offer to postcolonial understandings of North America: an affirmation of the living, reciprocal relationship between the People, the land and the stories, not as an escape but as an ever-realized alternative, not as a memory but as a continuing reality of kinship and continuity, with an acknowledgment of colonialism as a reality of Native history and life, but as only one small part of the full, rich measure of the People's experience in Canada, *kanata*, this place I now call home.

Notes

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1. Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, 'First peoples literature in Canada', in David R. Newhouse, Cora J. Voyageur and Daniel J.K. Beavon (eds.), *Hidden in Plain Sight: Contributions of Aboriginal Peoples to Canadian Identity and Culture* (University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 172.
2. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada provides a helpful guide to this changing lexicon: www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/pubs/wf/wf-eng.pdf; Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 292.
3. 'Indian Woman', quoted. in D.D. Moses and T. Goldie, *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*, 3rd edn (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 231-2).
4. The Indian Act (first passed in 1876 and subsequently revised) is the primary legislative document used by the federal government of Canada to define both Native identity and the terms of Canada's relationship to Native individuals and nations; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is the primary federal department charged with providing services to Native peoples.
5. During the June 2008 Grand Council Assembly of the forty-two communities of the Anishinabek Nation (Union of Ontario Indians), the chiefs passed a resolution banning the term 'aboriginal', both to affirm the cultural and political specificity of their Anishinaabe member communities, and to challenge what they saw as the assimilationist uses to which the term has been used. For more information, see their online news release: www.anishinabek.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=304&Itemid=47.
6. As Margery Fee and Janice McAlpine advocate – and in keeping with common use by Aboriginal peoples themselves – '*Aboriginal* and *Native* should be capitalized to parallel other broad ethnic, linguistic, and geographic designations such as *Asian*, *Hispanic*, and *Nordic*. *Aboriginal* and *Native* should be used as adjectives only, as in "Aboriginal peoples" and "Native peoples" (not "Aboriginals", "Natives")' (Fee and McAlpine, *Guide to Canadian English Usage* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 5).
7. 'I Lost My Talk', quoted in Moses and Goldie, *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*, p. 107.
8. Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 45.
9. The word 'tribe', like 'Indian', is considered problematic among many Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and for good reason, given its frequent primitivist and savagist associations. (It is less controversial in the US, where I was raised, and where my own community – the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma – is located.) My infrequent use of the term here is quite specifically referencing the familial/genealogical/kinship distinctions of Indigenous nationhood that distinguishes it from nation-state nationalism and its associated patriotist/jingoist foundations.
10. Penny Petrone, *Native Literature in Canada: From the Oral Tradition to the Present* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 9-10.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
12. J. Edward Chamberlin, *If This Is Your Land, Where Are Your Stories? Finding Common Ground* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2004), p. 20.
13. Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 229.
14. Akiwenzie-Damm, 'First peoples literature', p. 170.
15. Agnes Grant, *Our Bit of Truth: An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1990), pp. vii-viii.

16. Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2003), pp. 11–12.
17. Gerry Turcotte, 'Re-marking on history, or, playing basketball with Godzilla: Thomas King's monstrous post-colonial gesture' (*Faculty of Arts – Papers*, University of Wollongong, 2003; <http://ro.uow.edu.au/artspapers/63/>), pp. 4–5).
18. M. Powell, 'Rhetorics of survivance: how American Indians use writing', *College Composition and Communication*, 53.3 (February 2002), 399.
19. Shari Huhndorf, 'Literature and the Politics of Native American studies', *PMLA*, 120.5 (2005), 1624.
20. I prefer the term 'cosmovision' to 'worldview' in Indigenous contexts, as the latter term has become so generalized as to be almost evacuated of meaning. The more specific term is borrowed from the work of Mesoamerican religious scholar David Carrasco, who describes it thus: 'Scholars of Aztec religions use the term *cosmovision* to refer to the "worldview", or coherent and rational arrangement of space and time communicated through religion and mythology. I have found this term and the discourse around it to be useful for describing the indigenous models of space and time as represented in rites, architecture, and mythology' (*City of Sacrifice: The Aztec Empire and the Role of Violence in Civilization*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1999, p. 191).
21. These perspectives are hardly a thing of the past. A recent book by Frances Widdowson and Albert Howard, *Disrobing the Aboriginal Industry: The Deception behind Indigenous Cultural Preservation* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), makes the surprisingly retrograde (and poorly researched) argument that Native peoples of the Americas were in a Neolithic cultural state when they encountered supposedly more sophisticated and civilized Europeans, and it was this difference in social evolution that led to subsequent Native disempowerment and social dysfunction, not the policies and processes of economic and political colonialism, land dislocation, institutional assaults, European-induced cultural instability and decades of dehumanizing legislative policy.
22. The irony of these documents is that, although they chronicle the missionary enterprise of learning the language to destroy Wendat cultural and, eventually, linguistic difference, the texts have since become invaluable aids in reinvigorating the Wendat traditional cosmovision and especially the Wendat language, whose last fully fluent speakers died in the early twentieth century. Foremost among these scholars is John L. Steckley, whose work in the field of Wendat anthropological linguistics (or ethnolinguistics) has profound significance for current and future linguistic, literary and historical studies of the Wendat Confederacy, particularly his book *Words of the Huron* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007).
23. Brooks, *The Common Pot*, p. 115.
24. Quoted in Penny Petrone, *First People, First Voices* (University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 36–7.
25. While the first Anishinaabe ordained to be a minister, Jones was not the first Native minister in North America; Samson Occom, the celebrated Mohegan minister who lived in what is now Connecticut and New York, was ordained in 1759; Petrone, *First People*, p. 77.
26. Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations*, p. 184.
27. E.P. Johnson, *Flint and Feather: Collected Verse* (Toronto: The Musson Book Company, 1912), pp. 15–16.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
29. E.B. Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), p. 50.

30. These provisions were changed in 1985, by Bill C-31, when many once-Status women and their children were also re-enfranchised, but there is a generational cut-off attached to the provisions of Bill C-31 that still reduces Status for the descendants of the re-enfranchised.
31. Olive P. Dickason, 'Metis', in Paul R. Magocsi (ed.), *Aboriginal Peoples of Canada: A Short Introduction* (University of Toronto Press, 2002), pp. 205–6.
32. Petrone, *Native Literature*, p. 95.
33. Olive P. Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, 3rd edn (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 378.
34. In particular, the public testimony of residential school abuse survivors beginning in this period brought awareness of the systemic horrors that thousands of young Native people experienced, and helped to strip away some of the shameful silence that had added to the suffering of many survivors. Numerous creative works have dealt with this legacy, including novels by Tomson Highway (*Kiss of the Fur Queen*, (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1998) and Eden Robinson (*Monkey Beach*, Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000) and autobiographies by Basil Johnston (*Indian School Days* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988) and Inuit writer Anthony Apakark Thrasher (*Thrasher: Skid Row Eskimo*, ed. G. Deagle and A. Mettrick, Toronto: Griffin House, 1976). On 11 June 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper stood before the House of Commons to apologize on behalf of the Government of Canada to residential school survivors and their communities.
35. Daniel Heath Justice, "'Go away, water!': kinship criticism and the decolonization imperative', collective editorship, *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), p. 150.
36. Douglas Cardinal and Jeanette Armstrong, *The Native Creative Process: A Collaborative Discourse* (Penticton, BC: Theytus, 1991), p. 89.
37. Simon Ortiz, 'Towards a national Indian literature: cultural authenticity in nationalism', in J. Weaver, C. Womack and R. Warrior (eds.), *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), p. 259.
38. Akiwenzie-Damm, 'First Peoples literature', p. 175.

16(b) Indigenous writing in Australia and New Zealand

ANNE BREWSTER

Penny van Toorn reminds us that since European invasion in 1788 Aboriginal people had taken up alphabetic writing and print in many inventive ways.¹ She maps Aboriginal people's use not only of literary forms but also of letters, pamphlets, newspaper articles, petitions and manifestos. These early indigenous writing cultures, she suggests, problematize the history and the beginning of Aboriginal writing. The specific focus of this chapter is on the emergence and development of literary genres – poetry, fiction, playwriting and life story (this last genre a recent entry into the literary canon). Since its beginnings in the 1960s – the decade which launched the first book of poetry, Kath Walker's *We Are Going* (1964), the first play (written if not produced), Kevin Gilbert's *The Cherry Pickers* (1968), and what was mooted as the first Aboriginal novel, Colin Johnson's *Wild Cat Falling* (1965) – the field of Aboriginal literature has now reached its half-century.

While this chapter does not include an analysis of traditional myths and legends, mention must be made here of one of the first indigenous people to translate oral traditions into literary form, an erudite and accomplished man of letters, David Unaipon (1872–1967). Unaipon was schooled in Greek and Latin and widely read in the English classics. His multilayered and syncretic stories combine traditional indigenous spiritual and cosmological narratives with stylistic technologies of the Old Testament, European fairytales and the English classics. He spent many years collecting and rewriting stories from his indigenous countrymen with the aim of publishing them in a book. In one of the most egregious literary appropriations in Australian literary history, the heavily edited stories were published by Harrap in London as *Myths & Legends of the Australian Aborigines* (1930), with their authorship accredited to amateur

anthropologist William Ramsay Smith. The stories were recently repatriated and published in their original form as *Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines* (2001). Unaipon's work represents an important milestone in the development of indigenous literature. He saw his work as distinctly literary and as part of an ongoing cross-cultural dialogue between narrative traditions: 'Perhaps one day Australian writers will use Aboriginal myths and weave literature from them, the same as other writers have done with the Roman, Greek, Norse and Arthurian legends.'²

The years during which Unaipon was writing, especially the 1930s, were an important period of Aboriginal mobilization and political organization. The many campaigns which Aboriginal people had been mounting since the 1930s gained momentum in the 1960s. A number of highly visible events were staged during this decade including the Yirrkala Bark Petition (protesting against the excision of Aboriginal reserve land and the granting of mining rights to it) which was presented to the Federal Parliament in 1963; the Freedom Ride in 1965 (a bus trip activists made through rural areas protesting against racial discrimination); and the Gurindji stock workers' strike in 1966. These events were part of broad cultural changes that resulted in the dismantling of the 'White Australia Policy' in 1966 and the national Referendum to change the Constitution in 1967.³ This was also the decade in which the first Aboriginal literary writers entered the corpus of mainstream literature.

In the Jamaican context Stuart Hall describes black as an identity which had to be learned.⁴ In Australia Aboriginal political identity developed within a global context of protest, shaped by the Black and Red Power moments in the US; by the liberation struggles in Africa, Papua New Guinea and South America; and by global indigenous affiliations under the banner of the United Nations. The emergence of poets and playwrights during the 1960s and 1970s reflects the desire of Aboriginal people both to articulate and consolidate collective political and cultural identities and to cultivate mainstream media. As performative genres, poetry and theatre played a vital role in convening Aboriginal collectives and consolidating political and cultural identities. Kath Walker read her poems at political meetings and, as Maryrose Casey reminds us, the audiences of early theatrical works were comprised mainly of Aboriginal people.⁵

Since the 1960s Aboriginal writers have continued to engage and adapt European genres and aesthetics in order to articulate cultural, spiritual and political histories and identities. While black writers Colin Johnson and Archie Weller produced fiction in the 1960s and 1970s, it was not until the late 1980s (with the notable exception of Monica Clare's 1978 novel *Karobran*) that

Aboriginal fiction gathered momentum. Twenty years later several identifiable trajectories were discernible: historical fiction, fiction inspired by the experience of the stolen generations and gritty realism focusing on the violence of urban life. In the latter mode writers respond to the ongoing systemic violence of dispossession, poverty, police brutality, domestic violence and gang violence. But what occurred in the interim, the period between the political activism of the 1960s and 1970s and the emergence of the novel? If poetry and theatrical works were the dominant genre of the 1970s and fiction emerged as a cultural force in the 1990s, the 1980s saw the efflorescence of the life story.

Aboriginality

In contemporary Australia Aboriginality is determined by (1) a person identifying as Aboriginal and (2) being confirmed as such by the community. Aboriginality is not defined according to blood quantum.⁶ Identificatory categories used in governmental policies until the 1960s – such as half-caste, quarter-caste and octoroon – are offensive to many contemporary Australians and references to ‘mixed-blood’ are often considered derogatory as they distinguish Aboriginal people from white Australians whose whiteness remains unmarked. As well as rooting Aboriginality within a biological identity, this general terminology rests on the assumption that Aboriginality can only deliquesce and be lost rather than seeing Aboriginal culture as adaptive and inventive and as having access to the future.⁷

Indigenous people today usually refer to themselves according to their ‘nation’, or language group.⁸ The term ‘Aboriginal’ is also widely used, capitalized in order to distance it from the biological specificity of the colonial category ‘aborigine’.⁹ Today, the terms ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘indigenous’ are generally interchangeable, the term ‘indigenous’ being the more generalized category, incorporating as it does Torres Strait Islanders; it also constitutes a supranational identity category. The more common usage, ‘Aboriginal’, and its cognates, will be used in this chapter. The phrase ‘black Australian’ is used for a range of writers including those of African American and other ethnic backgrounds such as Johnson/Mudrooroo and Roberta Sykes.

Aboriginal literary texts in effect problematize the generalized category ‘Aboriginal’ as they inevitably articulate a range of singular Aboriginalities. First among differentiating features are the indigenous nation or language group with whom Aboriginal people identify. Additionally, specific Aboriginalities are historically contextualized¹⁰ by the ways in which Aboriginality converges with class, gender, sexuality, region, religion and generation. Class is highly visible as a

marker; Aboriginal constituencies are often described as disengaged from the economy and socially and culturally disenfranchised. Indeed, many Aboriginal writers focus on urban and rural poverty and disadvantage (Birch, Muk Muk Burke, Taylor, Cleven, Winch, Moreton, Gilbert, Wright, Langford, Lucashenko etc). However, as Kim Scott reminds us, Aboriginality is not identical with subalternity; he describes as ‘unfortunate’ the belief

that the *real* Aboriginal people are the down and outs, the itinerants, the ‘parkies’ [those who gather in urban parks]. In [this] case, to affirm one’s Aboriginality is to perpetuate the characteristics expected of a member of an oppressed community.¹¹

Tony Birch invites us to consider the ways in which working-class writing itself is conceived as a marked category where middle-class writing is not. Of ‘social realism’, for example, he comments:

Why is ‘social realism’ used so commonly about Australian and British working-class writing, and not North American writing? And why, when Australian writers of a middle-class background reflect their own lives and their upbringing are they referred to more commonly as ‘beautiful writers’ rather than realists?¹²

Many indigenous writers define individual and collective identity and subjectivity in terms of their ‘dreaming’. This term traditionally refers to the eternal, archaic time of ancestral creation and the stories and totems associated with this cosmology.¹³ Many contemporary writers redefine their ‘dreaming’ in contemporary terms incorporating, for example, aspects of their specific urban environment (for example Fogarty, Beller and Wagan Watson).

Aboriginal literature is read contemporaneously for the ways in which it represents Aboriginality and the ways in which it engages and complicates whiteness.¹⁴ It behoves non-indigenous critics to be cognizant of the fantasies and investments that come to bear in their analyses of the ‘other’s’ worlding. If it is impossible for the non-indigenous critic to divest themselves entirely of these interests, self-reflexivity and the inclusion of Aboriginal viewpoints and knowledge are important to ethical cross-cultural research. Guidelines for research undertaken in indigenous culture are promulgated by many indigenous cultural bodies, for example, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

Poetry

Adam Shoemaker suggested that ‘if there is any “school” of Black Australian poetry it is one of social protest’.¹⁵ While Aboriginal poetry is variously a

discourse of celebration and survival, addressing both indigenous and white audiences, it has continuously mounted a scrutiny of white privilege, entitlement and disavowal and the concomitant political, economic and cultural subordination of Aboriginal people. From the 1960s onwards it has mobilized persuasive argumentation, exhortation, direct address and an appeal to logic in the artful use of questioning and naming. It has the rhetorical power of advocacy and rights assertion.

Kath Walker (1920–93) inaugurated this tradition. During the 1960s Walker had been the Queensland state secretary of the key activist organization FCAATSI (The Federated Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders) and was prominent in the national campaign which resulted in the 1967 Referendum. Her collection of poetry, *We Are Going* (1964), was the first book of literature published by an Aboriginal person. This fact and Walker's high profile as an Aboriginal activist made it a best-seller. *We Are Going* was followed by two further collections, *Dawn is at Hand* (1966) and *My People* (1970). In 1988 Walker changed her name to Oodgeroo Noonuccal in protest at the Australian bicentenary.¹⁶ The critical reception of her poetry was mixed; while reviewers hailed it as a significant cultural event, the formal quality of the poetry was found wanting. This binary demarcation between the social and the textual characterized much of the critical commentary on Aboriginal poetry in the 1960s and 1970s. The emphatic metrical rhythms and strong rhyme patterning in Oodgeroo's work and that of other early poets, Jack Davis and Kevin Gilbert, were not coincident with current tastes in free verse. It was argued that the polemic qualities of the poetry and its expressive metrical and rhyming effects detracted from its literariness.

Needless to say, Oodgeroo (and Davis and Gilbert after her) shrugged off these evaluations and were comfortable with the designation 'protest' poet. She commented that 'I'm dead the day I stop protesting.'¹⁷ Oodgeroo's poetry was directed at both white and Aboriginal audiences. For the latter it functioned performatively as a rallying point of social conscientization; she read 'Aboriginal Charter of Rights', for example, at the 1962 Easter conference of FCAATSI.¹⁸ This poem opens:

We want hope not racialism,
 Brotherhood not ostracism.
 Black advance
 Not white ascendance.
 Make us equal not dependent.

Oodgeroo's advocacy is cast in the language of equality, integration, fellowship and amelioration characteristic of 1960s discourse of global humanitarianism. We can also see that the title of her first book, *We Are Going*, gestures to the culturally pervasive 'doomed race' theory,¹⁹ according to which Aboriginal peoples were no match culturally or biologically to the superior British race and that biological assimilation was inevitable.

Jack Davis (1917–2000) was the next important poet on the scene with four books: *The First-born* (1970), *Jagardoo* (1978), *John Pat* (1988) and *Black Life* (1992). Like Oodgeroo, Davis was active in Aboriginal political life in the 1960s and 1970s and held positions in the Aboriginal Advancement Council and FCAATSI. He edited the literary journal *Identity* from 1973 to 1979. His first books share much of Oodgeroo's political rhetoric and her fondness for strict metrical rhythm and rhyme. In the next generation, Kevin Gilbert (1933–93), like Oodgeroo and Davis, was influenced by global Black Power movements and the language of civil rights emerging from the US. The rhetoric of militancy impacted more on his work than on his predecessors'. His publishing career began in 1971, shortly after he was released from a long term in prison, with three books of poetry: *People are Legends* (1978), *Blackside* (1990) and, posthumously, *Black from the Edge* (1994). He also published several edited anthologies, a play and two important treatises: *Because a White Man'll Never Do It* (1973) and *Aboriginal Sovereignty* (1993). *Because a White Man'll Never Do It* is the first major political work by an Aboriginal writer. In the first two collections the poetry works primarily to document Aboriginal suffering and disadvantage, creating poetic portraits of a range of urban and rural Aboriginal subalterns which are remarkable in their economy and bodily presence. Although he also relies heavily on metrical and rhyming structures, Gilbert differs from Oodgeroo and Davis in his use of Aboriginal English which gives his work a raw immediacy and visceral impact. Traces of performative oratory are evident in the repetitions, the declarative, expressive language and the force of direct address:

And some say 'Shame' when we're talkin' up
And 'Shame' for the way we are
And 'Shame' cause we ain't got a big flash House
Or a steady job and car.

Some call it 'Shame' when our kids they die
From colds or from sheer neglect
'Shame' when we live on the riverbanks
While collectin' our welfare cheques

'Shame' when we're blind from trachoma
'Shame' when we're crippled from blights

But I reckon the worstest shame is yours
You deny us human rights.²⁰

In 'Look Koori' he redeploys both the image of the dawn (a popular metaphor, as we can see from the title of Oodgeroo's second book) and the trope of the 'doomed race' in the service of an expressive militancy:

Look to the dawn, dark brother
Look to your knife and gun
...
Look to the new-found Dreaming
Rise as a new-born man
Forever to take your pride of place
Or bequeath your blood on sand.

Die as a man if die you must
Die as a man born free
It's better to die than to live a life
As gutless scum, Koori.²¹

Gilbert's call for social justice and redistribution is cast in a very different language to that of his predecessors, mobilizing the rhetoric of anger, confrontation and demand. This rhetoric was taken up by the black poet Bobbi Sykes who was also influential in the 1970s–80s, popularizing the term 'black',²² and in the poetry of Johnson/Mudrooroo and Lionel Fogarty. Johnson/Mudrooroo and Fogarty couch their polemic in oral and performative forms. They borrow from traditional Aboriginal song cycles, the spectral features of which, as Adam Shoemaker suggests, can be identified in repetitions and incremental progressions of narrative lines.²³ Johnson/Mudrooroo published four collections of poetry in the decade 1986–96. Fogarty has also been prolific as a poet, publishing ten collections since 1980. His first book, *Kargun* (1980), could not find a commercial publisher and not all of his books since then have been published by mainstream publishers. Fogarty's work is confronting both in its polemics and its stylistic radicalism. His fractured syntax, associative logic and ungrammaticalities make for an almost impenetrable style, described by Louis de Paor as 'disordered and compelling',²⁴ but which has nonetheless generated a comparatively large amount of scholarly attention. Fogarty's innovative linguistics draw largely on Aboriginal English but also on a radical disruption of standard Australian English. As Philip Mead suggests,

the social and political struggle against hegemony and oppression translates for Fogarty into a struggle over language.²⁵ In the Introduction to his *New and Selected Poems: Munaldjali, Mutuerjaraera* (1995), Fogarty famously writes ‘I see words beyond any acceptable meaning, this is how I express my dreaming.’ He states that he uses ‘their English against the English’.²⁶ In the Foreword of the same collection, Mudrooroo describes Fogarty’s poetry as ‘Guerrilla Poetry’.²⁷ Fogarty’s ‘Frisky Poem and Risky’, for example, begins:

Regarding respects I’m fully
purchased within my own
exchanges
Please give my regards to our
God down and above
I would also like more spirits
so the list can be send
Before receiving your hearing
I had to write to a conference
Sincerely I’m yours against
all evil co-ordinators
I decided from myself stems
a meaning and a creation²⁸

This ‘risky’ tumbling together of shards of bureaucratic language, of letter writing, of formalized verbal procedures of greeting and management, has a ‘frisky’ satirical ring, eroding what Bakhtin calls ‘tendentious languages’.²⁹ Various phrases hint at a sense of purpose and direction, invoking the authority of governance which the disruptive language undermines. Within this semantically emptied ‘disorder’, the phrase ‘I decided from myself/stems a meaning and a creation’ acquires forceful clarity and emerges as a statement of a resistant political will.

Graeme Dixon’s formidable *Holocaust Island* (1990) uses heavily metrical poetry with a powerful element of protest – in this case against police brutality and a judicial system which results in high rates of incarceration of indigenous people (his own prison poems are some of the most compelling work in this collection). In most poetry that followed Dixon lyricism becomes more dominant. Dennis McDermott (2003) and Margaret Brusnahan (1981) draw on personal experience in their work. Alf Taylor (1992), (1994), John Muk Muk Burke (1999) and Sam Wagan Watson (2000), (2001), (2002), (2004), (2005) draw on the regenerative spiritual power of landscape and the dreaming, sometimes exploring forms of urban dreaming. Watson laments the debilitation of ‘a rainbow-serpent dormant on cryogenic dreams’ and excoriates the

appropriation and commodification of Aboriginal spirituality: 'the dreamtime can be resurrected anytime/and found on the video store shelves'.³⁰

Like Wagan Watson, Lisa Bellear (1985) explores various forms of 'urban dreaming'. Other poets in the first decade of the 2000s diversify in the kind of genres poetry draws upon. Elizabeth Hodgson's *skin painting* (2008) draws on memoir and Tony Birch's 'Chronicles' (2006) incorporate colonial archive materials into imaginative sequences of poetry and prose.

Women poets such as Kerry Reed-Gilbert, Lisa Bellear (1996), Romaine Moreton (2004), Charmaine Papertalk-Green (2007) and Yvette Holt (2008) have continued to work within a protest paradigm, while producing a powerful celebration of female Aboriginality and a critique of gendered power relations within Aboriginal communities. Bellear does not shy away from an explicit naming of gendered violence:

This rapist is
Black white people
call him Mr
His 'lations
Call him Uncle/
Grandpa/cuz/bud
I call him
a rapist!³¹

Papertalk-Green makes the point that Aboriginal domestic violence is distinguished from violence in the general community only by its visibility; in white families the woman is 'hit behind doors / Where she was too ashamed / To scream for help'.³² Anita Heiss in *I'm Not a Racist, but...* (2007), like Bellear and Moreton, addresses the complacencies and platitudes of white liberalism.

Life stories

Although poetry has been popular with Aboriginal writers, the life story has been the most prolific literary genre to date.³³ Many life stories have been authored by people who were born between 1920 and 1950 and lived through the eras of Protection (1900s – late 1930s)³⁴ and Assimilation (1937–67).³⁵ Many had experienced the impact of the policy of removing fair-skinned children from families in order to assimilate them to the general population. The life story often performs the cultural work of restitution. They have functioned as a corrective to a eurocentric Australian history which has elided Aboriginal perspectives of the colonial encounter and Aboriginal people's

formative contributions to the modernization of Australia. The commemorative turn that characterizes this generation of Aboriginal literature was instantiated across a range of sites and imperatives. Familial links were forged and reaffirmed in order to consolidate personal genealogies. But the recognition and affirmation of Aboriginal heritage impacted generally on the way in which Australia's colonial and postcolonial history was understood. Connective acts with the past restored a sense of Aboriginal continuity and contributed to a growing awareness that Aboriginal people had not in fact become extinct through biological inevitability nor had the policies of assimilation succeeded in legislatively expediting their disappearance. Life stories, as part of the wider development of Aboriginal literature, were part of a cultural renaissance which celebrated survival and continuity, as well as the plasticity and hybridity of Aboriginal cultural production through life-story authors' appropriation and adaptation of the Western genres of biography and autobiography. They facilitated a growing sense of pan-Aboriginality, while grounding individual stories within the specificity of locale, generation and gender.

The entry of Aboriginal life stories into the public sphere is always mediated by the technologies of publishing and reading. Not all life-story authors wrote their own stories; many collaborated with an editor/transcriber, and there was much discussion in the 1980s over the ethical implications of cross-racial collaboration and critique. For example, in an early text, *I, The Aboriginal* (1964), first-person narration is incongruously cast in standard Australian English. In a strange case of avowed ventriloquism existing hand in hand with a disavowal of Aboriginal ownership, authorship is attributed to Douglas Lockwood. Lockwood makes a gesture of 'gratitude and affection' by dedicating the book to Waipuldanya, 'whose story it is'.³⁶ Nonetheless, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Aboriginal people made these collaborations productive for their own political and professional purposes. It is also important to take into account the oral nature of these narratives. The originary enunciative act of oral storytelling, from which many of the written texts evolve, is often framed by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal listeners/readers. These texts have a range of audiences. In many cases the stories are pedagogic and archival; the authors are custodians of knowledge, recording Aboriginal history for future generations of Aboriginal people. On the other hand, many Aboriginal authors consciously aim to include a white market, motivated by both educative and commercial interests.

There were a small number of Aboriginal life stories published in the 1950s and 1960s. Among the earliest recorded examples are David Unaipon's 'My Life' (1951) and 'Leaves of Memory' (1953). Most life stories of this early period

focused on men, for example Ronald Morgan (1952) and Lionel Rose (1969). It is difficult to determine what involvement Aboriginal people had in the production of a number of these texts. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s there were many more Aboriginal men's life stories being produced than women's. These were an important archive of Aboriginal masculinity, focusing on a range of themes including traditional legends, stories and cultural practices especially those relating to the land (Jack Mirritji, 1976; Bill Neidjie, 1989; Grant Ngabidj, 1981; and Dick Roughsey, 1971); life on a penal settlement (Willie Thaiday, 1981); mission life (Jimmy Barker, 1977); station life and traditional practices (Clancy McKenna, 1978, and Jack Sullivan, 1983); station life and boxing (Bill Cohen, 1987); family history (Phillip Pepper, 1980, and James Miller 1985); urban living and political activism (Robert Bropho, 1980); personal quests such as the recovery from alcoholism (Koorle Dhoulagarle, 1979); Christianity (Lazarus Lamilami, 1974); the development of professional careers (Charles Perkins, 1975) and working on pearling luggers (Thomas Lowah, 1988).

The 1990s saw the continuation of station life stories such as the tracker stories of Jack Bohemia (1995), and stockman and drover stories, notably those of Morndi Munro (1996) and Jack McPhee (1989 and 1995). There were also a number of biography-like life stories of men prominent in the political arena published in the 1990s. Books which foreground the Aboriginal person's participation in their production include Joe McGinness (1991) and Edward Koiki Mabo (1996). Other Aboriginal men's life stories include those by Jack Davis (1991) (an exploration of childhood); Bill Dodd (1991) (the story of recovery from an accident); Warrigal Anderson (1996) (the story of a lifetime of not having a birth certificate and hiding from the authorities); and Wayne King's affirmation of his homosexuality (1996). There is also Gordon Matthew's account of identifying as Aboriginal, later to discover that he was South Asian (1996). Charles Smith collaborated to produce his mother, Celia's, life story (1997). The year 1997 saw the publication of *Bringing Them Home*, the Report of the National Enquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and TSI Children from their Families. The readership of Aboriginal life stories expanded as the history of the stolen generations was widely debated in the media throughout the 1990s.

There are very few early publications of women's life stories apart from Theresa Clements (c. 1950). A wave of women's life stories began in the late 1970s and spanned the 1980s: Evonne Goolagong (1975), Kath Walker (Oodgeroo Noonuccal) (1972), Margaret Tucker (1977), Monica Clare (1978), Ella Simon (1978), Shirley Smith and Bobbi Sykes (1981), Eliza Kennedy (and

Tamsin Donaldson) (1982), Janet McKenzie (1982 and 1983), Ida West (1984), Labumore (Elsie Roughsey) (1984) and Marnie Kennedy (1984). Black Australian (of Vanuatian heritage) Faith Bandler's two books, *Wacvie* (1977) and *Welou My Brother* (1984), were also significant. This wave further gained momentum in the late 1980s with the publication of Sally Morgan's *My Place* in 1987. Morgan's book enjoyed wide popular success and focused new attention on the genre; in Ruby Langford Ginibi's words 'her book was the first to open the country up'.³⁷ From this point the genre proliferated giving rise to about twenty books in the following decade including: Glenyse Ward (1988, 1991), Ruby Langford Ginibi (1988), Della Walker (with Coutts) (1989), Ellie Gaffney (1989), Patsy Cohen (with Margaret Somerville) (1990), Mabel Edmund (1992), Alice Nannup (1992) Evelyn Crawford (1993), Rosalie Medcraft and Valda Gee (1995), Connie Nungulla McDonald (1996), Iris Lovett-Gardiner (1997) and the collection of life stories, *The Sun Dancin'* (1994). In another trajectory the focus of Aboriginal women's life stories widen to include the histories of other family members (for example, Sally Morgan (1989), Doris Pilkington (1996 and 2002), Ruby Langford Ginibi (1992, 1994 and 1999), Rita and Jackie Huggins (1994), Rosemary van den Berg (1994) and Mabel Edmund 1996). Several of these life stories – those by Monica Clare (1978), Kath Walker (Oodgeroo Noonuccal) (1972) and Doris Pilkington (1991) – are fictionalized (a process which involved, for example, the altering of names) or dramatized (for example, Pilkington, 1996).

Women's life stories from the 1980s onwards are largely histories of the family. They reflect women's pivotal role in communal and family life which have become, in Marcia Langton's words, 'matrifocal'.³⁸ As heads of households, Aboriginal women had assumed responsibility for the continuation and transmission of Aboriginal values and practices. They act as a buffer to pressures to conform to mainstream Australian life, as O'Shane³⁹ and Daylight and Johnstone⁴⁰ have suggested. Aboriginal women's life stories show us how families, by maintaining a distinct way of life, provide resistance to assimilation.

The genre of life story continues to appeal to indigenous authors (particularly elders who work with the assistance of an editor) as a means to articulate the specificity of indigenous nations' identities and specific activist struggles, for example, Doreen Kartinyeri and Sue Anderson's *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* (2008) and Lewis Yerloburka O'Brien with Mary-Anne Gale, *And the Clock Struck Thirteen* (2007). Two recent publications, Kim Scott and Hazel Brown's *Kayang & Me* (2005) and Stephen Kinnane's *Shadow Lines* (2003) indicate that the life story is undergoing generic change and incorporating

extensive intellectual reflection into family history and storytelling. Scott and Brown's book is a dialogue between Scott and his Aunt Hazel Brown, which is in part a meditation (by Scott) on the ethics of claiming indigenous identity and the act of cultural brokerage that it entails. Sally Morgan's ground-breaking book *My Place* (1987) describes Morgan's discovery of her Aboriginality which had been hidden within the family. Kinnane's and Scott's recent life histories are working within the tradition laid down by Morgan but elaborate complex issues of Aboriginal subjection and identification. Scott sees himself as 'broker' not only between generational processes of identification within his own family but between his mixed heritages (white and indigenous). Lynette Russell in *A Little Bird Told Me: Family Secrets, Necessary Lies* (2002) also explores her mixed descent and, as Fiona Probyn-Rapsey argues, finds 'a "hybrid space" [that] is "salvaged" from her grandmother and great-grandmother's stories of passing for white'.⁴¹ Elsewhere, in literary and cultural studies scholarship, the binary white-indigenous is being challenged in an investigation of triangulated relations between indigenous people, other minority groups and white Australia.⁴² Some Aboriginal life stories have foregrounded these cultural triangulations.⁴³

Fiction

Generally (apart from a few exceptions such as Pilkington and Clare who, as I suggest below, fictionalized life stories), it was a different generation who adopted the novel, a generation who, in the main, were not members of the stolen generations. One of the dominant figures in the development of the field of indigenous fiction was Colin Johnson who published his first novel *Wild Cat Falling* in 1965. Johnson (who wrote under various names including 'Mudrooroo') continued to occupy centre stage of the field until the late 1990s when revelations about his black American ancestry brought about a reassessment of the nature of his contribution to it.⁴⁴ *Wild Cat Falling* (1965), which describes a young Aboriginal man's experiences in jail, was reworked as *Doin' Wildcat* (1988) and then as *Wildcat Screaming* (1992). He also published a number of historical novels such as *Long Live Sandawarra* (1979), *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* (1983) and *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* (1991). This is a genre which continues to inform many writers' enterprise of rewriting history to include indigenous perspectives. In the absence of extensive archival records, fiction performs the work of imaginatively recreating pre-contact Aboriginal culture, early contact and indigenous resistance. The historical novel is a genre which to date has been

mostly favoured by male writers; it includes Eric Willmot's *Pemulwuy* (1987) and Richard Wilkes's *Bulmurn* (1995), books which, like some of Johnson/Mudrooroo's work, focus on celebrated real-life resistance fighters. Kim Scott's *Benang* (1999) both borrows and departs from this tradition. It uses fictional characters modelled on archival information to depict the impact of race management policies (as conceived by one of the main ideologues of assimilation, A. O. Neville). Bruce Pascoe has two historical novels *Earth* (2001) and *Ocean* (2002), which explore respectively the impact of the sealing industry and Christianity on indigenous peoples in the nineteenth century.

There is a small body of historical fiction which focuses not on celebrated historical figures but on the protagonist's personal negotiations of various governmental strictures. While most of these novels have been written by women, one notable exception is John Muk Muk Burke whose *Bildungsroman*, *Bridge of Triangles* (1994), is based on autobiographical experience. The women's novels include Monica Clare's *Karobran: The Story of an Aboriginal Girl* (1978) and Doris Pilkington Garimara's *Caprice: A Stockman's Daughter* (1990). Following revelations about Johnson's African American ancestry, *Karobran* is now regarded as the first Aboriginal novel. Larissa Behrendt's novel *Home* (2004), which describes the effects of child removal across several generations of an indigenous family, shares many features with the earlier two novels. These last three works are based on auto or biographical experience of the authors' family members and, as such, have generic links with life-story writing, a genre which has dominated Aboriginal women's writing to date. The choice of the novel rather than life story in these cases may have been prompted by a desire for anonymity, generated by respect for older members of one's family. Even later novelists whose narratives depart from a *Bildungsroman* mode, such as Alexis Wright's *Plains of Promise* (1997), have chosen to write fiction, while drawing on real-life events, in order to provide a measure of protection. Wright says:

There are a lot of things that need to be said to the country and I found fiction was one way of saying them without exposing people from my traditional area to the kind of scrutiny that a conventional [life] history would have risked.⁴⁵

A further two novels which revolve around historical recreation of child removal on one hand and the efforts of contemporary indigenous people to reconnect with their ancestors on the other are Anita Heiss's *Who Am I? The Diary of Mary Talence* (2001) and Terri Janke's *Butterfly Song* (2005). Both draw on historical material in their recreation of past events but without overt autobiographical reference. Another recent novel, Fabienne Bayet-Charlton's *Watershed* (2005), which portrays a mother who loses her son in a drowning

accident, continues the theme of loss and recovery but in an entirely fictional world with no formal textual links to the life-writing mode.

If Johnson/Mudrooroo's fictional oeuvre had commanded much scholarly attention from the 1970s to the 1990s, critical attention was also directed in the early twenty-first century to Kim Scott, following the publication of his second novel *Benang* (1999), which was the first indigenous novel to win Australia's major literary award, the Miles Franklin Literary Award.⁴⁶ Scott's highly crafted literary and poetic style, which is also erudite and cerebral, represents an important milestone in the field of indigenous fiction and an expansion of the work the novel was undertaking for Aboriginal writers. Scott is a versatile and chameleonic writer. All his fiction focuses centrally on issues of indigenous identity, from his first novel, *True Country* (1993), to his most recent book, *Kayang and Me* (2005), co-authored with Hazel Brown, which takes him into the genre of family history writing.

Johnson/Mudrooroo's novels inaugurated a tradition of gritty realist fiction in their angry portrayal of the brutalization of the colonized subaltern, often within violent urban environments. This style was picked up by Archie Weller, a writer who for a time was considered indigenous, whose novel *The Day of the Dog* (1981) and short-story collection *Goin Home* (1986) focus on young indigenous boys whose lives are dominated by poverty and violence. In *Land of the Golden Clouds* (1999) Weller translates this theme into a fantasy scenario. Steven McCarthy's short novel *Black Angels – Red Blood* (1998) is a further example of indigenous grunge, but it was Sam Watson's novel *The Kadaitcha Sung* (1990) which substantially renewed interest in the genre. It combines gritty realism with mythological elements in a story of revenge and counter-revenge where spirits, indigenous men and white men (migloo) are entangled in a violent web of collusion, murder and retribution. This novel develops upon what Colin Johnson calls 'maban realism',⁴⁷ the merger of gritty realism with indigenous cosmology. The protagonist, Tommy's, retributive violence is largely sanctioned by the mythic cosmology (a cosmology which draws loosely upon a variety of extant indigenous creation stories). These aspects of the novel's violence function in some measure as an assertion of contemporary indigenous people's strong emotional links with the past and a recuperation of identity (which Heim argues is the case with some Maori novels).⁴⁸

In *The Kadaitcha Sung* Tommy Gubba, the main character, is initiated as a Kadaitcha (sorcerer) by the god Biamee, in order to avenge the evil deeds of a renegade Kadaitcha, Booka. Booka has stolen the Rainbow Serpent's magic stone and thereby locked Biamee out of the mortal world. In the fallen mortal world of Biamee's former paradise Booka colludes with the white colonizers

and masquerades as a white policeman. A subtheme reflects on the internalization of oppression and violence in indigenous people. Although he is the son of a Kadaitcha man Tommy's mother is a white woman. Tommy is therefore the product of a 'forbidden mating'; he is a 'mongrel hybrid' who rails against the 'accursed' white blood 'in his veins'. So while Tommy hates comprador indigenes such as Booka who 'lived within the camp of the migloo', he feels guilty about his own mixed blood. He is plagued by the guilty question 'do I have two camps?'⁴⁹ The spectacle of violence embedded within the novel's thematics can thus be seen not only as an index of the emancipatory rage directed at the colonizers, but as an allegory of the intense conflict of two contradictory worlds (white and black) coalescing within the body and psyche of the contemporary indigene.

It is Tommy's capacity for violence and his 'absolute hatred for the migloo race'⁵⁰ which makes him an effective 'payback' weapon against the comprador indigenes and the migloo; the vanquished spirits aver that 'he will need to be possessed of all the violence and rage that we can call up if he is to endure'.⁵¹ However, not all the violence in the novel is performed under the sign of revenge. Verbal and physical violence informs the indigenous male sociality of the novel and friendships between indigenous friends (such as Tommy and Boonger) which balance on a razor edge between affection and aggression. At one point Tommy admires the heroism of indigenous men in a confrontation with heavily armed police at a pub brawl: 'they knew the futility of resistance ... but they were ready to sell their lives dearly if need be'.⁵² Indigenous writers such as Watson expose colonial violence, much of which has routinely been depicted as heroic, taking place in the service of civilization. By establishing violence as the base line of its apocalyptic world, the novel makes no qualitative distinction between the violence performed by spirits, white men and indigenous men. The novel demystifies colonial violence, exposing its raw brutality.

Throughout the novel both black/black and black/white violence (between men and between men and women) is sexualized. Tommy's relationships with women are uniformly sexualized, even that with his mother. Sexuality is the currency of negotiation for women with both men and spirits. The white scoundrels are censured in their rape of indigenous women, but Tommy's exploitation of indigenous and white women's sexuality is figured in an almost picaresque style; like the gods and spirits he is fickle, headstrong and beyond the moral censure of the mortal world.

Sam Watson was a co-founder in 1971 of the Brisbane chapter of the Australian Black Panther Party. Although the Australian party was short-

lived, it made a large impact upon indigenous political organization in the 1970s and provided a discourse of black pride and the militant language of demand. It provided a cultural and discursive context for the depiction of violence in *The Kadditche Sung*. In 1971 one of the leaders of the party, Gary Foley, was reported as saying that 'violence is natural to an Aboriginal because he has been subject to it since birth' and that 'Violence is their means of survival. All the Black Panther Party is doing is utilising and redirecting this violent feeling.'⁵³

Indigenous women novelists have also been centrally interested in the issue of violence, but are not generally represented within the genre of gritty realism. The exception is Alexis Wright's first novel, *Plains of Promise* (1997), a dense elliptical novel which evokes the brutality of mission life and its damaging effects on three generations of women. Aboriginal cosmological events interrupt the realist temporality of the novel and situate colonial violence within a cosmological context. Vivienne Cleven's second novel, *Her Sister's Eye* (2002), has been described as 'Aboriginal Gothic'.⁵⁴ Set in a rural country town, it depicts how the suppressed memory of white violence inflects cross-racial relationships. This novel differs markedly from Cleven's first novel, *Bitin' Back* (2001), a burlesque comedy of manners which figures racial and sexual border-crossings when the central character, a hefty indigenous footballer, starts to cross-dress and call himself Jean Rhys. Melissa Lucashenko's two novels *Steam Pigs* (1997) and *Hard Yards* (1999) address the psychological impact of violence in indigenous families. Written with an eye to psychological realism, these two novels centre on their protagonists' *rites de passage* and investigate possibilities for cultural and emotional recovery.

These novels are located within the concrete and local specificity of outer Brisbane suburbs and document the convergence of class interpellation and racialization. Lucashenko depicts 'the tedium of blue-collar employment'⁵⁵ and its concomitant downward spiral of drinking and fighting:

They drank too much, Dave especially. Why? Who knew? Who the fuck cared? There was no shortage of role-models for the boys, they knew how to ascend the ever-shortening ladder of teenagehood. Sue drank negatively sometimes, slugged it down till she spewed. There was simply no reason not to. Knowing the world to be a dangerous one, adults pitted against kids, women against men, and men against each other and the world ...⁵⁶

In both novels the central character undertakes rigorous physical training: in *Steam Pigs* Sue practises karate, in *Hard Yards* Roo is a competitive runner.

These physical regimes are undertaken to compensate for powerlessness and disadvantage. Sue describes the people in her karate class as

avenging their father's beatings, their mother's sarcasms, building themselves ladders into new worlds where they're the biggest, the strongest, the least vulnerable, where nothing can ever get them again, ever, ever.⁵⁷

Unable to escape an environment of alcohol and substance abuse, gambling and the neglect of children, Sue finds herself caught in a debilitating cycle of domestic violence. Eventually she undergoes a moving and beautifully observed transition through a consciousness-raising friendship with some lesbian activists and leaves her boyfriend. Sue reflects on how she has learned to internalize shame and to accept that 'there's nothing more to being Aboriginal than drinking and fighting and being poor'.⁵⁸ This self-image is further exacerbated by the fact that she was 'brought up white' and considered a 'coconut'.⁵⁹

Crises over indigenous identification are also central to *Hard Yards*, a wrenching story about a young boy, Roo, adopted out since birth, who is at one point described as 'white trash who hangs around with [coons]'.⁶⁰ A hard life has removed both hope and trust from Roo's grasp. The story opens as he meets his biological father for the first time. Roo is about to walk out on the nurturing indigenous family he had been living with; his young girlfriend is pregnant and he cannot cope with the responsibility. This situation echoes his own father's abandonment of him as a baby. The indigenous family is in mourning as one of the sons, Stanley – Roo's girlfriend's brother – has recently died in police custody. In the course of the novel Roo discovers that his father is the arresting officer and that he contributed to Stanley's death. He has to make the choice between a racist white father and the indigenous family; he chooses the latter. In a narrative subplot Roo discovers that his biological mother was coloured; nothing more of her identity is revealed. The implication that he may be indigenous is hinted at. Roo's desperate search for somewhere to belong is further traumatized by his father's inability to confirm Roo's mother's (and therefore Roo's) identity. The novel's adroit handling and minimalist elaboration of these events and its refusal of narrative resolution on the issue of his identity makes it powerful and resonant, replete with suggestion and possibility for cross-racial modes of belonging and reconciliation and pluralized racial identities.

Lucashenko's deftness in rendering the linguistic consciousness and vernacular voice of her characters enables us to inhabit intimately their

psyches. This novel is as much about whiteness as it is about Aboriginality. Throughout the trial into Stanley's death, Roo's father believes that he is victim. Lucashenko takes us deeply into his pitiable sense of white injury as well as the guilt he experiences over his abandonment of Roo and Roo's mother. His compensatory defensive, aggressive behaviour as a policeman and his deep-seated anxiety can be read as indexical of postcolonial traumatized whiteness. The novel's skilful ending is chilling and arresting: when Roo rejects his father in order to return to his girlfriend, his father commits suicide. In this scenario we observe a reconciliatory whiteness emerging from the violent collapse of a beleaguered and paranoid mode of whiteness. If the novel is about emergent identities, it is also about the violent collapse of moribund cultural identities.

From the late 1980s onwards, several indigenous writers have been successful in popular genres, including thriller and crime writer Philip McLaren (*Sweet Water: Stolen Land*, 1992; *Scream Black Murder*, 1995; *Lightning Mine*, 1999; *There'll be New Dreams*, 2001; *Murder in Utopia*, 2009, and Herb Wharton, whose novel *Unbranded* (1992) and two collections of stories *Cattle Camp* (1994) and *Where Ya Been* (1996) are based on his experiences as a stockman. Bruce Pascoe's novels *Fox* (1988), *Ruby-Eyed Coucal* (1996) and *Shark* (1999) explore political issues such as deaths in custody and relations between indigenous and Papuan peoples. Eric Willmot's *Below the Line* (1991) is a futuristic thriller.

A recent novel, Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* (2006), the second indigenous novel to win the Miles Franklin Literary Award, represents another important milestone in the development of indigenous fiction. Self-consciously literary, referencing Patrick Chamoiseau's *créolité* and his interest in the epic, for example, *Carpentaria* overtly references its globalized literariness. A biting satirical epic novel, depicting several generations of indigenous people's struggle in the face of colonial and multinational mining's invasion of their lands, the novel interweaves indigenous cosmology with realist narrative and a distinctive vernacular voice. As with several other indigenous novels, these effects have often been compared with magic realism. The convergences of magic realism and postcolonial literature have been examined in numerous contexts.⁶¹ Wilson and Slemon argue that magic realism's incorporation of the 'dual spatiality' and that the dialectical struggle inherent in postcolonial cultures makes this form germane to postcolonial writers. However, as a category magic realism has its own cultural history which limits its ability to accommodate the specificities and locality of Aboriginal writing.

Recent short-story collections by Alf Taylor (*Long Time Now*, 2001), Tony Birch (*Shadow Boxing*, 2006) and Tara June Winch (*Swallow the Air*, 2006) share the common textual feature of discontinuous narrative. Stories within each collection contain the same characters although the stories are not linked narratively, thematically or chronologically. The innovative and dynamic nature of these collections suggests that this form offers a viable alternative to the novel. Many indigenous short-story writers and novelists are distinguished by their use of distinctive, colourful and resistant versions of Aboriginal English and Kriol, either in dialogue or narratorial and focalizing language. The vernacular is often bawdy and excessive, conveying the resilience, the defiance and the sheer celebratory aspects of its use in everyday life, and the significant role that humour plays in destabilizing neo-colonial hegemonies.

Theatre

Indigenous cultures have always had their own traditions of performance. In the postcolonial period new modes of theatre emerged, particularly as a result of urbanization. There were large migrations of Aboriginal people to urban areas during the 1930s Depression and also in the 1960s. In 1966, for example, Aboriginal people won the right to the basic wage,⁶² which meant that employment in rural areas diminished and people moved into the cities in search of work. Theatricalized forms of protest emerged from indigenous urban cultures where dispossession, racism, poverty and conflict with police were a way of life. One early example is the Day of Mourning, a protest staged on the occasion of the Australian sesquicentenary celebrations in 1938. The presentation of the Yirrkala Bark Petition to the Federal Parliament in 1963 and the Tent Embassy which was erected on the lawns of federal Parliament House on Australia Day in 1972 are other celebrated examples. Throughout the 1960s Aboriginal performers and activists were engaging in theatrical forms such as street theatre and by the early 1970s they were starting to organize themselves into collectives and productions. The Nindethana company and the National Black Theatre were established in the early 1970s, a period which saw performances of the first indigenous plays including Kevin Gilbert's *The Cherry Pickers* (1971), Robert Merritt's *The Cake Man* (1978), Gerry Bostock's *Here Comes the Nigger* (1976) and Jack Davis's *Kullark* (1979). *Kullark* was written in protest at the exclusion of Aboriginal history from the Western Australian sesquicentenary celebrations in 1979.⁶³ During the 1970s the experimental and occasional modes of indigenous theatre had moved into mainstream forms. Whereas the

early productions had played largely to indigenous audiences, plays were now drawing mainstream audiences. Jack Davis's *Kullark*, for example, toured nationally in 1983 and internationally in 1987. Davis continued to become a major playwright with another eight plays produced in the period up to the mid 1990s. His work exemplified the naturalistic tradition established in the 1970s. Other major playwrights of the 1980s were Bob Mazza and Richard Walley. Eva Johnson also had a significant impact during this period. Another milestone was Jimmy Chi's *Bran Nue Dae* (1991), a highly successful musical with songs written by Chi and other members of the group Kuckles. This was followed by Chi's second musical *Corrugation Road* (1996). These plays combined many genres including country and western, hymns and Hollywood musicals. Three successful monodramas by women drew, in part, on personal experience: *Ningali* (1994), written and performed by Josie Ningali Lawford, *The 7 Stages of Grieving* (1994), written by Wesley Enoch and Deborah Mailman and performed by Mailman, and *Box the Pony* (1999), written by Leah Purcell and Scot Rankin and performed by Purcell. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the naturalism that had emerged in the 1970s gave way to many other forms and playwrights such as Wesley Enoch, Sally Morgan, Kelton Pell, John Harding and David Milroy. These playwrights and others continue to expand the repertoire of theatrical practices, developing hybrid forms and mobilizing the body as a performative site. Since its beginnings in 1960 the field has seen the emergence of fifteen cross-cultural or indigenous companies.⁶⁴

Aotearoa-New Zealand: Maori literature

Fiction

As in Australia, New Zealand indigenous literature in English established its presence as an autonomous field with the publication of indigenous authors' books in the 1960s. The first book by a Maori author was Hone Tuwhare's collection of poetry *No Ordinary Sun* (1964). This was followed by a woman's collection of poetry, Vernice Wineera Pere's *Mahanga* (1978). Fiction emerged soon after with Witi Ihimaera's stories *Pounamu Pounamu* (1972) and novel *Tangi* (1973). Another important founding figure of Maori literature is Patricia Grace, whose collection *Waiariki and Other Stories* (1975) and novel *Mutuwhenua* (1978) are the first of their kind for Maori women writers. Both Ihimaera and Grace, however, gesture to their predecessors Arapera Blank, Rose Denness and J. C. Sturm, who published in literary journals such as *Te Ao Hou* (produced by the Department of Maori Affairs), which was launched in 1952 and

continued publication throughout the 1950s and 1960s. It is one of the factors responsible for what is known as the Maori cultural renaissance of the 1970s. As Grace comments, this government-sponsored journal represented an emergent affirmation of Maori cultural autonomy and an initial recognition that writing by Pakeha (white New Zealander) writers about Maori was 'presenting an outsider viewpoint only'.⁶⁵

Unlike in Aboriginal literature, the novel as a genre flourished early (a process in which *Te Ao Hou* played a significant role) and has become the most prolific and acclaimed genre in Maori literature.⁶⁶ The early fiction of the 1970s on the whole celebrated the rural communalism of the Maori *marae* (traditional meeting houses) and mourned the passing of that lifestyle. It was lyrical and nostalgic. By the late 1970s, however, Maori literature was beginning to depart from its initial idealism. Maori were migrating from rural tribal communities to the cities and traditional ways of life were undergoing transformation. Ihimaera's second collection of stories, *The New Net Goes Fishing* (1977), for example, depicts the violence of alienated urban Maori. This portrayal of racialized urban struggle reflects the political activism of the period which included the 1975 Maori land march and the demonstrations that accompanied the 1981 South African Springboks tour. This decade also saw constitutional reforms such as the establishment of the Treaty of Waitangi Act (1975) and the Waitangi Tribunal which was charged with the role of monitoring and implementing the recommendations of the 1840 Waitangi Treaty (to which representatives of the British and the Maori people were co-signatories).

This growing activism gained momentum in the literature of the 1980s. During this decade, when political tracts such as Donna Awatere's landmark *Maori Sovereignty* (1984) appeared, Maori literature generally became more politicized and polemical. Grace's second novel, *Potiki* (1986), a book which received international acclaim, engages directly with issues such as land rights and Maori self-determination. Ihimaera's third novel, *The Matriarch* (1986), a revisionist post-contact novel which forcefully advocates Maori sovereignty, for example, also signalled this change from quietism and idealism. Grace and Ihimaera continue to be prolific; Grace has published a further six novels and five short-story collections, and Ihimaera, twelve novels and ten collections of short stories. The mid 1980s also saw Keri Hulme's arrival on the literary scene with *The Bone People* (1983). This novel, which won the 1985 Booker McConnell Prize, sold more than half a million copies worldwide and consolidated the international recognition of Maori literature.⁶⁷ Hulme has also published a short-story collection, three volumes of poetry and a collection of prose fragments.

Perhaps the most famous Maori novelist, however, is Alan Duff, whose first novel, like Hulme's, became the author's best-known work. *Once Were Warriors* (1990) spent one year at number one on New Zealand best-seller lists and remained in the top ten for the next five years.⁶⁸ The international success of *Once Were Warriors* was boosted by Lee Tamahori's 1994 film adaptation. The novel depicts the grim and unrelenting violence that characterized Maori gangs and domestic life. Its gritty social realism differs markedly from the symbolist, mythological and magic realist strategies of Ihimaera, Grace and Hulme. Duff also writes journalism⁶⁹ and his criticism of Maori welfare dependency and his view that Maori should take responsibility for their own systemic dysfunctionality rather than 'blaming' their socio-economic problems on Pakeha is widely known and highly controversial.⁷⁰ In spite of its bleak depiction of an urban Maori underclass, Heim argues that Duff's work is characterized by the ability 'to channel a visceral response [of rage and despair] into controlled and constructive action'⁷¹ and that characters such as Beth in *Once Were Warriors* indicate that political action can produce positive results. The novel is the first of a trilogy, comprising *What Becomes of the Broken-Hearted* (1996) and *Jake's Long Shadow* (2002). Duff has written five other novels and an autobiography, *Out of the Mist and Steam* (1999). Lydia Wevers makes the point that even though Maori literature achieves transnational mobility, it remains rooted in specific localities, that is, within Maori psychic and corporeal relations to land.⁷² In this aspect it resembles Aboriginal literature. Maori fiction produces a hybrid aesthetics; it syncretically combines traditional storytelling, family history and Maori spirituality and ceremonial practices with Western literary genres. To take one example: Patricia Grace's *Potiki* imitates the structure of a *whaikorero* (an oration to welcome people to *marae*).

The demography of New Zealand is very different to that of Australia. Whereas Aboriginal people constitute 2.5 per cent of the overall population, in New Zealand the Maori constitute 15 per cent. There are further contrastive factors including New Zealand's smaller land size – which means that there is greater cultural continuity among Maori (in language, for example) – and historical events such as the Waitangi Treaty which formally invested Maori with civil rights at a relatively early stage in the nation's colonial history. These factors differentiate the cultural positioning of Maori from that of Aboriginal people and, subsequently, each nation's governance of indigenous peoples. In New Zealand during the 1970s and 1980s activists started to advocate biculturalism, which was seen as an alternative to integration and the ensuing loss of Maori identity.⁷³ The policy of biculturalism gives Maori a higher profile and greater cultural and political recognition than Aboriginal people have

experienced in Australia. The specificity of Maori identity as shaped by these legislative practices is reflected in its literature. While most Maori writers support biculturalism, they also argue for greater autonomy and self-determination. Patricia Grace, for example, is an advocate of biculturalism,⁷⁴ but only in the form that honours the agreements enshrined in the Treaty of Waitangi. Her fiction directly engages with political issues such as land rights and foreshore and seabed rights. Like Grace, Ihimaera argues for biculturalism but is also a strong advocate for Maori separatism and binationalism (notably in *The Dream Swimmer*, 1997). This split is symptomatic of the conflict within the Treaty between the conditions of *kawanatanga* (state sovereignty) and those of *rangatiratanga* (Maori sovereignty), a conflict which is the subject of ongoing negotiation by writers and activists. Maori writers' support for biculturalism is sometimes expressed through their celebration of hybridity, for example Ihimaera's celebration of his dual Pakeha and Maori heritage.⁷⁵ This is rare in Aboriginal writing where Aboriginal disenfranchisement is usually of central importance.

Maori writers' support for biculturalism is often thus inflected with an insistence on Maori sovereignty and binationalism. The binary terms of New Zealand's biculturalism have also become increasingly problematized by the nation's multiculturalism. Hulme, for example, advocates a multi-ethnic nationalist identity even though violence remains central to her 'redemptive vision'.⁷⁶ Indeed, Maori fiction, in particular, has been seen to be characterized by violence, of which Duff is perhaps its most visible exemplar.⁷⁷ Newer Maori writers include Paula Morris and Kelly-Ana Morey.

There are protocols for research in Maori literature by non-Maori. The rubric of 'Kaupapa Maori research' provides guidelines for approaches and issues relating to intellectual property. Non-indigenous researchers are advised to develop a 'Kaupapa Maori orientation'.⁷⁸

Notes

1. Penny van Toorn, *Writing Never Arrives Naked: Early Aboriginal Cultures of Writing in Australia* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006).
2. David Unaipon, *Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines*, ed. Stephen Muecke and Adam Shoemaker (Carlton, VIC: Miegunyah Press, 2001), p. 4.
3. This referendum asked voters to decide whether (1) the responsibility for legislating in Aboriginal affairs should be shifted from the states to the federal government and (2) if Aboriginal people should be included in national censuses. The resounding 90 per cent 'yes' vote was seen as nationwide recognition and endorsement of Aboriginal people's civil rights. The 1967 Referendum was a milestone in the history

- of modern indigenous politics in Australia and was followed by increased activism in land rights, health, education, legal services and political representation.
4. Stuart Hall, 'Minimal selves', in Lisa Appignanesi (ed.), *Identity: The Real Me: Postmodernism and the Question of Identity* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1987), pp. 44–6.
 5. Maryrose Casey, *Creating Frames: Contemporary Indigenous Theatre 1967–97* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2004), p. 104.
 6. Anita M. Heiss, *Dhuuluu-Yala: To Talk Straight* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2003), p. 17.
 7. Dennis Byrne, 'Deep nation: Australia's acquisition of an indigenous past', *Aboriginal History*, 20 (1996), 82–107.
 8. Rosemary van den Berg, 'The cultural diversity of Aborigines in Australia', *Museums West*, 8.1 (1995), 8–9.
 9. For a historical discussion of the category of the Australian Aborigine and the significance of this category as a limit case in global understandings of the human in the nineteenth century see Kay Anderson, *Race and the Crisis of Humanism* (London: Routledge, 2007).
 10. Philip Morrissey, 'Aboriginal writing', in Sylvia Kleinert and Margo Neale (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 313.
 11. Kim Scott and Hazel Brown, *Kayang & Me* (Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Press, 2005), p. 190.
 12. Tony Birch, 'The true history of Beruk (archive box – no. 3)', *Meanjin*, 65.1 (2006), 43.
 13. John Morton, 'Dreaming', in Kleinert and Neale (eds.), *Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, p. 577.
 14. See, for example, Anne Brewster in 'Humour and the defamiliarisation of whiteness in the short fiction of Australian Indigenous writer Alf Taylor', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 44.4 (2008), 427–38; 'Brokering cross-racial feminism: reading Indigenous Australian poet Lisa Bellear', *Feminist Theory*, 8.2 (2007), 209–22.
 15. Adam Shoemaker, *Black Words White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929–1988* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989), p. 201.
 16. Noonuccal is the nation from which she hails and Oodgeroo means 'paperbark'.
 17. 'Interview: Kath Walker', with Jim Davidson, *Meanjin*, 36.3 (1977), p. 440.
 18. Kathie Cochrane, 'Noonuccal, Oodgeroo', in Kleinert and Neale (eds.), *Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, p. 664.
 19. Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory 1880–1939* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 1997).
 20. Kevin Gilbert, 'Shame', in *People Are Legends: Aboriginal Poems* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1978), p. 13.
 21. 'Look, Koori', in *People Are Legends: Aboriginal Poems*, p. 52.
 22. Ian McLean, 'Aboriginality', in Kleinert and Neale (eds.), *Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, p. 519.
 23. Shoemaker, *Black Words White Page*, p. 202.
 24. 'Stepping stones across a river in spate: images of language loss in Irish writing in English and in the guerilla poems of Lionel G. Fogarty', in Tadgh Foley and Fiona Bateman (eds.), *Irish-Australian Studies: Papers Delivered at the Ninth Irish-Australian Conference, Galway, April 1997* (Sydney: Crossing Press, 2000), p. 40.
 25. Philip Mead, *Networked Language: Culture & History in Australian Poetry* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008).

26. Lionel G. Fogarty, *New and Selected Poems* (South Melbourne: Hyland House, 1995), p. ix.
27. *Ibid.*, p. xi.
28. *New and Selected Poems*, p. 34.
29. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 262.
30. Samuel Wagan Watson, *Smoke Encrypted Whispers* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2004), pp. 86, 52.
31. Lisa Belleair, *Dreaming in Urban Areas* (St Lucia, and Portland, OR: University of Queensland Press, 1996), p. 58.
32. Charmaine Papertalk-Green, *Just Like That and Other Poems* (Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2007), p. 36.
33. A survey of the 'types of writing' done by indigenous writers indicated that family histories were the most popular form. See Judi Cooper *et al.* 'To tell my story: A study of practising Indigenous writers of Australia' (research report, Australia Council for the Arts Sydney, 2000), p. 11.
34. The heavy paternalism of policies of 'Protection' which dominated governmental management of Aboriginal populations from the 1900s onwards had its genesis in colonial policy formulated in Britain. Labour shortages during World War I combined with the horrendous living conditions of Aboriginal communities led to a reassessment of the Protection policies in the 1930s.
35. The policy of Assimilation was first formulated in 1937 at the first conference of Commonwealth and State ministers on Aboriginal affairs: 'the destiny of the natives of Aboriginal origin, but not of the full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth' (Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities, Canberra, April 1937), quoted by Phyllis Daylight and Mary Johnstone in *Women's Business: Report of the Women's Task Force* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1986), p. 104.
 Following pressure from Aboriginal lobbying throughout the 1960s for equality and civil rights, by the late 1960s government policy shifted to recognize cultural diversity. In 1968 Prime Minister Gorton continued to define government policy in terms of assimilation but he agreed that this should not be at the cost of destroying Aboriginal culture. The term 'assimilation' was subsequently replaced by the term 'integration' (Daylight and Johnstone, *Women's Business*, p. 108).
36. Douglas Lockwood, *I, the Aboriginal* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1962), np.
37. 'Talking with Ruby Langford Ginibi', interview with Janine Little, *Hecate*, 20.1 (1994), 103.
38. Marcia Langton, 'Urbanising Aborigines: the social scientists' great deception', *Social Alternatives*, 2.2 (1981), 18.
39. Pat O'Shane, 'Is there any relevance in the women's movement for Aboriginal women?' *Refractory Girl* (Sept. 1976), 33.
40. Daylight and Johnstone, *Women's Business*, p. 2.
41. Fiona Probyn-Rapsey, 'Kin-fused reconciliation: bringing them home, bringing us home', *Australian Humanities Review* (2007), www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/
42. Peta Stephenson, *The Outsiders Within: Telling Australia's Indigenous/Asian Story* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2007); Helen Gilbert and Jacqueline Lo, *Performance and Cosmopolitics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
43. For example, Christine Choo, *Mission Girls: Aboriginal Women on Catholic Missions in the Kimberley, Western Australia, 1900-1950* (Crawley: University of Western

- Australia Press, 2001); Septu Brahim, 'Recollections of the early days', in Anne Brewster, Angeline O'Neill and Rosemary van den Berg (eds.), *Those Who Remain Will Always Remember: an Anthology of Aboriginal Writing* (Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000).
44. Maureen Clark, *Mudrooroo: A Likely Story* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2007); Anne Brewster, 'Mudrooroo', in Kleinert and Neale (eds.), *Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, p. 650; Heiss, *Dhuulhu-Yala*, pp. 3–8.
 45. Alexis Wright, 'Politics of exposure: an interview with Alison Ravenscroft', *Meridian*, 17.1 (1998), p. 75.
 46. Scott shared the award with Thea Astley's *Drylands*.
 47. 'Maban' means sorcerer.
 48. Otto Heim, 'Writing Along Broken Lines: Violence and Ethnicity in Contemporary Maori Fiction' (Auckland University Press, 1998).
 49. Sam Watson, *The Kadaitcha Song* (Ringwood, VIC, and New York: Penguin, 1990), pp. 153, 251, 28, 118, 182.
 50. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
 51. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
 52. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
 53. Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1999), p. 255.
 54. Katharine England, 'Aboriginal Gothic', *Adelaide Advertiser*, 14 December 2002, p. 11.
 55. Melissa Lucashenko, *Steam Pigs* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1997), p. 2.
 56. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
 57. *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.
 58. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
 59. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
 60. Melissa Lucashenko, *Hard Yards* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999), p. 55.
 61. Suzanne Baker, 'Binarisms and duality: magic realism and postcolonialism', *SPAN*, 36 (1993), 82–7; Stephen Slemon, 'Magic realism as postcolonial discourse', *Canadian Literature*, 116 (1988), 2–24; R. R. Wilson, *In Palamedes Shadow: Explorations in Play, Game and Narrative Theory* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990).
 62. Casey, *Creating Frames*, p. 9.
 63. Gerry Turcotte, 'Jack Davis', in Kleinert and Neale (eds.), *Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Literature*, p. 569.
 64. *Ibid.*, p. xxiv.
 65. Patricia Grace, interview with Paola Della Valle in *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 42 (2007), 135.
 66. The lack of life stories, when compared to Aboriginal literature, can be explained by the different historical circumstances of Maori who did not experience child removal to the extent Aboriginal people did. Many Aboriginal life stories have emerged as a cultural imperative for the stolen generations for whom they function on the one hand to re-establish familial genealogies and histories and on the other to connect with a hitherto inaccessible Aboriginality and to affirm the continuity and survival of Aboriginal culture.
 67. It is interesting that two of the highest-profile indigenous novels from Australia and New Zealand, Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* (2006) and Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*

- (1983), were both published by small presses. *The Bone People*, after failing to interest a commercial publisher, was initially published by the small women's collective, Spiral Press. It was later taken up by mainstream publishers.
68. Lydia Wevers, 'Globalising indigenes: postcolonial fiction from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific', *JASAL*, 5 (2006), 121–32.
 69. Michelle Keown writes that 'In 1991, Duff began writing a column for the *Evening Post* which was syndicated to eight other newspapers, and he remains one of New Zealand's most well-known and controversial journalists' (*Postcolonial Pacific Writing: Representations of the Body*, London: Routledge, 2005, p. 210, fn 2).
 70. This viewpoint is also expressed in the Australian context by prominent Aboriginal lawyer and community leader Noel Pearson. Pearson argues that in recent decades a 'rights' discourse of protest has taken precedence over a 'responsibility' discourse with the result that Aboriginal people transfer moral responsibility by blaming white people for their subaltern status and promulgating a 'politics of victimhood' ('White guilt, victimhood and the quest for a radical centre', *Griffith Review* (Winter 2007), 26, 28). Pearson draws on black American Shelby Steele's *White Guilt: How Blacks and Whites Together Destroyed the Promise of the Civil Rights Era* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).
 71. Heim, *Writing Along Broken Lines*, p. 2.
 72. Wevers, 'Globalising indigenes', pp. 121–32.
 73. Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing*, p. 5.
 74. Antonella Sarti, *Spiritcarvers: Interviews with Eighteen Writers from New Zealand* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998), p. 44.
 75. 'Witi Ihimaera's New Zealand dreams', transcript of speech delivered at National Library, 2 November 2005; www.fulbright.org.nz/news/releases/051102-nzdreams.html, p. 4.
 76. Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing*, p. 105.
 77. Heim, *Writing Along Broken Lines*; and Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing*.
 78. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York and Dunedin: Zed Books and University of Otago Press, 1999), p. 187.

Postcolonial writing in Ireland

JOE CLEARY

Was Ireland a colony? If by colonization we mean the conquest of one society by another more powerful society on its way to acquiring a vast empire, the settlement of the conquered territory by way of population transfers from the conquering one, the systematic denigration of the culture of the earlier inhabitants, the dismantling of their social institutions and the imposition of new institutions designed to consolidate the recently arrived settler community's power over the 'natives' while keeping that settler community in its turn dependent on the 'motherland', then Ireland may be considered one of the earliest and most thoroughly colonized regions of the British Empire. The initial process of colonization began under the Tudors in the 1550s with the plantation of the Irish midlands, continued with Munster plantation in the 1580s, was extended to the north with the Ulster plantation in the 1590s and early 1600s, and was completed by the Cromwellian conquest and land confiscations in the 1640s. In this process, the Gaelic clan system and the Hiberno-Norman (or Old English) dynasties were almost entirely shattered and the spiritual and cultural institutions of the old Irish order – namely, the Catholic abbeys and monasteries and the secular Gaelic Bardic septs – were also dismantled and replaced by the English-language and Protestant culture of the new elites. The earlier economic system based on pastoral herding was also eliminated as Ireland was integrated into the mercantile capitalist order that the European empires were already expanding into a world system stretching across the Americas and Asia.¹

Reduced to the condition of a colony by the 1650s, Ireland remained a volatile tinderbox in the century and a half between then and 1800. Nervous that its European rivals might use the island to launch an invasion of England, the English ruling elite depended on the new settler society to uphold its rule there. However, that settler community was itself fractured. The Scottish-descended and mainly Dissenter community concentrated in Ulster was disenfranchised under a political establishment in Dublin that was predominantly

English-descended and Anglican and thus many Scots Irish left to re-settle in Britain's American colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These migration routes also became intellectual circuits and had repercussions in Ireland when Irish Dissenters were radicalized by both the Scottish Enlightenment and the rise of American colonial-settler nationalism. By then, however, the Anglican Irish elite had become a prosperous and powerful Ascendancy (as it was to be termed) enjoying something like a 'golden age' since it was domestically protected from economic or political challenge by a system of Penal Laws that banned Catholics from the Dublin parliament and excluded them from the higher professions. When the American colonies declared their independence in 1776 this further emboldened Irish Protestant settler nationalism and in 1782 an English parliament weakened by its North American wars was compelled to grant its Dublin subordinate a greater measure of autonomy.

The French Revolution was another watershed, prompting some of the more radical intellectual cadres of Irish Protestantism, inspired by the ideas of American democracy and French republicanism, to view London's capacity to manipulate Irish religious divisions in its own interests as a brake on Irish progress. This represented a drastic rupture with an inherited Protestant worldview that had always attributed the country's misfortunes to Irish savagery and backwardness or to papist superstition and despotism. The Jacobin-inspired United Irishmen movement developed in Dublin and Belfast in the 1790s set out to break the link with Britain and to create an Irish republic uniting Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter in bonds of common citizenship. Seeking help from Napoleonic France for a rebellion in 1798, the United Irish movement, led mainly by middle-class Protestants though its mass base came from the subordinate Catholic community in the south and from some sections of the Dissenting community in the north, was brutally put down by the English military assisted by the local colonial Ascendancy and the ultra-Protestant Orange Order. A combination of actual massacres of Protestants in the course of the rebellion and a deliberate campaign by the British authorities to whip up sectarian fears in order to draw off Protestant support for republicanism aggravated old communal animosities and ended the United Irish movement. To safeguard Ireland from further threat, the parliament in Dublin, the headquarters of Irish Protestant power, was persuaded to dissolve itself and Ireland became part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland under the Act of Union of 1800.² Hence, although Ireland was colonized concurrently with the westward enterprise that had led to the establishment of colonial North and South America, Irish colonial-settler nationalism

never attained the sovereignty that the North American colonies acquired in the late eighteenth century and that the Spanish colonies gained in the early nineteenth century. Convinced that Irish democracy would mean a reign of terror by a Catholic majority, the bulk of the Irish Protestant community instead turned its back on nationalism and republicanism after the 1790s and remained wedded to the ideologies of Union and Empire over the next two centuries.

Some scholars doubt whether Ireland can legitimately be considered a colony after the Act of Union because it was represented by its own members of parliament in Westminster, a status extended neither to the American colonies before their independence nor to any of Britain's other white dominions or colonies in Asia and Africa. After 1793, moreover, when Catholics were officially allowed to enter the British military, Ireland became a major recruiting ground for the British imperial service and during the nineteenth century Irish Catholics served throughout the British Empire, primarily as soldiers and administrators, but also as doctors, engineers, missionaries and businessmen. But although Ireland was certainly incorporated into the institutional matrix of the British Empire in quite distinctive ways, this does not mean that its domestic structures did not continue to be colonial. Obviously, the transfer of parliamentary authority from Dublin to London could not and did not abolish overnight the religio-ethnic hierarchies instituted during the centuries of colonization. Indeed, one of the chief reasons why Irish Protestants were prepared to cede management of the island from Dublin to London was that they were convinced that in a more democratically minded age their inherited privileges might better be preserved within an overwhelmingly Protestant United Kingdom than in any purely Irish context where Protestants would always be outnumbered. Furthermore, nineteenth-century British national identity remained intimately tied to Protestantism, and so even after the Union Irish Catholics continued, despite assurances to the contrary, to be disenfranchised from Westminster until the winning of Catholic Emancipation in 1829 after several decades of mass mobilization. The anti-papist sentiment of the pre-Enlightenment period gradually waned in English liberal circles during the Victorian era but continued to be a fairly rabid force in the more evangelical Protestant denominations; moreover, new Social Darwinist and other 'scientific' racial theories were deployed in the later nineteenth century in ways that continued to construct the Catholic Irish as culturally and racially inferior. Thus, the Irish might be accepted as 'white' British subjects when serving the empire overseas, but when they flooded into the slums of Manchester or Liverpool during the Industrial Revolution, emigrated to the United States,

or were transported to the penal colony of Australia, their otherness to the dominant Anglo-Saxon Protestant order was regularly insisted upon, vigorously so in periods of political turbulence.³

In Ireland itself, the property regimes established in the colonial period meant that the vast bulk of land remained in Protestant ownership. Nothing underscored the continuing economic and cultural gulf that divided Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom more vividly than the Great Famine of the late 1840s. At a time when the Scottish and Welsh peripheries were fast becoming epicentres of the Industrial Revolution, Ireland was still overwhelmingly rural and, outside of a small corner in the northeast, an overwhelmingly Catholic tenantry lived by subsistence modes of agriculture on plots leased from Ascendancy landlords. Between 1845 and 1852 the potato blight wreaked havoc with this mode of subsistence and over one million Irish people lost their lives to hunger or to disease and over two million more emigrated over the next decade. The long-term consequences of this catastrophe were scarcely less dramatic: from a high of approximately eight million at mid-century the Irish population had halved by 1900 due both to chronic emigration (to an extent that two out of every five Irish-born people were living overseas at century's end) and to radically changed patterns of delayed marriage provoked by fears of a renewed calamity. The Famine also devastated what remained of Gaelic culture since it was the poorest Irish-speaking tenant-cottier classes that bore its severest brunt. For many British observers, the Famine was another manifestation of an innate Irish disposition to unruly squalor and of cultural or racial inferiority; for many Irish, it was viewed as the latest of many genocidal atrocities visited by England on their country. Between the Act of Union and the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, Ireland was always more heavily garrisoned and more recurrently rebellious and subject to coercion than any other part of the United Kingdom. Hence modern Irish nationalism was fashioned in the age of high imperialism and became, in its more militant versions at least, not only anti-Union but anti-empire in sentiment.

Modern Irish literature is intimately connected to this traumatic history of colonialism and resistance. The continuous stream of *Views*, *Topographies*, *Discoveries*, *Descriptions*, *Images*, *Anatomies* and travel narratives that described Ireland for English audiences from the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman invasions to the seventeenth-century Cromwellian land confiscations became in time a dense textual archive that determined how Europeans generally conceived of Ireland and the Irish. The web of discourses – ethnographic, religious, legal, geographic, historical and so on – that comprised this colonial archive supplied the fundamental template within which and out of which Anglo-Irish

literature was initially fashioned. Once the plantations had dismantled the old Gaelic order an embattled Gaelic intelligentsia was also compelled to produce various kinds of counter-narratives to contest this colonial archive. One can say, therefore, that Ireland's English- and Irish-language writers were both obliged to a large extent to take their imaginative bearings for several centuries from a colonial regimen of discourses that established what it was possible and permissible to say about Ireland.

In one elementary sense, the inexorable decline of Irish-language culture and the inexorable ascent of English-language culture merely reflected a wider history whereby the Irish people were detached from the premodern Gaelic dispensation and were simultaneously anglicized and conscripted into modes of modern capitalist subjectivity spread across the world by the European empires. But while English was certainly the language of colonial power in Ireland, it also became in time the primary vehicle through which not only the Protestant colonial-settler nationalisms of the eighteenth century but also the Irish political and cultural nationalisms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were articulated. Likewise, while the history of Gaelic literature in Ireland is certainly one of drastic decline, it cannot be wholly summed up *only* in these terms either. This is so because even as the language shift accelerated from 1800 onwards Gaelic became an object of fascination for a wide variety of intellectuals and devotees of all sorts and thus it survived, albeit precariously, to be adopted not only as the first official language of the Irish Free State (and later Republic) in the post-independence period, but also as the medium for a lively minority literature that thrives today alongside the dominant English-language one.

The Irish literatures shaped by this multifaceted history of colonialism, imperial entanglement and anti-colonial resistance are of course variegated. Irish literature in English is an especially hybrid affair: some elements of it share family resemblances with other imperial and colonial-settler literatures, while other features are closer to those of decolonizing national literatures. In the circumstances, Ireland's literatures do not lend themselves to any simple postcolonial schemata and instead demonstrate the extent to which the colonial and the postcolonial are always mutually imbricated. The extraordinary burst of Irish modernist literature produced at the peak of the country's national struggle in the early twentieth century is, for example, like a later South American magic realism, hard to square with theories that suggest that postcolonial or 'Third World' literatures most commonly take the form of realist national allegories. But even if the Irish colonial experience can seem anomalous in some ways, in others it may be seen as exemplary: over the course

of centuries the country was transformed from a violent early modern colonial frontier into a bustling settler society and then into a chronically underdeveloped, famine-ravaged periphery before becoming, after independence, a partitioned dominion divided between a devolved six-county Northern Ireland and a twenty-six-county 'Free State' in the south, the latter leaving the Commonwealth in 1948 (just as India and Pakistan joined it) to become the Irish Republic. The literatures shaped over several centuries by so many shifting modalities of colonialism and postcolonialism must inevitably be colonial and postcolonial in quite knotty and complex ways.

In a short chapter such as this, any attempt to do even modest justice to the various ways in which Ireland's literatures have been shaped by the country's evolving colonial and postcolonial struggles will inevitably have to be a rather schematic overview. The pages that follow do not pursue a strictly chronological approach; instead, they document some of the more significant ways in which Irish writing in both of the major languages has been affiliated to diverse modes of Irish resistance to historically shifting regimes of English and Irish Ascendancy hegemony. The opening section below describes some of the more notable attempts by Gaelic and Catholic writers to counter the relentless assault on Irish culture during the period in which the colonial order was consolidated; the subsequent one then considers some changing modalities of Gaelic and Catholic resistance in the centuries after the Act of Union. The subsequent section then examines the mainly anglophone world of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Irish republicanism and cultural nationalism and some of the major bodies of writing they stimulated. Viewed against this historical backdrop, later sections will then discuss Irish Revivalist, Irish modernist, Northern Irish and Irish women's writing as these have flourished from the push to independence in the early twentieth century to the contemporary moment.

Gaelic and Catholic modes of cultural resistance from the colonial period to the Act of Union

The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Irish settler community's worldview was shaped by the discourses of the religious wars of the European Reformation and Counter-Reformation and by those of English and Spanish settlement in the Americas. Because it had already been made available to the English imagination through writings compiled during the late medieval Norman invasions, and because the new settlers did not encounter there the dazzling empires that the Spaniards confronted in Mexico or Peru or that the English confronted in the

East, Ireland was never constructed in the early modern colonial archive either as a wholly strange 'brave new world' or as a site of the marvellous and the exotic. The Norman invasions had been legitimated on the basis that their purpose was to return a wild and virtually heathen Ireland to civility and Christianity; hence, the English-language archive dating from this period had stressed the uncultivated condition of the Irish landscape and the laxity of Irish customs and morals. Historians have argued that from the time of the first Tudor plantations onwards the already negative conception of Ireland thus established became even darker. A new Renaissance sociology, fashioned primarily out of Spain's encounter with the Amerindians, inaugurated a move away from an older humanist confidence in the potential of even savage peoples to become more civil through conversion and sanctioned a European tendency to think more sternly of alien others as not just contingently but congenitally barbarous and anthropologically inferior. When these New World discourses were filtered into English culture they were further tintured by a Calvinism disposed to divide people into the elect and the damned and to believe that the non-elect could rarely be persuaded to mend their ways. The upshot was an intellectual shift away from attempts to civilize the Irish through piecemeal reform and the cultural assimilation of their elites towards a more fundamentalist policy based on the premise that only an island-wide military conquest followed by a comprehensive programme of plantation by English settlers would ever produce civility in Ireland.⁴

Elaborating these ideas, early modern settler writings constructed a version of Ireland that manipulated a series of tropes that were also common currency in other colonial sites. Because the Irish had not developed a centralized state, they were depicted as nomadic barbarians temperamentally addicted to the laziness and lawlessness thought to be habitual to such peoples. Moreover, Gaelic Christianity was, following the precedent of the Norman writer Giraldus Cambrensis, dismissed as a mere veneer on a more fundamental heathenism or was construed, along the lines of post-Reformation Puritanism, as a foul species of superstitious priestcraft. Similarly, though the Irish had once enjoyed a reputation across Europe for piety and scholarship, they were now depicted as almost entirely lacking in cultural accomplishment. The attributes of sloth, lasciviousness, wildness, rudeness, incivility, inertia, superstition and treacherousness, as well as the more extravagant tropes of cannibalism, blood-drinking, incest and murderous depravity that occur with such inventive monotony in colonialist discourses of the New World, appear also in fertile abundance in English writing on Ireland in this era.⁵ Edmund Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, written in 1596 out of the latter's experiences of the Munster Plantation, was widely circulated among other writers and senior officials and

expressed the convictions of the new English settlers that the old Gaelic world must be entirely destroyed and replaced by an orderly English plantation policy. Sir John Davies, one of the chief architects of the Ulster Plantation, was also the author of *A Discovery of the True Causes why Ireland was never Entirely Subdued* (1612), which translated the kind of policies advocated by Spenser into a more fully programmatic form. After every Irish rebellion in the centuries that followed the plantation texts stressing the murderousness of ‘the mere Irish’ and the need for stronger punitive measures to safeguard England’s loyal Irish Protestant subjects streamed again from the printing presses.

The durability of these colonial-era discourses is indicated by the fact that when David Hume wrote his *History of England* (1745–62), which rapidly became the standard work of reference in British letters, he drew extensively on settler writers such as Davies for his accounts of the Ulster Plantation and on works by later New English ideologues such as John Temple’s *The Irish Rebellion* (1646), a sensationalist treatment of Irish massacres of Protestants in colonial Ulster in 1641. Small wonder, then, that Hume confirmed for his own and future generations what was by then a generally settled conviction:

The Irish, from the beginning of time, had been buried in the most profound barbarism and ignorance; and as they were never conquered, or even invaded by the Romans, from whom all the western world derived its civility, they continued still [in the seventeenth century] in the most rude state of society, and were distinguished by those vices alone, to which human nature, not tamed by education, or restrained by laws, is forever subject . . . Being treated like wild beasts, they became such and joining the ardour of revenge to their yet untamed barbarity, they grew everyday more intractable and more dangerous.⁶

There are real differences between Spenser’s and Davies’s early modern evangelical puritanism and Hume’s Enlightenment whiggishness, but these writers are nonetheless in agreement on fundamentals: empire, be it that of ancient Rome or modern England, is the mother of civility and those ‘not tamed by [imperial] education, or restrained by laws’ are ever likely to regress into ‘the most profound barbarism and ignorance’ for which the Irish, never properly tamed by imperial Rome – though all too thoroughly claimed by papist Rome – were by now an established byword.

Since the early modern English were convinced that Gaelic society needed to be disaggregated and Irish subjects either anglicized or replaced by English ones, much hostility was inevitably directed at the clerical and bardic orders that were the custodians of Irish learning and cultural memory. New English settler writings warned obsessively about the dangers of going linguistically

native. In Spenser's *View*, for example, Eudoxus, the spokesman for a pro-grammatic plantation, notes that in Roman imperial practice 'it hath been ever the use of the conqueror to despise the language of the conquered, and to force him by all means to learn his'.⁷ Likewise, Davies's *Discovery* argues that once they had adopted the Irish tongue the earlier Norman settlers or Old English 'became degenerate and metamorphosed like Nebuchadnezzar; who although he had the face of a man, had the heart of a Beast; or like those who had drunke of *Circes* Cuppe and were tuned into Beastes'.⁸ In a ground-breaking study of early modern linguistic colonialism, Patricia Palmer has argued that the Tudor settlers in Ireland never matched the ambitious philological endeavours undertaken in the same age by at least a minority of Spaniards with regard to Amerindian languages. One explanation for this, Palmer suggests, is that early modern Spanish colonialism was mediated through a religiously sanctioned nationalism in which a Counter-Reformationist imperative to evangelize was given precedence over linguistic nationalism; the reverse ratio, she surmises, applied in the English case where English was always too central to the settlers' national identity to be subordinated to the interests of evangelizing others.⁹ For whatever reason, the English settlers in the North American colonies, unlike the Spaniards to their south, certainly remained largely indifferent to converting native Americans, and the fact that the Irish, alone of the people on Britain's Celtic fringes, were not converted en masse to Protestantism may be attributed not only to the mobilization of Catholicism in Ireland as a badge of anti-colonial resistance but also to the English colonists' preference to remain aloof from a Gaelic they commonly regarded as a cacophonous marker of Irish recalcitrance rather than as a language in its own right. This linguistic antagonism was logically extended to the Gaelic poets or bards, who were commonly regarded as inveterate agents of subversion. Writing in 1561, Thomas Smythe condemned the bards as 'very hurtfull to the common-whealle, for they chifflie mayntayne the rebels' and Spenser's *View* seconds this opinion, chastizing them for cultivating in the Irish a love of war and persuading their chieftains 'that his musicke was not the harpe or layes of love, but the cryes of people, and Clashinge of armor'.¹⁰

The Irish bards that were the source of such anxiety were members of hereditary septs in which learning was transmitted in the male line under the patronage of clan chieftains. These bards or *fili* were not poets in the European courtly sense but multipurpose officials: the keepers of clan genealogies, the reciters of eulogies, the composers of highly elaborate metrical verse designed for oral performance. Historically, the profession had always been separate from the monastic orders that were the custodians of religious scholarship, but

when the Gaelic nobility lost power the traditional patronage system collapsed and the clerical and secular Gaelic intelligentsia were forced into greater contact. The proscription of Catholicism also stripped the Catholic intelligentsia of institutional support in Ireland and compelled many to go into European exile or to go underground and to ply their learning in secrecy. Under these conditions, some members of the bardic families entered religious orders, bringing with them their devotion to Gaelic language and history, while others were compelled to fall back on the support of the surviving minor Gaelic nobility or to seek patronage from the New English landlords or antiquarians. Since the printing press and Trinity College, the only Irish university until 1795, were in Protestant settler hands, Irish-language scholarship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries continued to circulate, as it had always done, mainly in manuscript or else was printed in Europe or on small underground presses in Ireland. Some modern scholars have argued that the old Gaelic intelligentsia were so conservative that they were never able to deal effectively with the convulsions brought about by the new colonial dispensation and that their writings increasingly slipped into ideologically bankrupt pedantry; however, recent scholarship tends to contend that under extraordinarily difficult conditions the Gaelic response to the new colonial regime proved remarkably versatile and resilient.¹¹

Only a few of the more significant strands of the Gaelic cultural resistance to the relentless barrage of anti-Irish sentiment that attended the consolidation of colonial rule in Ireland can be mentioned here. One major line of bardic literary response might be described as the creation of a poetry of lamentation, which mourned the loss of the old order and the demotion of Irish learning, and a poetry of indignation, which lashed the insufferable arrogance of the Protestant settlers or of the newly anglicized Irish who accommodated themselves to the new dispensation. Mixing an extraordinary combination of caste hauteur and desolate abjection, the most distinguished works of this kind were produced by Dáibhí Ó Bruadair and Aogán Ó Rathaille, though Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonail's *Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire* (*The Lament for Art O'Leary*), a keen by an Irish gentry-woman for a husband murdered in a dispute with Ascendancy officials, is a fine late eighteenth-century classic of broadly the same order. In a second line of development, the bards also reworked inherited genres to create a new, more future-orientated mode of *aisling* (vision or dream) verse in which the dejected poet meets a supernatural woman of outstanding beauty and then engages her in conversation, during which she identifies herself as Ireland, forsaken by her legitimate spouse. The *aisling* ends with the woman prophesying the return of her rightful husband, sometimes an Irish nobleman in exile

but more commonly the legitimate Stuart king. Like the poetry of lamentation or invective, the *aisling* has frequently been castigated as a regressively aristocratic mode attached to a forlorn Jacobite hope for the Stuart restoration. The genre does indeed look for a top-down solution to the plight of the Gael, but its volatile mixture of defeated dolour and millenarian hope and its tendency to fix great expectations on some kind of military saviour-figure may be found in the literatures of many colonized peoples. Moreover, since the Jacobite threat was consistently used by the Ascendancy press in Ireland to justify the Penal Laws, Irish Jacobitism was animated less by an attachment to the Stuarts as such than by a desire for the removal of those hated laws. The *aisling*, moreover, was practised not only by old-style caste-conscious poets such as Aogán Ó Rathaille or Liam Dall O hÍfearnáin but also by more popular folk-poets such as Eoghan Rua O Suilleabháin, and in the later eighteenth century Jacobitism evolved into Jacobinism with figures such as Napoleon Bonaparte or native Catholic leader Daniel O'Connell eventually replacing the Stuarts as the redeemer-figure. What this suggests is that while the *aisling* was the product of a pre-democratic age and literary system, it was nonetheless a verse form responsive to popular sentiment, expressing the hopes of the now wretchedly down-trodden literati that some imminent convulsion in the wider European political system would release Irish Catholics from an otherwise unshakeable Ascendancy stranglehold.¹²

Between the plantations and the Act of Union, the Gaelic intelligentsia also managed to preserve the historical memory of Gaelic Ireland and to forge a new sense of national consciousness in which Hiberno-Norman and Gael were united by the common bonds of language and Catholicism against the New English. In this enterprise, the key role was played not by the bardic orders but by the Irish colleges that emerged on the European continent to educate Irish Catholic priests and noblemen in exile. Even so, the bardic orders still made a major contribution here through their members who entered clerical orders and there carried on their family's customary scholarship. Of the many figures of this kind, the most significant is Michéal Ó Cléirigh, a member of a hereditary poetic family serving the O'Donnell clan in Donegal, who joined the Franciscans in the most important Irish college of the period in Louvain, a major sixteenth-century centre of Counter-Reformation learning. Sent back to Ireland to collect Gaelic manuscripts in 1626 by Aodh Mac an Bhaird, a professor of theology at Louvain who was also from another northern bardic family, Ó Cléirigh travelled the island for eleven years, visiting clerical and lay centres of learning, checking manuscripts and sending freshly transcribed copies back to Belgium to be used by others. His major work, *Annála Ríochta*

na hÉireann (*Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*), was completed with the help of three other scholars in 1636; better known as *The Annals of the Four Masters*, this was a compilation recording events in Ireland from the earliest times to 1616. Another outstanding work of the period is Seathrún Céitinn's *Foras Feasa ar Éireann* (*Sources for Knowledge of Ireland*), composed between 1629 and 1634. Céitinn's *Foras Feasa* reworked *Lebor Gabála*, an important account of ancient invasions of Ireland, to enrol his own Hiberno-Norman community in the list of peoples that had gone into the making of Gaelic Ireland.

The histories of Ó Cléirigh and Céitinn have the quality of heroic salvage operations designed to rescue their people's cultural memory from a colonial archive designed to reduce them to barbarians. As such, their efforts bear comparison with that of their near-contemporary Garcilaso de la Vega, a *mestizo* of Incan and Spanish aristocratic parentage whose masterpiece, *Comentarios reales de los Incas*, written in exile in Spain and published in Lisbon in 1609, offered an account of pre-conquest Incan civilization and of the Spanish conquest of Peru from an Incan perspective. Like de la Vega's great work, the histories of Ó Cléirigh and Céitinn were very early forms of anti-colonial 'writing back' that would – the asymmetries of cultural power being what they were – circulate for centuries to come mainly in manuscript. But in another sense they were also forward-looking, radically activist works designed to serve a wider campaign on the part of the Irish in European exile to connect Irish nationalism to a wider pan-European Counter-Reformation Catholicism. In this sense at least they anticipate the endeavours of later twentieth-century anti-colonial intellectuals of many ideological stripes who would try to fuse nationalism and internationalism by way of various modes of Negritude, Islamism, pan-Americanism, pan-Africanism or pan-Arabism.¹³

Vectors of Catholic and Gaelic cultural resistance from the Act of Union to 2000

Given the close association between the Irish language and the Catholic religion in the writings of Ó Cléirigh and Céitinn and others, it might seem surprising that the bond between the two was largely severed in the leading modes of Irish nationalism that emerged after the Act of Union in 1800. Having prohibited all Catholic seminaries in Ireland since the establishment of the Penal Laws in the 1690s, the British government reluctantly permitted the opening of a national seminary in Maynooth, a small town close to Dublin, in 1795. The change of policy was motivated partly by the fear that the Irish educated abroad would absorb the dangerous republican creeds spreading

across Europe, partly by the hope that the Catholic Church, itself strongly anti-republican, might now serve as mediator to uphold British sovereignty over Ireland. Though Maynooth would later supply – as the opponents of this concession feared – many clergy who were nationalists and some who were Irish-language activists, the Catholic hierarchy as a body was keen to remain on good terms with London and not to condone militant nationalism or rebellion. In addition, the language of clerical instruction in Maynooth was English and thus the clergy in the Victorian era were, like the middle classes and intelligentsia generally, strongly anglophone. The Catholic Church would oppose or support Irish nationalist movements or the Irish language as the occasion warranted in its view, but as an institution its overriding commitment was to the advancement of Catholicism, not nationalism or the language movement. As the Irish population generally became more English-speaking, both at home and in the growing diaspora communities in England, the US and Australia, English also became the language of devotion and popular Catholicism.¹⁴

Something of the complexity of the immediate post-Union situation may be glimpsed through the charismatic figure of Daniel O’Connell, popularly known as ‘the Liberator’, and the most significant Irish political leader in the first half of the 1800s. Born in 1775 to an Irish-speaking minor gentry family in County Kerry, and educated in France, where he was traumatized by the Terror, O’Connell was called to the Irish bar in 1798, the year in which the United Irish rebellion was bloodily defeated. When Catholics were refused enfranchisement after the Act of Union, he led the agitation for Catholic Emancipation, leading a moral-force, non-violent mass democratic movement that was the largest of its kind in Europe. This campaign did not attain the vote for Catholics until 1829; afterwards, O’Connell devoted the rest of his career until he died in 1847 to an unsuccessful campaign to repeal the Union and to restore an Irish parliament in Dublin that would remain loyally within the Union and empire. In the decades when O’Connell was leading the Emancipation struggle, the Catholic Church in Europe, smarting from the French Revolution, was strongly *ancien régime* in sentiment, whereas the British parliament in London was widely admired by radicals everywhere as the home of Europe’s most advanced democracy. In the circumstances, the spectacle of an Irish Catholic popular movement taking on Westminster on the basis of advanced liberal ideas of parliamentary government, male suffrage and the separation of church and state presented a curiously anomalous spectacle, one that confounded long-established stereotypes associating Catholicism with despotism and Protestantism with liberty. As a result, O’Connell’s fame stretched across the United Kingdom, Europe and the Americas, and his

campaign was watched with fascination by progressives everywhere, especially by Catholic liberals in France and abolitionists in England and the United States.

Though a pragmatic empire-loyalist who wished to maintain the connection with England via a devolved parliament, O'Connell was also a critic of colonialism condemning, in a speech given to the Aborigines Protection Society in 1840, 'the devastation of nations' that had been 'the consequence of the spread of colonization, and of the extensive occupation of countries heretofore uncivilized'. 'No other human event', he asserted, '[had] led to evils so multitudinous.' Likewise, he was also a radical abolitionist and critic of American slavery, arguing that the slave owners were 'felons to the human race', 'traitors to liberty' and 'blasphemers of the Almighty'. He maintained this critique of the 'White Republic' even when it was costing him important pro-slavery Irish-American support for his Repeal campaign, and he was also, despite his stance against militancy at home, an admirer of Simón Bolívar – the Liberator from whom he derived his own title – because 'he taught the natives that the Spaniards were not invincible' and hoped to establish 'the perfect equalisation of civil rights *among all castes and colours*'.¹⁵ However, while O'Connell was the darling of the Catholic masses, he was regarded with dismay by radical republicans not only because he was content to maintain the British connection but because his conception of the Irish nation consolidated the link between Irishness and Catholicism, whereas the United Irish movement had tried to create a more inclusive cross-denominational definition. But as a whig and utilitarian, O'Connell, unlike Counter-Reformation writers such as Ó Cleirigh and Cétinn, was not championing a Gaelic-Catholic nationalism; he declared himself satisfied to see the Irish language disappear if the acquisition of English would better allow the masses to progress in the world. For later generations of cultural nationalists, who regarded Gaelic culture as essential to Irish identity, such sentiments were regarded as blasphemy and as evidence of the kind of crass whiggish modernization that had sanctioned the death of the language and with it a kind of cultural suicide.

Given the extent to which Gaelic culture had collapsed by then, the emergence of an energetic and popular language revival movement known as Conradh na Gaeilge or the Gaelic League in the closing decade of the nineteenth century was in many ways remarkable. In 1892, the Trinity College-educated scholar Douglas Hyde delivered an address titled 'The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland' in which he called for a language revival movement to spearhead linguistic decolonization. Despite their increasingly clamorous political nationalism, Hyde argued, the Irish people were culturally 'hastening

to adopt, pell-mell, and indiscriminately, everything that is English, simply because it *is* English'. Castigating what would later be termed colonial mimicry, Irish nationalists, Hyde noted, were trapped in an impasse because, even as they continued 'to clamour for recognition as a distinct nationality', they had, since the foundation of Maynooth and the example of O'Connell, continued to throw 'away with both hands what would make it so'.¹⁶ Over a century of popular anti-British agitation confirmed, Hyde argued, that there was 'no earthly chance of [the Irish people] becoming good members of the [British] Empire'.¹⁷ But to press their anti-empire dissent to its logical conclusion, Irish nationalists, he urged, must realize that the Irish language was the repository of their own Irish 'language, traditions, music, genius and ideas'.¹⁸ Insisting that a distinct language was the cornerstone for any vibrant national identity, Hyde declared that:

I have no hesitation at all in saying that every Irish-feeling Irishman, who hates the reproach of West-Britonism, should set himself to encourage the efforts which are being made to keep alive our once great national tongue. The losing of it is our greatest blow, and the sorest stroke that the rapid Anglicisation of Ireland has inflicted upon us . . . We must arouse some spark of patriotic inspiration among the peasantry who still use the language, and put an end to the shameful state of feeling – a thousand-tongued reproach to our leaders and statesmen – which makes young men and women blush and hang their heads when overheard speaking their own language.¹⁹

When Hyde made this address only about 14 per cent of the Irish people could still speak Irish and less than half of 1 per cent could still claim to be monoglot Irish speakers. What Hyde was calling for, therefore, was a desperate last-ditch rally to save the language before it entirely disappeared; something that could be accomplished, he made clear, only if the nationalist leadership and the people as a whole could overcome that stigmatization of Gaelic initiated in the colonial period and now deeply embedded in the Irish psyche.

The Gaelic League, founded a year later in 1893, by Hyde, a southern Irish Protestant, and Eoin MacNeill, a northern Catholic, aimed to be a non-sectarian, non-political movement dedicated to the 'sole purpose of keeping the Irish language spoken in Ireland'.²⁰ Together with a whole series of broad-based cultural movements emerging at the same moment – including the Gaelic Athletic Association founded in 1884, the Co-operative movement founded in 1894 and the Irish Literary Theatre founded in 1897 – it stimulated a remarkable upsurge of Irish cultural self-assertion at the start of the twentieth century. For the next twenty-five years, the League sponsored Irish language classes and cultural events, encouraged Irish industries, campaigned for equal

recognition of Irish and English in the National School system and for a compulsory Irish-language requirement for entry to the National University of Ireland, and laid the foundations for a modern Irish-language literature. At its height, it attracted an island-wide membership, drawn predominantly from the lower-middle classes, though only a small number of its members ever became sufficiently proficient to use Irish as an everyday vernacular. The League's non-sectarian ambitions were always bound to be difficult to realize in a deeply sectarian society, and when many of its branches came under the patronage of the Catholic clergy, the movement inevitably became more associated with Catholicism. When republicans infiltrated it and took command of its steering committee in 1915 and Hyde resigned as its president, its association with Irish separatism appeared to be confirmed; thereafter Protestant interest in its activities diminished considerably. The League itself became institutionally ossified after the 1920s, but many League activists, including Hyde, went on to become prominent in the post-independent state's cultural institutions and did much to set the politico-cultural tone of the new postcolonial dispensation.²¹

Did the Gaelic League succeed in its mission of linguistic and cultural decolonization? In some fundamental ways, the answer has to be no. One of its conspicuous failures was that it never established strong roots in the poor western Gaeltacht regions where Irish was still being spoken and, suffering as such regions did from high emigration, Irish continued to recede even in these remaining vernacular pockets. Secondly, the League's leading intellectuals drastically underestimated, despite their own often inflammatory polemics, the hugely painful psychic trauma involved in the language shift and thus failed to realize the degree to which the effort to reverse that shift might be equally psychically demanding. After independence, the burden of learning Irish was devolved almost entirely upon schoolteachers and schoolchildren. In a context where Irish was a compulsory school subject but remained little used outside the classroom, students often took away only a sense of futility after spending much of their childhood wrestling with the tongue. At its worst, Gaelic League zealotry promoted a mean-spirited sense of Irish culture as a sectarian 'Battle of Two Civilizations', one Catholic and Gaelic, the other Protestant and English, that merely inverted the cultural stigmas of the early colonization period.

Despite real failures, though, the movement can also count substantive long-term successes. The Irish-language literature it slowly nursed into existence at the start of the century through the writings of Hyde, Patrick Pearse, Pádraic Ó Conaire and others was later refined by mid-century writers such as Máirtín Ó Cadhain, Seán Ó Ríordáin and Máire Mhac an tSaoi, and by late

twentieth-century exponents such as Michael Hartnett, Nuala ní Dhomhnaill, Éilís ní Dhuibhne, Cathal Ó Searchaigh, Louis de Paor and others. Since the days when Ó Cléirigh and Céitinn first challenged the vilification of Gaelic culture, there have been many prodigious feats of Irish-language scholarship, especially in the areas of old Irish philology and mythology as well as modern folklore and cultural history, and this scholarly tradition has been carried on in twentieth-century Departments of Irish and Celtic Studies in Ireland, Europe and America. The Folklore of Ireland Society, founded in 1927 by several Gaelic Leaguers, and which became in 1935 the government-supported Irish Folklore Commission, has assembled one of Europe's greatest folk archives. Without the efforts of these modern writers and scholars, the ambitions of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century New English to entirely extirpate the Irish language would long since have been realized.

Nineteenth-century Ascendancy, republican and cultural nationalist writings

The shattering of the United Irishmen in 1798 had long-term consequences for the development of Irish politics over the next two centuries since it ensured that Irish republicanism could not follow the parliamentary routes taken by its French or North or South American counterparts. Thus, the centre ground in nineteenth-century Irish politics was filled first by the moral-force politics of O'Connell and Catholic nationalism, later by the cultural nationalism of the Young Irelanders, founded in 1842, then by the constitutional nationalism of the Home Rule League, founded in 1873, which continued, most flamboyantly under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell, O'Connell's campaign for a devolved Irish parliament in Dublin. However, republicanism did not disappear but went underground, and made its re-entry on the historical stage in 1858 when the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) or the Fenian movement was founded. Dedicated to the establishment of an independent republic by force, the Fenians were from the start a transnational, secret, oath-bound society with memberships drawn from Ireland and Irish America and with offshoots in all of the major Irish diasporas. The various Fenian plans for open rebellion in Ireland all came to nothing, but the movement undertook a series of bombing and assassination campaigns in Ireland, England and several British Dominions that earned it a place in the wider pantheon of late nineteenth-century terror societies and revolutionary undergrounds. The IRB also exerted a power beyond its numbers on Irish politics through its expertise at infiltrating more moderate nationalist movements and at

organizing mass rallies and commemorations. During the Land Wars of the 1880s, in which tenant farmers attempted to break the power of the landlord class, Parnell's middle-class Home Rulers entered into a tacit alliance with the IRB and used the threat of Fenian violence to win concessions from London. In 1898, the IRB provided a cadre of experienced organizers to lead the 1798 centenary celebrations, and its members also dominated Irish pro-Boer agitations and protests against royal visits in 1900 and 1903. When Irish nationalists and unionists both organized mass volunteer militias to show their resolve to secure or to resist the Irish Home Rule Bill that London had finally passed in 1913 (though it was shelved on the outbreak of World War I in 1914), the IRB infiltrated the command of the Irish Volunteers and proclaimed the first Irish Republic during the Easter Rising of 1916. During the War of Independence that followed, it was guerrilla-leader Michael Collins's IRB comrades who guided the Irish Republican Army's (IRA) campaign against the British forces. After the establishment of the Free State, both of the two major constitutional nationalist parties in the south, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, traced their origins back to the militant republican tradition, though they were each embarrassed by the survival of the IRA as a secret paramilitary force. When longstanding tensions over the centuries-old oppression of Catholics and over the 1921 partition settlement ignited in Northern Ireland the 1970s, the IRA and Sinn Féin, the political wing of the movement, fought a modern urban guerrilla war against the British forces in the North and saw themselves as continuing the struggle for Irish autonomy and for republican values. Ever since 1798, then, moderate constitutional nationalist and more militant republican traditions have developed alongside each other in Ireland in competitive symbiosis.

The concurrent rise of nineteenth-century European cultural nationalism and European Romanticism created new opportunities for the English-language Irish literature that developed within this broader post-Union politico-cultural context. For analytical purposes, this emergent corpus of Anglo-Irish writing can be divided into a number of significant strands. Within the terms of eighteenth-century neoclassical aesthetics, the attributes assigned to Ireland in the early colonial archive – uncultivated wildness, remoteness, incivility, backwardness – all carried an overwhelmingly negative resonance. But within the new Romantic aesthetic that privileged the 'natural' over the 'cultivated', the same attributes could be transvalued and the Irish reputation for wildness could now be aligned with those versions of Romantic primitivism that celebrated whatever signified a welcome alternative to a modernity now defined by over-refinement, repressive restraint and urban or industrial anomie. In the early 1800s, the Romantic interest in sublime

landscapes and a post-Enlightenment ethnographic interest in sociocultural evolutionism were exploited in several new Irish genres, most notably Irish melodies, national tales and historical novels. Owing much to the structure of the travelogue, a staple genre of the early modern colonial period, and to Irish antiquarianism, the national tales and historical romances were often focalized around young English protagonists visiting Ireland, falling in love with Irish heroines, and undergoing in the process a re-education about the causes of Irish discord. Though they often express moderate nationalist or liberal unionist sentiment, these fictions, associated with authors such as Maria Edgeworth, Sydney Owenson and John and Michael Banim, were widely read at the time but never became part of the English canon in the way that Walter Scott's historical romances of the same era did; their failure to do so is usually attributed to the fact that the radically unsettled nature of Irish conditions was not conducive to the optimistic evolutionary reassurance offered by Scott's historical romances.²²

A cognate line of 'Ascendancy Gothic' originating in the same period was inspired by the darker side of romanticism. Featuring lurid, labyrinthine tales of historical crimes and haunted protagonists, this Gothic vein drew heavily on the more paranoid discourses of the old colonial archive that provided it with a fertile set of tropes to do with Protestant terrors, fanatic secret societies, inherited curses and so on. Like other versions of colonial Gothic such as the near-contemporaneous American versions of Edgar Allen Poe and Charles Brockden Browne, Irish Gothic fed on a mix of Calvinist-minded spiritual despair, colonial guilt, and neuroses about cultural degeneracy and contagion. Exemplary works include Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), William Carleton's *Wild Goose Lodge* (1830), Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas* (1864) and 'Carmilla' (1872), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), though Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and W. B. Yeats's *The Words upon the Window-pane* (1934) display affinities with this essentially Irish Protestant literary lineage. Like plantation Gothic generally, the decaying houses and vampires of Ascendancy Gothic rehearse a non-evolutionist, non-stagist sense of history in which 'progress' can never exorcise the past, which always overwhelms and wreaks havoc on the present.²³ An affiliated line, the Big House novel, dealing with the final collapse of the Ascendancy against the backdrop of the unravelling of the British Empire, has continued to be one of the most durable strands in twentieth-century Irish literature. Landmark works in this genre, which has distinct stylistic and thematic similarities with Anglo-Indian late Raj fiction, include Edith Somerville and Violet Martin's *The Real Charlotte* (1894), Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September* (1929), Molly

Keane's *Mad Puppetstown* (1931), Aidan Higgins's *Langrishe, Go Down* (1966), J. G. Farrell's *Troubles* (1970), John Banville's *Birchwood* (1973) and William Trevor's *The Story of Lucy Gault* (2002).²⁴

The political manifestoes, polemical journalism, prison journals, revolutionary memoirs and anti-government broadsides produced by radical activists constitute another major strand of nineteenth-century Irish writing. Because they are less 'literary', these have been much less studied by postcolonial critics than the genres mentioned earlier, but collectively they did as much as Catholicism or Gaelicism or Romanticism to set their stamp on modern Irish nationalism, creating a culture nursing a strong sense of historical grievance, hostile to England and empire, and disposed to admire acts of anti-establishment outrage or bravado. The most accomplished of these works – essays by James Fintan Lalor and Thomas Davis, John Mitchel's *Jail Journal* (1854) and *The Last Conquest of Ireland (Perhaps)* (1861), Michael Davitt's *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (1904) or James Connolly's *Labour in Irish History* (1910) – are fired with the kind of incendiary anti-imperial indignation to be found in twentieth-century classics of resistance literature such as C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938) or Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Though written from the other end of the political spectrum, they resemble Ascendancy Gothic at least in that they too are inflamed by a sense of civilizational collapse and by an anti-historicist resistance to any equation of capitalist modernity with 'progress'. However, in republican circles, this anti-progressivism ramified in very different directions: John Mitchel embraced American southern slavery as a system less rapacious than northern industrialism; Michael Davitt called for Irish land nationalization to avert petty proprietor greed; James Connolly looked to precolonial, precapitalist clan collectivity as a model for a postcolonial, postcapitalist 'Celtic communism'.²⁵ Republicans and cultural nationalists were also highly conscious of the value of oral culture in disseminating political sentiment, and the mournful laments or rebel-rousing ballads of writers such as Thomas Moore, Thomas Davis, James Clarence Mangan and others reached a wider audience than printed works could do and many of their most feted songs retain their popularity even today.²⁶

The Irish Revival and Irish modernism: from Yeats and Joyce to Beckett

Modern Anglo-Irish writing made its strongest mark on the literary world after the turn into the twentieth century. Extending from approximately 1890 to 1930, the Irish Literary Revival, stimulated in part by the concurrent

Irish-language literary revival discussed earlier, took shape in the politically charged atmosphere that extended from the fall of Parnell, through the Easter 1916 Rising, to the end of the Irish Civil War. The creation of the Abbey Theatre that performed the drama of Augusta Gregory, John Millington Synge, W.B. Yeats and Sean O'Casey, the consolidation of Yeats as the decisive English-language poet of the early twentieth century, and the cultivation of a climate of linguistic and literary experiment that led to the emergence of the high modernism associated with Yeats, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett can be counted among the Revival's major achievements. Though commonly viewed, not least by its chief ideologue, Yeats, as a rupture with a nineteenth-century Irish literary tradition too provincial and imitative or too political and polemical to be great, Revivalist literature was in some ways less a wholly new departure than a harvest of over a century of cultural nationalist agitation. The Gaelic folk culture that inspired many of its classic works (such as Yeats's early 'Celtic Twilight' poetry, Yeats's and Gregory's *The Countess Cathleen* (1899), Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) or James Stephens's *The Crock of Gold* (1912)) had been collected and translated for many generations, going back to early nineteenth-century figures such as Charlotte Brooke, Thomas Crofton Croker, James Hardiman and many others. Similarly, the Old Irish mythic literature that inspired key Revivalist texts, such as Standish O'Grady's *History of Ireland: The Heroic Period* (1878), Synge's *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (1910) or Yeats's Cuchulain poems and plays, had been made available to modern readers by the labours of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gaelic and Anglo-Irish antiquarians and later by German and French philologists. Even the opulent Hiberno-English idiom made famous by Synge's *Playboy* or O'Casey's *Plough and the Stars* (1926) rested on the works of earlier translators who had assimilated Gaelic metres and idioms into English-language versions and it owed something too to the stage-Irish broguery familiar to theatregoers since Restoration drama. By the same token, the Revivalists' lack of deference to things British owed much to Irish republicanism's culture of rebellious anti-authoritarianism. What gave the Revival its novelty, then, was not the cultural materials with which it worked, but its determination to mould those materials into a new Hiberno-English literature and to break with centuries of Irish literary emigration to London by making Dublin the centre of new national literary institutions. Long before the Easter 1916 rebels raised a defiant tricolour over the GPO or the Anglo-Irish Treaty recognized a semi-independent Irish parliament, Yeats and his colleagues were making Dublin a cultural capital of world renown.²⁷

Yeats's place in the canon of postcolonial literature remains vexed. No less an authority than Edward Said claimed him as one of 'the great nationalist artists of decolonization and revolutionary nationalism, like Tagore, Senghor, Neruda, Vallejo, Césaire, Faiz, Darwish'.²⁸ Domestically, Yeats's enormous literary achievements have always been recognized, but his work's relationship to colonialism remains more controversial than Said's roll-call of great postcolonial national writers might suggest. In Yeats's own day, Gaelic Leaguers were often hostile to the Revival, feeling that just when they were trying to resuscitate a Gaelic literature the Hiberno-English writing Yeats and Synge were creating was being feted internationally as the 'real' Irish literature. Some of this animosity was crassly sectarian, motivated by the fact that many leading Revivalists were Protestants. Other critics felt that there could be no authentic decolonization in English because 'an attempt to base Irish culture on the English language can only result in provincialising Irish life'.²⁹ Not all of the criticism had to do with language politics, however. In 1965, Conor Cruise O'Brien iconoclastically marked Yeats's centenary with an essay, 'Cunning and Passion', which argued that Yeats's support for Irish nationalism during the insurrectionary period had been hedged with a habitually prudent eye for British opinion and that the ageing poet's disdain for English materialism and bourgeois democracy had led him to support European fascism.³⁰ Both claims have been disputed, but Yeats's disdain for 'the filthy modern tide' and his admiration for aristocracy in culture and authoritarianism in politics is not in question. In *Celtic Revivals*, Seamus Deane gave O'Brien's thesis a twist when he argued that Yeats's fascist leanings were not, as O'Brien had inferred, a logical extension of his Irish nationalist extremism but rather 'an almost pure specimen of the colonialist mentality'.³¹ Yeats's mythologizing of the Ascendancy as a gallant aristocracy outfacing a crass modernity had lent, Deane argued, an undeserved retrospective glamour to what had been a brutally exploitative colonial-capitalist elite.³² In 1995, Declan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland*, one of the most widely read works of Irish postcolonial criticism, took a more Saidian view, arguing that Yeats was, like Walt Whitman, a ground-breaking national poet writing out of a decolonizing culture, and that both had served as exemplars to other decolonizing national figures like Tagore in India and Neruda in Latin America.³³

These long-running Yeatsian controversies register the wider complexities of the Revival, which was at once a vibrant moment of nationalist literary self-assertion and domestically an acrimonious transition period when the cultural leadership of the emerging state passed from largely Protestant to largely Catholic control. Because the masterworks of Irish modernism were created

in Paris, and because both Joyce and Beckett were critical of aspects of the Revival, it has been standard practice for much of the twentieth century to view both writers as apolitical cosmopolitan humanists above such petty factionalism and indifferent to Irish politics. This view of both writers is seriously misleading, especially so of Joyce who came of literary age with the Revival and shared its elevated sense of the writer as someone whose high vocation it was, as Stephen Dedalus puts it in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), 'to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race'.³⁴ Joyce's hostility to the British Empire was more fiercely felt than that of many of his Revivalist contemporaries: in a lecture to an Italian audience in Trieste in 1907 he reviewed the whole history of British involvement in Ireland as one of injustice and exploitation, claiming that 'what England did in Ireland over the centuries is no different to what Belgians are doing today in the Congo Free State, and what the Nipponese dwarfs will be doing tomorrow in some other lands'.³⁵ The reference to 'Nipponese dwarfs' tells us something about the kind of easy racial denigration of non-Europeans that sometimes inhabited Irish anti-imperial nationalism, but the statement also indicates that Joyce, like many Irish intellectuals, was attentive not just to British imperialism at home but to other imperialisms generally.

What distinguished Joyce's attitude to Ireland from many Irish cultural nationalists was his insistence that the Catholic Church had always abetted English rule, though such sentiment was widely shared in Irish republican and Parnellite anti-clerical constituencies. But Joyce also shared the emerging Catholic middle class's resentment against the Protestant Ascendancy, referring disparagingly to the Anglican Church in Ireland as one that had catered 'only to a few thousand colonists'.³⁶ The dazzling formal and linguistic experiments of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are best understood, therefore, not as a repudiation but rather as an extreme radicalization of Irish Revivalist ambition and as Joyce's Houdini-like attempt to wriggle his way out of an Irish colonial double-bind whereby the writer had to choose between writing in an Irish language that might confer on him a distinct cultural identity, but that was no longer even an everyday vernacular, or in an English language that offered a vast international audience, but that risked conscripting the writer into an unwanted Britishness. From the outset, Joyce was acutely aware of this dilemma. It is expressed in the *Portrait* where Stephen admits the 'unrest of spirit' he feels in English, 'so familiar and foreign',³⁷ yet cannot share his comrade's enthusiasm for Irish language classes; it is evident, too, in remarks that Joyce made in Italy where he commented acridly that: 'Condemned to express themselves in a language not their own [the Irish] have stamped on it

the mark of their own genius and compete for glory with the civilised nations. This is then called English literature.' *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, then, share the same drive towards 'de-anglicization' that had motivated Hyde and the Gaelic League, but Joyce took the linguistic experiments of earlier Irish writers to very different and astonishing ends, displaying a virtuosic mastery of a whole history of English literary styles while simultaneously parodying them.

One of Joyce's Irish Protestant contemporaries, John Eglinton, himself a mildly lampooned figure in *Ulysses*, certainly sensed a literary-cum-linguistic sabotage act of this kind and spoke of 'Joyce's Celtic revenge' on the canon of English literature: 'Like a devil taking pleasure in forcing a virgin to speak obscenely, so Joyce rejoiced darkly in causing the language of Milton and Wordsworth to utter all but unimaginable filth and treason.'³⁸ Turning English into a babble of filthy tongues, Joyce's masterpiece enacts, Eglinton avers, a mocking Mephistophelian vengeance on the great English literary tradition that had silenced his country's own Celtic language. In his *Empire of Words: The Reign of the OED* (1994), John Willinsky writes that: 'With the first signs of the crumbling of the empire and the shifting of power to the United States, the Society of Pure English was formed in 1915 with a mission to protect the language from the "obnoxious condition" of British colonials engaged in "habitual intercourse" with "other-speaking races".'³⁹ Appearing only six years later in 1922, *Ulysses*'s ambition may be seen as directly opposite to that of the Society of Pure English. If that Society's great monument was the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *Ulysses* was Joyce's anti-imperial counter-monument to a flagrantly adulterated, comically anarchic Hiberno-English revelling in its linguistic impurity.

Joyce's work epitomizes the ebullient ambition of the early decades of the twentieth century when Irish nationalism and international modernism were both in spring tide; Beckett's exemplifies the exhaustion that afflicted both after World War II. The Ireland that emerged after partition was culturally and economically conservative, and by the 1940s nearly all the higher hopes of the independence struggle had been decisively dashed. Harried by censorship, at odds with church and state officialdom, and burdened too by the difficulty of matching the generation of Yeats and Joyce, almost all of the major southern Irish writers of the 1940s and 1950s felt profoundly disenchanted with Ireland and in almost all of their best works a morbidly grim naturalism is salted with astringent satire.⁴⁰ Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) and *An Béal Bocht* (1941), Patrick Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger* (1942), Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille* (1948), Francis Stuart's *Redemption* (1949) and Brendan Behan's *Borstal Boy* (commenced in the 1940s, published in 1958) are some of this period's finer literary achievements. Beckett's masterpieces of the 1950s – the novel trilogy

Molloy (1951), *Malone Dies* (1951) and *The Unnameable* (1953); the plays *Waiting for Godot* (1952), *Endgame* (1953) and *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) – share with these other works a fascination with spiritual and social squalor, an oppressive sense of entropy, the same black satire. Beckett's texts have been harder to claim as 'Irish' than Joyce's because they are not set in any kind of localized Irish landscape and seem to express a condition more ontological than national. However, his austere self-interrogative philosophical farces are heavily over-determined and would seem to be products of both European and Irish cultural crises: namely, the sense of civilizational numbness that afflicted Europe after World War II; the sense of ideological bankruptcy that troubled post-independence Ireland in the same decades; the acute late modernist anxiety as to whether art retained any viable social function at all in a world in which both religious and secular grand narratives had run aground.

In many ways, though, it is precisely this preoccupation with civilizational collapse that makes Beckett so much 'at home' in any history of Irish writing because collapse had been one of its most recurrent provocations and themes since the early colonial period. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Irish-language writers had struggled with the consequences of collapse ever since the Gaelic world first began to shatter about them; the Protestant Ascendancy Gothic and Big House literary traditions had elaborated a similar thematics since the rise of Catholic democracy; a sense of implosion had repeatedly tormented Irish republican writers after the disasters of 1798, the Famine and the Civil War; likewise, European modernism had emerged out a sense of devastation precipitated by two world wars and by advanced capitalism's capacity to commodify and relativize everything. Drawing on these various traditions, Yeats had ranted with deepening despair against the 'filthy modern tide' and 'the great art beaten down', and Joyce had hoped that his art might help him and his nation to awake from 'the nightmare of history'. However, Beckett neither rails nor hopes, but accepts collapse as the definitive and tragicomic common condition, one from which only silence or death might offer any kind of escape. In *All That Fall* (1957) the silence that has already fallen on the Gaelic world therefore becomes something not to be mourned but envied, a paradisaic release for which a blabbering English can still only long in order to be released from its endless purgatorial futility:

MR ROONEY: ... Do you know, Maddy, sometimes one would think you were struggling with a dead language.

MRS ROONEY: Yes indeed, Dan, I know full well what you mean, I often have that feeling, it is unspeakably excruciating.

- MR ROONEY: I confess I have it sometimes myself, when I happen to overhear what I am saying.
- MRS ROONEY: Well, you know, it will be dead in time, just like our own poor dear Gaelic, there is that to be said.⁴¹

The Northern Troubles, Irish feminism and globalization

As the sun finally set on the British Empire and late twentieth-century Ireland repositioned itself in a new US-dominated world order, issues of empire and decolonization might have been expected to recede as preoccupations in Irish writing. However, a number of factors have ensured that they have retained a real currency in recent decades. The most salient ones were the outbreak of the Troubles in Northern Ireland from the late 1960s onwards, the concurrent rise of a vigorous women's movement in the South, and the post-Cold War globalization that saw an Ireland that had for centuries been a country of emigration converted into one of immigration between the 1990s and the present.

The old political sores opened by the Troubles propelled the bitter history of Anglo-Irish, nationalist–unionist, Catholic–Protestant and North–South relations back to the centre of Irish intellectual debate. Three decades of bloody warfare widened a rift within the Irish intelligentsia between ‘revisionists’, who attributed most of the blame for the situation to Irish nationalism, and ‘anti-revisionists’, who argued that any comprehensive analysis of violence in Irish politics must equally address the colonial histories of Irish unionism and British governance.⁴² A number of significant cultural responses reflect this wider intellectual schism. In the North, the first-generation of university-educated Catholics produced a body of writers who voiced the experience of a minority Catholic community written out of both northern and southern state narratives since partition. John Montague’s *The Rough Field* (1972), Seamus Heaney’s *North* (1975), Brian Friel’s *Translations* (1980) and Seamus Deane’s *Reading in the Dark* (1996) are landmark works in this line. When Heaney subsequently went on to attain the status of a ‘national poet’, winning the Nobel Prize in 1995, and Deane became the country’s most influential literary critic, this provoked the hostility of many revisionists who saw them as bearers of an unreconstructed nationalism and who resented what they felt was a wider northern ‘takeover’ of southern cultural agendas. However, the prominence of such writers demonstrated the difficulty of cordoning off northern and southern cultures, and many southern Irish artists, such as the filmmakers Neil Jordan and Jim Sheridan, and border-region writers, including Eugene

McCabe, Patrick McCabe and Dermot Healy, also engaged with the North in their works.

The Troubles also provoked a number of Northern Irish writers to engage with the wider politics of empire; notable examples are: Brian Moore's *Black Robe* (1985), dealing with cultural clashes between French Jesuits and Hurons in early modern New France; Paul Muldoon's *Meeting the British* (1987), a volume that takes its title from a poem about the disasters brought on the American Indians by British colonialism; and Ronan Bennett's *The Catastrophist* (1998), set in the Belgian Congo in the late 1950s. Northern Protestant poets also probed Irish issues in an imperial frame: John Hewitt, for example, deployed the trope of a declining Roman colony to explore late colonial settlers' anxieties in 'The Colony' (1949), while many fine poems by Derek Mahon explore the Northern Protestant psyche against the backdrop of British imperial decline. In the South, others reacted in more 'revisionist' terms and set about recovering Irish involvements in empire and other narratives suppressed in southern cultural memory. Notable works in this vein include Frank McGuinness's *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (1985), which deals with Ulster loyalist traumas during World War I, and Sebastian Barry's *A Long, Long Way* (2005), which explored the loyalties of young Irishmen fighting in World War I but distressed by accounts from home of comrades dying in the Easter 1916 insurrection. Whether 'revisionist' or 'anti-revisionist' in tendency, all of these works are essentially in an interrogative mode; they seek less to articulate visionary new horizons than to subject received discourses of the nation, colonialism and modernity to imaginative scrutiny. In this sense, late twentieth-century Irish writing of this sort is affiliated to post-revolutionary and deconstructive versions of postcolonial literature rather than to the more militant versions of earlier moments.

The emergence of a vigorous women's movement in the Irish Republic from the 1970s onwards further charged the debates about nationalism. The republican proclamation of Easter 1916 addressed itself to both 'Irishmen and Irishwomen' and promised 'equal rights and equal opportunities' to all its citizens, yet after independence the Irish Free State introduced a raft of discriminatory measures seriously damaging to women and Eamon De Valera's 1937 Constitution compounded this trend when it idealized women's domestic roles as home-makers and mothers. Such developments led some Irish feminists to conclude that the independence struggle was detrimental to the women's movement: a budding early twentieth-century feminist political consciousness, it has been argued, was sidelined by a new nationalist hegemony. The feminization of Irishness under empire is also argued to have produced as a reflex an aggressively

insecure masculinity that found expression after independence in a determined bid by church and state authorities to control women.

Confronted with this history, the Irish woman writer's situation was severely thwarted. In an essay titled 'Outside History' (1990), leading poet Eavan Boland acknowledges that the tragic history of the Irish people inevitably mesmerized the woman writer's emotional consciousness, but noted that she had nevertheless to confront the fact that the Irish poetic tradition was predominantly male and that in it women featured mainly as sacred icons of motherhood and nationhood, not as agents in their own right. Irish women over the centuries, Boland surmised, had suffered all of the traumas and defeats of their nation, but a literary tradition that largely reduced them to reified national signifiers merely 'defeat[ed] them twice' by subordinating their complicated human stories and sufferings to a singular male-centred national narrative.⁴³ The dilemma of how women might best inhabit the political and literary history of a people which had been, like women, reduced to a second-class humanity is common to the post-colonial world, and, like their counterparts elsewhere, Irish women writers' responses have been varied. One major enterprise has been to recover and restore forgotten archives of women's writings. The publication of the first three volumes of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* in 1991 provoked a furious response from Irish feminists on the basis that it seriously under-represented women's writing, and the production by a team of women editors of two supplementary *Field Day* volumes, *Irish Women's Writing and Traditions* (2002), represents the most ambitious feminist recovery project of this kind to date in Ireland. The combination of women's writings and feminist scholarship that comprise these volumes marked a kind of coming-of-age of Irish cultural feminism and set a benchmark for a new kind of gender-consciousness in Irish studies.

Other women wrote about issues of female sexuality, the body and motherhood with a searching feminist consciousness. Building on the achievements of earlier writers such as Kate O'Brien, Mary Lavin and Edna O'Brien, works such as Clare Boylan's *Holy Pictures* (1983) and *Home Rule* (1992), Mary Morrissey's *Mother of Pearl* (1996), Marina Carr's *Portia Coughlan* (1996) or Anne Enright's *The Gathering* (2007) have explored how the nexus of Catholicism and nationalism moulded modern Irish sexual experience, dwelling particularly on the injuries inflicted on women and sexual minorities by repressive state, religious and familial expectations. In the even thornier context of the North, Pat Murphy's *Maeve* (1981) and *Anne Devlin* (1984), Anne Devlin's *Ourselves Alone* (1985) and *After Easter* (1994), Deirdre Madden's *One by One in the Darkness* (1996) or Margo Harkin's *Hush-a-Bye Baby* (1989) took on similar clusters of issues. Confessional modes of self-expression – such as Nuala O'Faolain's best-selling memoir, *Are You*

Somebody? (1996), or Sinéad O'Connor's popular music – have tackled issues such as abortion, sexual abuse, famine memories, national neuroses and women's sexual freedom with a flamboyant emotional frankness all but expunged from the Irish public sphere in modern times. The upshot of this revisionist, anti-revisionist and feminist activity was a cultural milieu more disputatious, acrimonious and lively than any since the Irish Literary Revival.

The new immigrant communities that arrived on the tide of accelerated globalization precipitated by the fall of communism in 1989 have dramatically reconfigured the meaning of the 'postcolonial' in contemporary Ireland. Coming from 'Second World' regions such as Poland, Lithuania or Romania, and 'Third World' ones such as Nigeria and North Africa, these communities have provoked many new questions for a society that had been, for all its internal divisions, rather homogeneous. A country that once sent missionaries to its 'spiritual empire' stretched across the British Empire must now accommodate Muslim and other 'non-Western' religions. Polish or Yoruba are today more commonly heard on Dublin streets than Gaelic and middle-aged Irish people not long returned from lengthy migrant sojourns in the US or UK now work alongside 'new Irish' who occupy the lower-tier occupations that Irish migrants had themselves historically occupied elsewhere. How well such challenges will be met remains to be seen. Postcolonial Irish culture is still in many ways quite fractured – the Catholic communitarian, Protestant liberal, Gaelicist, republican and feminist traditions all remain potent, but any sort of viable let alone vibrant synthesis between these heritages of earlier historical struggles has always proved elusive.

To cater for its new communities, twenty-first-century Ireland will have to become more than the kind of 'White Republic' that Daniel O'Connell once taunted the United States for becoming. Still, older struggles have generated the resources at least to meet such challenges. The prolonged intellectual strife generated by the Northern Troubles and the women's movement has already challenged the once-solid nationalist and unionist cultural blocs. In the intellectual field, Irish academics have been drawing on the resources of post-colonial studies since the 1980s to produce new interpretations of Ireland's colonial experience and to understand how it compares to the experiences of other regions. Derided by revisionists as backward-looking, this scholarship has in fact helped to de-provincialize Irish understandings of imperialism and postcoloniality. Historically, twentieth-century Ireland has had good relations with many 'Third World' societies, and its leading statesmen, from Eamon de Valera to Mary Robinson, have offered solid support initially to decolonizing movements, and later to women's struggles and anti-poverty campaigns. Irish writers, including Revivalists, modernists and more latterly figures such as

Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and Medbh McGuckian have been to the forefront in the decentring of standard English. Together with Caribbean-English, Nigerian-English, South African-English and Australian-English writers, they have collectively created a polycentric anglo-phone literary world much more linguistically heterogeneous than anything imagined under empire or Commonwealth.

None of this carries many guarantees in the face of twenty-first-century challenges. But if old anti- and postcolonial defeats and resistances are not to become mouldy and morbid they must be made to yield new harvests. Seamus Heaney's 'Requiem for the Croppies', a commemoration that invokes the strange harvests that sprouted from the corpses of crop-haired Jacobin-minded peasantry buried in unmarked graves after they fell in the struggle to create the first Irish Republic in the United Irish rebellion of 1798, underscores this point:

The pockets of our greatcoats, full of barley –
 No kitchens on the run, no striking camp –
 We moved quick and sudden in our own country.
 The priest lay behind ditches with the tramp.
 A people, hardly marching – on the hike –
 We found new tactics happening each day.
 ...
 Until, on Vinegar Hill, the fatal conclave.
 Terraced thousands died, shaking scythes at cannon.
 The hillside blushed, soaked in our broken wave.
 They buried us without shroud or coffin
 And in August the barley grew up out of the grave.

Notes

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2. On this period, see Thomas Bartlett, David Dickson, Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds.), *1798: A Bicentenary Perspective* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003).
3. On Victorian conceptions of the Irish, see L. P. Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); on race and the Irish in America, see David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991).
4. Leading studies of early modern colonialism are Nicholas Canny's *Making Ireland British 1580–1650* (Oxford University Press, 2001) and William J. Smyth's *Map-Making, Landscapes and Memory: A Geography of Colonial and Early Modern Ireland, c. 1530–1750* (Cork University Press, 2006).

5. Authoritative studies on early modern discourses include Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: Studies on Irish Nationality, Its Development and Literary Expression prior to the Nineteenth-Century* (Cork University Press, 1996); Clare Carroll, *Circe's Cup: Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Ireland* (Cork University Press, 2001); and Patricia Palmer, *Language and Conquest in Early Modern Ireland: English Renaissance Literature and Elizabethan Imperial Expansion* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).
6. David Hume, *History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*, cited in Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael*, p. 65.
7. Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, cited in James P. Myers (ed.), *Elizabethan Ireland: A Selection of Writings by Elizabethan Writers on Ireland* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1983), p. 96.
8. John Davies, *A Discovery of the True Causes why Ireland Was Never Entirely Subdued* (1612; Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969), p. 82.
9. Palmer, *Language and Conquest in Early Modern Ireland*, pp. 74–107.
10. Cited in Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael*, p. 49.
11. For a critical account of the bardic system, see Sean O'Faolain, *King of the Beggars: A Life of Daniel O'Connell* (1938; Dublin: Poolbeg Press, 1980). Leading contemporary accounts are Marc Caball, *Poets and Politics: Reaction and Continuity in Irish Poetry, 1585–1625* (Cork University Press, 1998); and Michelle O'Riordan, *The Gaelic Mind and the Collapse of the Gaelic World* (Cork University Press, 1990).
12. On the *aisling* genre, see Breandán Ó Buachalla, *Aisling Ghéar: Na Stiobhartaigh agus an tAos Léinn 1603–1788* (Baile Átha Cliath: An Clóchomhar, 1996); and Éamonn Ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite Cause, 1685–1766: A Fatal Attachment* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2000).
13. See Bernadette Cunningham, *The World of Geoffrey Keating: History, Myth and Religion in Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000); and Brendan Jennings, *Michael Ó Cléirigh, Chief of the Four Masters and His Associates* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1936).
14. On modern Irish Catholicism, see Emmet Larkin's *The Consolidation of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, 1860–1870* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1987), *The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1997) and *The Pastoral Role of the Roman Catholic Church in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1750–1850* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006).
15. On O'Connell and empire, see Bruce Nelson, "'Come out of such a land, you Irishmen': Daniel O'Connell, American slavery, and the making of the 'Irish Race'", *Éire-Ireland*, 42.1–2 (Spring/Summer 2007), 58–81, citations 66 and 62. More generally, see Oliver MacDonagh, *O'Connell: The Life of Daniel O'Connell, 1775–1847* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1991).
16. Douglas Hyde, 'The necessity for de-anglicising Ireland', in Seamus Deane (ed.), *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, vol. 2 (Derry: Field Day Publications, 1991), pp. 527–33, citation 527. Italics in the original.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 528.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 530.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 532.
20. Eoin MacNeill, 'The Gaelic League', *Gaelic Journal/Irishleabhar na Gaedhilge*, 4 (November 1893), p. 226, cited in Timothy MacMahon, *Grand Opportunity: The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society, 1893–1910* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008), p. 2.
21. On the Gaelic League, see Philip O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881–1921* (Pennsylvania University Press, 1994); P. J. Mathews, *Revival: The Abbey*

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22. On this literature, see Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Imagination of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Cork University Press, 1996); Seamus Deane, *Strange Country: Modernity and Irish Writing since 1790* (Oxford University Press, 1997); and Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton University Press, 1997).
 23. See W. J. McCormack, *Ascendancy and Tradition in Anglo-Irish Literary History, 1789–1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).
 24. Of a voluminous secondary literature, see especially Vera Krielkamp, *The Anglo-Irish Novel and the Big House* (Syracuse University Press, 1998) and McCormack, *Ascendancy and Tradition*.
 25. See Niamh Lynch, 'Defining Irish nationalist anti-imperialism: Thomas Davis and John Mitchel', *Éire-Ireland*, 42.1–2 (Spring/Summer 2007), 82–107.
 26. For a useful overview, see Seamus Deane, 'Poetry and song 1800–1890' and 'Political writings and speeches 1850–1915', in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, pp. 1–111 and 209–366.
 27. Of the extended secondary literature, see especially Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature, 1890–1990* (Winston-Salem, NC: Wake Forest University Press, 1985); and Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995).
 28. Edward Said, 'Yeats and decolonization', Field Day Pamphlet no. 15 (Derry: Field Day Theatre Company, 1988), p. 8.
 29. Eoin MacNeill, cited by Daniel Corkery in *What's This About the Gaelic League?* (Dublin: Gaelic League, 1942), p. 25.
 30. Conor Cruise O'Brien, "'Passion and cunning": an essay on the politics of W. B. Yeats', in A. Norman Jeffares and K. W. G. Cross (eds.), *In Excited Reverie* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1965).
 31. Deane, *Celtic Revivals*, p. 49.
 32. *Ibid.*, pp. 28–37.
 33. Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, pp. 115–29.
 34. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 253.
 35. James Joyce, 'Ireland: island of saints and sages', in Kevin Barry (ed.), *James Joyce: Occasional, Critical and Political Writings* (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 119.
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
 37. Joyce, *Portrait*, 189.
 38. John Eglinton, *Irish Literary Portraits* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1935), p. 146.
 39. John Willinskey, *Empire of Words: The Reign of the OED* (Princeton University Press, 1994), cited in Rob Jackman, *Broken English/Breaking English: A Study in Contemporary Poetries in English* (London: Associated University Presses, 2003), p. 16.
 40. The authoritative history of the post-Revival period is Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922–2002* (London: HarperCollins, 2004).
 41. Beckett, *All That Fall*, in *Samuel Beckett: The Grove Centenary Edition*, vol. 3 (New York: Grove Press, 2006), p. 182.
 42. On revisionism, see Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism 1938–1994* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994).
 43. Eavan Boland, 'Outside history', in *Object Lessons* (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 137.

Postcolonial writing in Britain

JOHN MCLEOD

In March 1956, the popular writer Colin MacInnes published an essay in the journal *Twentieth Century* titled 'A short guide for Jumbles'. The essay was in the form of an imaginary dialogue between a white British citizen – the 'Jumble' of the title, a corruption of 'John Bull' – and MacInnes, who proceeded to explain and advocate for the presence of postwar Britain's new African, Caribbean and South Asian populations. In answering questions such as 'why do they come here?' and 'is there a colour bar in England?' MacInnes involves himself in two tasks simultaneously: providing the Jumble with an impression of how Britain's latest migrants see host peoples, and offering a sympathetic if combative account of the fortunes of the migrants that is ultimately intended to challenge racist and prejudicial views.¹ Standing between native and newcomer, acting as a way of opening an enlightening envisioning of one to the other, MacInnes occupies an unsteady but illuminating vantage point. Born in London in 1914, he was raised in Australia and only returned to the county of his birth in 1931, settling in London after World War II. Neither native Londoner nor New Commonwealth migrant, MacInnes considered himself 'partly a foreigner' when he returned to London as a young man and described himself as a perpetual 'inside-outsider' due to his Australian upbringing.² Thus, he was both within but to one side of the Britain about which he wrote in his journalism and fiction, and in contrast to those who felt that the nation was threatened by immigration (both at the time and since) he prized keenly Britain's new migratory multicultural admixture. His essay concludes with a celebration of the birth of so-called mixed-race children as epitomizing 'the modern infusion of that new blood which, according to our history books, has perpetually re-created England in the past and is the very reason for her mongrel glory'.³ In so doing, MacInnes aligned himself with and also anticipated a significant body of writers in parallel positions; writers who, in the midst of prejudice, hostility and racism, offer a reconceived image of Britain (not just England)

which underscored its historical fortunes and future as a polycultural and postcolonial location.

MacInnes's dislocated position and the opportunity it fashions for challenging received notions of nationhood and citizenship has enjoyed a long history in Britain's literary endeavours as a remarkably fertile creative location of innovation and new vision. Yet his cognizance of the hostile attitudes of the Jumbles derived from his understanding of the precariousness of migrant life in an often unsympathetic nation which seemed not to share his enthusiasm for those from colonized countries. Similarly, the Caribbean-born, British-raised writer Caryl Phillips begins his book of essays *A New World Order* (2001) by recalling a series of sobering memories, which include his feelings as seven-year-old child running through the rain of Leeds on his way home from the cinema: 'too late to be coloured, but too soon to be British. I recognise the place, I feel at home here, but I don't belong. I am of, but not of, this place.'⁴ As Phillips's essays and fiction also evidence so powerfully, occupying a displaced position, 'of, but not of', bears witness not simply to new ways of seeing that treasure Britain's polycultural condition, but more often than not to the perpetual practices of prejudice under which migrants, their descendants and their cultures have often unhappily laboured. As we shall see, such unhappy experiences of not belonging collectively point to the persistent struggle to survive by those peoples from colonized countries (and their British-born descendants) who have established themselves in the colonial motherland, but who have often been dismissed as 'inside-outsiders'. In his famous account of slavery and manumission of 1789, the African-born abolitionist Olaudah Equiano used the phrase 'almost an Englishman' to describe his precarious position as one keen to embrace what he saw as the spiritual and enlightened virtues of the colonizing nation, but fiercely critical of the sordid project of slavery and its abhorrent racism under which he had suffered immeasurable hardship.⁵ Three hundred years later, the mixed-race narrator of Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), Karim Amir, begins his tale of growing up in multicultural London with the words 'I am an Englishman born and bred, almost.'⁶ Although an entirely different figure to the once-enslaved Equiano of course, Karim's narrative of vibrant cultural exploration in a country where his right to belong is perpetually questioned forces him to occupy the precarious position of 'inside-outsider' where prejudice and violence are ever near. If MacInnes allows us to regard that site of displacement – of being 'almost' – as one of enabling polycultural vision, in their very different ways Phillips, Equiano and Kureishi offer other ways of thinking about being displaced as treacherous and unnerving, as well as creative and illuminating.

In thinking about Britain and its postcolonial literary fortunes, we must maintain this binocular approach to dislocation as simultaneously perilous and progressive, embattled and enabling. Because it is with this dislocated position – the place of the ‘inside-outsider’ where one ‘almost’ counts – and with Britain as a place with its own significant postcolonial literary history linked to this ‘inside-outsider’ vantage, that this chapter is primarily concerned.

In speaking of a postcolonial writing in Britain, I am dealing with the work of writers who arrived in Britain from colonized countries and wrote about their experiences of migration and settlement, as well as those who are descended from colonial migrants but are often seen as ‘inside-outsider’ figures on the dubious grounds of racial or cultural difference. The vast majority of this work has been produced in the decades since the ending of World War II in 1945, for reasons we shall consider presently. But this is not the full story. In recent years, and partly fuelled by the impact of postcolonial studies, a great deal of scholarly endeavour has concerned itself with unearthing a much longer history of writing of Britain by colonized peoples which can be traced back to at least the eighteenth century. If the demands of the empire facilitated the voyages ‘out’ of many British citizens to the plantations of the Caribbean, the trading posts of Africa and South Asia, the settlements of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, then it also enabled the voyage ‘in’ to Britain of thousands of colonized peoples, many of whom established lives at the heart of the empire long before the twentieth century and decolonization dawned. For example, African slaves were brought to Britain in the late sixteenth century, and it soon became a sign of prestige for the wealthy to have black domestic servants. Revealingly, on 11 July 1596 Queen Elizabeth I sent an open letter to the lord mayor of London raising her concerns about the ‘divers blackmoores brought into this realme, of which kinde of people there are already here to manie’.⁷ Two centuries later, at the height of the slave trade, London boasted a significant black population. According to the novelist S. I. Martin, it was ‘home to an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 people of African origin among its residents’ that featured ‘servants, sailors, scribes, beggars and former [freed] slaves’.⁸ Rozina Visram has described how ‘[s]tarting in the seventeenth century, Indian servants and ayahs (nannies) were brought over by British families from India’ and were later followed by emissaries, visitors, sailors (known as lascars), students and princes, so that by ‘the mid-twentieth century, then, there was a small population of students and activists, petty traders and merchants, industrial workers and professionals, artists and performers, from different religious backgrounds and regions of the Indian sub-continent in Britain’.⁹

People from other cultures have long been represented in British literature, and the impact of colonialism on the imagination can be discerned right from the beginnings of Britain's overseas imperial endeavours. As Peter Hulme has demonstrated, William Shakespeare's last play *The Tempest* (1611) calls to mind the shipwreck of the *Sea Venture* in Bermuda in 1609, which was carrying settlers to the new colony of Virginia in North America, while the figure of Caliban has been read as one of the first literary representations of the colonized subject in English literature.¹⁰ One of the earliest novels in English, Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko: or, The Royal Slave* (1688), is a love story concerning an African prince set in Africa and Surinam amidst the slave trade. While many examples of colonized peoples in literature can be found from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, very little was written by the colonized themselves. The first texts by colonized writers in Britain appeared at the end of the eighteenth century, chiefly as a consequence of the abolitionist movement which was keen to expose the evils of slavery through the apparent testimonials of those who had endured its unimaginable hardships. As C.L. Innes writes, 'during the eighteenth-century enlightenment period, the equation between writing, civilization and humanity became established, and the question as to whether black people were capable of writing and literary creation became crucial to the debates surrounding the abolition of slavery'.¹¹ Often these texts were passionate tracts declaiming the evils of slavery and lauding the saving grace of Christian piety, sometimes transcribed by sympathetic British abolitionists. Ukawsaw Gronniosaw's *Narrative of the Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince, related by himself* (1772) was one such text, committed to paper by the writer Hannah More; Ottobah Cuguano's *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evils of Slavery* (1787) was another important anti-slavery polemic.

The most artful and prolonged account of slave experience was written by Olaudah Equiano, whose *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789) became a major text in the abolitionists' cause. Born in southeast Nigeria (according to today's maps), Equiano was enslaved as a ten-year-old and taken to the Caribbean, where he eventually worked aboard naval vessels, during which time he learned to read and write. He eventually earned enough money to buy his freedom, and spent a great deal of his adult life travelling the world aboard ship and fighting for the abolitionist cause in London. While in England as a young man, Equiano relished the society and manners of his new countrymen and 'had the stronger desire to resemble them; to imbibe their spirit, and imitate their manners; I therefore embraced every occasion of improvement; and every new thing that I

observed I treasured up in my memory'.¹² Although keenly opposed to Britain's profiting by slavery, *The Interesting Narrative* is essentially supportive of the value of British society and culture, and not surprisingly it lacks the transformative, critical representation of Britain which would emerge much later in postcolonial writing. That said, its political thrust resided in its attempt to prove that colonized peoples were as capable as anyone else in appreciating and participating in the virtues of civilized life. This was also the case regarding the other key text from the time, Ignatius Sancho's *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, An African* (1782). According to legend, Sancho was born on a slave ship bound for Central America, but grew up in England where he worked as a butler and valet before opening a grocery store in Westminster. A lover of the arts, he tried his hand at acting and composing, and also corresponded with some of the key literary and artistic figures of the day (his portrait was painted in 1768 by the distinguished painter Thomas Gainsborough). A collection of his letters was published two years after his death, which amply demonstrates his stylish articulation of key issues of the day, often with recourse to a self-deprecating display of learning and wit. As he wrote to the novelist Laurence Sterne in 1766: 'I am one of those people whom the illiberal and vulgar call a Nee-gur – : the early part of my Life was rather unlucky; . . . a little Reading and writing I got by unwearied application – the latter part of my life has been more fortunate; having spent it in the honourable service of one of the best families in the kingdome; my chief pleasure has been books; philanthropy I adore –'.¹³ Sukhdev Sandhu has commented on Sancho's delight in artistry and literariness, and argues that Sancho's was an early example of how black writing 'needn't always be a species of protest literature, that it could be more than a crudely utilitarian discourse that exalts "relevance" or "resistance" at the expense of charm or aesthetics'.¹⁴ Yet the letter cited above also demonstrates the strained 'inside-outsider' position in which Sancho's life was caught, positioned between the illiberal, vulgar world of prejudice and service and the cultured, civilized vision of Britain pursued in books, art, music and the theatre. This tension between cultural endeavour and social reality has arguably remained throughout the work of postcolonial writers in Britain to the present day, as we shall continue to see.

The writings of Equiano, Sancho and others were exceptional and valued at the time chiefly because they furthered specific political causes. They did not inaugurate a new tradition of writing, although they constitute an important literary moment in the history of postcolonial writing in Britain, not least because their influence can be discerned in the work of a number of late twentieth-century writers. Throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth

century, other such texts appeared, but again their impact was exceptional and limited, and several of them were accounts of the travels of visitors who were passing through Britain, either under duress or their own steam. Susheila Nasta has described Sake Dean Mohamet's *The Travels of Dean Mohamet* (1794) as 'arguably one of Britain's first works by an Indian in English', while C.L. Innes's history of black and Asian writing in Britain refers amongst others to Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave* (1831) and B. M. Malabari's *The Indian Eye on English Life* (1893) as important works.¹⁵

In the twentieth century a more overtly critical vista of Britain began to emerge as a consequence of the growing pressure throughout the British Empire for decolonization. Several key anti-colonial intellectuals and political leaders of the time visited Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, often to study or to pursue political activism – such Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta, India's Mohandas Gandhi and the Caribbean's George Padmore and C.L.R. James. For many of these figures based in Britain, their primary concern was the political and cultural manumission of colonized lands from the rule of empire, and much of their writing produced in Britain was not necessarily *about* Britain, although amidst their writings there can be discerned a series of reflections on their experience of the colonial metropolis. The most prolonged and literary representation of Britain through colonial eyes from this period was perhaps Jean Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), which concerns the story of a young white creole woman from the Caribbean, Anna Morgan, who becomes a chorus girl in London. The novel focuses on Anna's crisis as she struggles to fit in to a cruel, indifferent city, and finds herself at the mercy of a series of exploitative and unsympathetic men. The novel depicts the unravelling of Anna's identity and emotional health as it heads towards its morbid end, and offers a chilling vision of the colonial migrant in the metropolis, devoid of psychological or cultural anchorage, adrift rather than belonging. Anna's 'inside-outsider' position becomes, in Elleke Boehmer's words, embedded within the 'urban spiritual dereliction' portrayed by the novel, which depicts the colonial arrivant as ultimately alienated rather than assimilated by the mother country.¹⁶ Indeed, Rhys's portrayal of a cruel, exploitative Britain for its colonized subjects anticipated many of the postwar representations of the Britain that were soon to emerge.

The shaping and sense of a distinct body of postcolonial literature about Britain, with a particular range of dynamics and featuring canonical texts and figures, really began to emerge after World War II and was well established by the late 1980s. This was a consequence of two related phenomena. First, in the years immediately after the cessation of hostilities in 1945, large numbers of

migrants from colonized or newly independent lands arrived in Britain and established significant new communities in a number of major cities, such as Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford and especially London. By the early 1970s, most British metropolitan locations could boast 'New Commonwealth' migrant and migrant-descended populations, from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia in particular. This 'colonization in reverse', as the Jamaican performer and poet Louise Bennett described it, occurred for a number of reasons.¹⁷ As a consequence of the war, Britain's economic infrastructure was severely damaged. Many cities had been badly bombed and lay in ruins, while important public services like transport and health urgently needed new facilities and labour. Britain's capacity to rebuild after the war was inevitably affected by the shortage of labour in the postwar years, due not least to the high loss of life as a consequence of military action. Several national industries – the building trade, public transport, the newly created National Health Service – looked to the colonies to find urgently required labour to assist in the rebuilding of Britain. As Susan Okonkon explains, the British government created a Migrants Liaison Service in the Caribbean which 'organised recruitment campaigns, medicals, training programmes for applicants, examinations, transportation and settlement loans'.¹⁸ Also, during the war colonial troops had been stationed in Britain and had seen active service in Europe, and many demobilized servicemen and -women were keen to return to a nation in which they had been well treated while in uniform to pursue employment opportunities. Coupled with the often depressed conditions of many colonial locations after the war and the scant opportunities for colonized peoples to earn a decent living at home, Britain soon began to experience a major influx of colonial migrants, the impact of which would irrevocably change the identity and the fortunes of the nation.

As a way of marking and remembering the advent of this new, profoundly influential moment in British history, many historians and writers have fixated upon the docking of the SS *Empire Windrush* at Tilbury Docks, London, on 22 June 1948, as inaugurating this new phase in Britain's migrant history. Aboard the *Windrush* were 492 migrants from the Caribbean, keen to settle and work in the colonial motherland. They were quickly followed by thousands of others, so that by the mid 1950s the sight of colonial migrants disembarking the boat-trains in central London had become a common, and much-commented upon, sight. For many of these migrants, coming to Britain was in a very fundamental sense a kind of homecoming, the chance to experience life at the centre of the British Empire which they had been taught for many years to regard as their motherland. The Guyanese migrant E.R. Braithwaite put it thus:

The majority of Britons at home have very little appreciation of what that intangible yet amazingly real and invaluable export – the British Way of Life – means to colonial people; and they seem to give little thought to the fantastic phenomenon of races so very different from themselves in pigmentation, and widely scattered geographically, assiduously identifying themselves with British loyalties, beliefs and traditions.¹⁹

That said, and as many migrant writers quickly testified in the immediate postwar years, the reality of British ways would contrast starkly with the colonial myth. As Braithwaite memorably remarked: ‘Yes, it is wonderful to be British – until one comes to Britain.’²⁰

Amongst the growing numbers of new migrants were those with ambitions to be writers. Sam Selvon and George Lamming arrived from the Caribbean on the same boat in 1950; also making his way to Britain that year was V. S. Naipaul, a young Trinidadian who had secured a scholarship at University College, Oxford. Others included James Berry, Andrew Salkey, Wilson Harris and E. R. Braithwaite. While a significant amount of their early writing concerned the lands of their birth, these figures also wrote in their own distinct ways about the experience of migration and the challenges faced by colonial peoples when trying to set up home in the imperial metropolis, so that by the 1960s a significant and substantial body of postcolonial writing about Britain had been produced. In contrast to earlier figures, the postwar writers were able to encounter each other – as well engage with native British writers – and make important connections, facilitated by some significant initiatives in publishing and the media. In 1943 the BBC West Indies service began to broadcast a programme called *Caribbean Voices*, the initiative of the Jamaican poet Una Marson who was in Britain at the time.²¹ Recorded in London, the programme ran until 1958 and its editor from 1946 was Henry Swanzy. In broadcasting new writing from Caribbean figures, Swanzy brought together a number of writers from different backgrounds who happened to be in London after the war, forging associations between them and engaging the interest and patronage of publishers. As a consequence, according to Philip Nanton ‘West Indian writers from across the region could, for the first time, meet and enter regular discussions with each other.’²² This sense of a burgeoning British-based network of postcolonial writers, from the Caribbean in this example but connecting with others from Africa and South Asia, accentuated the developing impression of a distinct new tradition of literary endeavour which interested British publishers and readers. Gail Low cites *Caribbean Voices* as enabling ‘a network of connections among writers, publishers, reviewers, and readers employed by publishing houses in London’,²³ one which was fundamental in securing publishing

contracts for newcomers. The postwar social phenomenon of significant migration, then, helped make possible a significant and influential new conjunction of writing by colonial peoples about Britain.

Several of the key texts of the 1950s offered a chilling, bleak account of the 'journey to an illusion' which migration to Britain often became. In contrast to the myth of the metropolitan motherland as a welcoming place of comfort, fortune and excitement – summed up vividly in Lord Kitchener's jaunty calypso 'London is the Place for Me' which he composed on board the *Windrush* and recorded in London in 1951 – the Britain which emerged from the pages of the first postwar migrants was austere, unwelcoming, racist and deeply psychologically corrosive. Several texts registered the seismic shock of realizing that Britain was not as it appeared overseas, and it quickly came apparent that Britain would have to change if its latest citizens were to be properly accommodated. The 'British Way of Life' was not receptive but hostile, and colonial migrants were shunned and discriminated against. It is hard not to overstate the impact of Britain's cool reception upon migrant peoples who had been taught since childhood that they were part of the British Empire and that Britain was mother. This was especially true of Caribbean peoples who, unlike those in Africa or South Asia, did not always have an alternative or indigenous language and cultural frame of reference to that of English or Britishness.

For example, George Lamming's novel *The Emigrants* (1954) depicts a group of Caribbean migrants travelling on board ship to Britain and follows their various agonized attempts to exist in a terrifying, hostile environment. Some are travelling for the first time; others have enjoyed an experience of Britain while in the armed forces and are returning to study or to pick up the lives they forged while stationed there previously. While on the ship, one character, Higgins, articulates the optimism and hope identified with coming to the mother country in the 1950s: 'Tis why we all here on this boat. In search o' some way to make the future better. To make a man o' yuhself, be somebody in the place you livin', keep yuh family clean, an' lead a decent clean life till the Almighty ready to give you leave.'²⁴ Yet the experience of Britain after the war is very different for those demobbed servicemen who were to find themselves much less welcome when out of uniform, while the prejudicial and impoverished conditions of the mother country for migrants creates an agonized crisis of being for many, who are frustrated in their attempts to lead a 'decent clean life' and instead are treated as second-class citizens and curious, dehumanized objects by many in the host community. The fragmentary form especially of the second and third sections of *The Emigrants*, which feature a

series of vignettes of migrant suffering in the metropolis, indexes the psychological and emotional disintegration effected by living in Britain, where selfhood is suspended. Lamming depicts the arrivants existing narrowly in a series of basement rooms, subject to the imperiousness and ignorance of Britons who regard them variously, and homogeneously, as ‘coloured’ and criminal, and dehumanized by the sexualizing gaze of the host society which constructs them as exotic, erotic objects.²⁵ In one particularly troubling scene, the character of Dickson is driven mad by his seduction by a white landlady who beckons some of her friends into the darkened room to witness her lover’s naked body: ‘He was lying on the divan, his clothes uncouthly thrown in one corner, and he sat up, rigid and bewildered, in his vest. 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.’²⁶ Subordinated to the objectifying perception of the British, the migrants’ lives are held in suspended animation between being and nothingness, with the illusion of Britain as a welcoming mother country where native and migrant might coexist harmoniously forever postponed. As one character puts it late in the novel, for the Caribbean arrivants ‘England was not only a place, but a heritage . . . But all that was now coming to an end. England was simply a world which we had moved about at random, and on occasions encountered by chance. It was just there like nature, drifting vaguely beyond our reach.’²⁷

Lamming’s bleak vision of migrant hopelessness indexed a sobering experience of coming to Britain in the postwar years which can also be discerned in novels such as Andrew Salkey’s *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* (1960) and V. S. Naipaul’s *The Mimic Men* (1967). In the latter, the narrator, Ralph Singh, reflects upon his early days in London as a series of disappointments where, as in Lamming’s novel, the possibility of an orderly and substantial life is denied: ‘The factories and warehouses, whose exterior lights decorated the river, were empty and fraudulent. I would play with famous names as I walked empty streets and stood on bridges. But the magic of names soon faded . . . [I]n this solid city life was two-dimensional.’²⁸ But in the work of other writers, these experiences of migrant immiseration were countered with narratives of significant survival and creativity which collectively speak of the resourcefulness, undaunted energy and stubborn creativity of the newcomers who refused to be dismissed as different.

Two contrasting examples are E.R. Braithwaite’s non-fictional account of his early years in Britain, *To Sir, With Love* (1959), and Sam Selvon’s highly influential novel of the Windrush generation, *The Lonely Londoners* (1956). Braithwaite’s autobiographical account of migrating to Britain from Guyana

was a sobering and in many ways typical tale of the disappointments and disenfranchisement of Britain's colonial newcomers. Ricky (as he is called in the book) struggles to find work as an engineer due to the colour bar, the physical and emotional consequences of which are vividly portrayed when he is denied a post for which he is perfectly qualified on the grounds of his 'race': 'as I walked sadly away I consciously averted my eyes from the sight of my face reflected fleetingly in the large plate glass of the shop windows. Disappointment and resentment were a solid bitter rising lump inside me; I hurried into the nearest public lavatory and was violently sick.'²⁹ Yet Braithwaite's narrative is one of fortitude in the face of adversity, and it tells the other story of postwar migration and settlement: one of survival, resistance, determination and courage. Unable to find work as an engineer, Ricky takes a job at a working-class secondary school in London's East End, where the behaviour and treatment of the pupils leaves much to be desired. In the face of scepticism from his colleagues and initial mistrust on behalf of the pupils, Ricky endeavours to teach his class what he regards as decent, civilized manners and endow them with a sense of intellectual curiosity about the world. *To Sir, With Love* is ultimately an affirmative narrative of a migrant figure overcoming prejudice through the principles of hard work and remaining civilized in the face of confrontation, and Ricky avoids the kind of psychological collapse that destroys several of Lamming's fictional migrants. The irony, however, is that Ricky's sense of what constitutes civilization and civilized behaviour is almost entirely derived from his colonial education and military training, and like a latter-day Equiano he endorses idealized British values. As he says early in the narrative, when reflecting on the shock of being discriminated against, 'I realised at that moment that I was British, but evidently not a Briton, and that fine differentiation was now very important.'³⁰ Arguably, Ricky's determination as a teacher is to make the young Britons in his care – and maybe the nation itself – more 'British', by inviting them to adhere to the values which he earlier described as 'the British Way of Life'. So while *To Sir, With Love* on the one hand offered a forthright articulation of one individual's success in refusing to succumb to British racism and discrimination, it made no significant challenge to the 'British' values of decency and civilization that are ultimately hypocritical and cannot be disaggregated from the divisive attitudes against which Ricky labours.

Other postcolonial texts would fare better. A more radical account of migrant survival and resilience in Britain was given in Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, perhaps the best-known and critically discussed text from the immediate postwar years.³¹ In contrast to the clipped prose of Braithwaite's

account of individual hardiness, always grammatically pure and rhetorically impeccable, Selvon's novel of postcolonial community was narrated in a hybrid form of English which mixed the vernacular speech patterns of Selvon's native Trinidad with standard forms of written English to produce a literary language which – like the city it depicts – was a fusion of British and Caribbean influences. This sense of fusion, of mixing together contrasting tones and impulses, pervades the novel as a whole, with significant results. It tells many stories of migrants in London – from Africa and South America, as well as the Caribbean – attempting to make their way in a city which finds their presence problematic, often in an antic and comic tone which provokes laughter more than sobriety. At its heart are two characters, the long-suffering Moses and the newly landed Sir Galahad, between whom much of the narrative modulates. Moses's weary pragmatism and resigned attitude to London's disappointments keep in focus the illusion of the city's inviting temptations of money, accommodation, conviviality and sexual adventure – summed up in his frequent refrain 'Take it easy' when faced with the wide-eyed and excited attitudes of the city's latest arrivals.³² As the newcomers quickly learn, meagre housing and manual labour soon become their lot, coupled with 'the old diplomacy' of the host community's prejudice that acts to keep the boys (as they are known in the novel) at bay.³³ Yet Selvon does not allow this vision of migrant life to predominate; just as important is Galahad's ebullient and eager engagement with the city and its pleasures, and laughter which he provokes. He is one of a number of memorable picaros and rogues in the novel, living by their wits and getting involved in a number of sticky situations usually concerning women or money. Selvon offers an account of coming to Britain as something other than the more familiar 'journey to an illusion'. While the chilling rendering of London's disappointments is well made, he keeps buoyant to the novel's end Galahad's cheerfulness and the laughter associated with it, arguably as an index of the unvanquished spirit of the migrants depicted in the novel and as the signature sounds of their undaunted survival in the metropolis, determinedly pursuing its pleasures and making light of their hardships as an effective mode of resistance and self-assertion against the sobriety of prejudice. It is notable that the last sound we hear in the novel, as Moses stands silently contemplating the sight of a tugboat on the Thames one summer's evening, is mirthful: 'laughter fell softly'.³⁴

In its hybridizing aesthetic which creates a new form of representation by combining an array of cultural influences, Selvon's novel anticipates one of the key literary strategies which has characterized postcolonial writing about Britain – namely, the pursuit of new forms of writing which bear witness

to the emerging, pluralizing new energies unleashed by migration and settlement, which must inevitably transform Britain and its people in the face of prejudice and hostility. It is interesting to note that in *The Lonely Londoners* Selvon always refers to 'Brit'n' and not Britain, as if this new spelling marks a newly emerging location, one that has never existed before and is fashioned from the creative encounter between host and migrant communities. In so doing, Selvon does something which Braithwaite is unable to: he suggests that a different kind of Britain, and different ways of being British, might be incubating at the heart of the old empire which are potentially transformative and non-prejudicial. It is significant that one of the few times that nearly all of the novel's characters are gathered together in one scene occurs towards the end of the novel, at a fete held in St Pancras Hall, which features a dance between white and black figures. Amidst this temporary, fragile moment of reciprocal conviviality, Moses remarks that 'the things that happening here tonight never happen before'.³⁵ In articulating a different sense of a Britain transformed by migrant cultures at this moment – and throughout the novel at the level of literary form – Selvon involves himself in one of the key preoccupations of postcolonial writing since: the attempt to imagine Britain otherwise, as a 'postcolonial' location in the truest sense of the word where the consequences of its colonial past are both acknowledged and transformed.

It is worth pausing here for a moment to note that the high preponderance of formal innovation in postcolonial writing in Britain, which can be detected in *The Emigrants* and *The Lonely Londoners*, has been a central feature of such writing since the 1950s, as many writers have attempted to discover literary forms which bear witness to the particular experiences of migrant peoples and their descendants, as well as establish new aesthetic principles using the key elements of migrant experience: dislocation, fragmentation, hybridity, cultural plurality. On the other hand, and as *To Sir, With Love* evidences, the attraction towards formal innovation has not been universal, and there remains an important genealogy of postcolonial writing in Britain which appears more conventional in terms of style and genre (as in the work of writers like Andrea Levy, Hanif Kureishi and Meera Syal). While the former is most often lauded these days as more distinctively postcolonial, the significance of a more conventional mode of writing must not be overlooked, not least because much postcolonial writing of the 1960s and 1970s seemed to eschew more innovative modes.

Indeed, in many ways the more conventional and realist forms of writing tended to be favoured by postcolonial writers in Britain in the 1950s, 1960s and

early 1970s, and we might identify a very important strain of non-fictional and documentary writing and travelogue. Nirad C. Chaudhuri's *A Passage to England* (1959) is an early example, one which represents Britain with enthusiasm and is voiced from a self-confessed anglophile. Doris Lessing's account of her first years in London, *In Pursuit of the English* (1960), cast a sympathetic if critical eye over the working-class Britons she lived amongst. E. R. Braithwaite continued his successful version of non-fictional documentary in *Paid Servant* (1962), which recorded his work as a welfare officer and the challenges he confronted when attempting to place vulnerable black children, often orphaned or abandoned, with obliging white families. Perhaps the most important book to emerge in this vein was Beryl Gilroy's *Black Teacher* (1976). Like Braithwaite, Gilroy was a migrant from Guyana and her account of working as a black teacher in London also included in it a perplexing narrative of the prejudice and discrimination which Gilroy faced as a young woman attempting to make her way in a new country. Gilroy's book was noteworthy in that it pointed to the next generation of postcolonial Britons, often born in Britain or raised there from a young age, growing up in racially different or mixed families and knowing no other place but Britain (we shall explore the work of these so-called 'second-generation' Britons presently). More importantly, it also evidenced the emergence of a postcolonial writing in Britain by women; as might be clear by now, the initial postwar creative texts were nearly always written by men and focused on male migrant experience.

One of the most important aspects of Gilroy's book was its focus on enduring challenges faced by migrants long after the initial phase of postwar 'Windrush' migration in the 1950s. While the British-focused novels of Lamming, Selvon and Naipaul dealt in the main with the initial shock and struggle of arriving and surviving in Britain, *Black Teacher* was one of several books which appeared in the late 1960s and 1970s which surveyed a much longer period of settling in and reckoning with Britain – a twenty-year stretch during which time racist attitudes and prejudices only seemed to have hardened. Gilroy depicts her fortunes in London as, initially, a maid to an old English aristocrat, Lady Anne, and later as an office worker for a mail-order firm (she took these jobs as she found it very difficult initially to find work as a teacher). Early on, she articulates very powerfully the crisis of identity created by seeming to exist as an 'inside-outsider':

At the end of each day with [Lady Anne] I realised afresh that I belonged in a cultural no-man's land. However often I had sung 'I vow to thee my country' on Empire Day in the pouring rain, I wasn't English. Brought up as we were under a faraway flutter of the Union Jack, I believe that at the time we West

Indians did think of ourselves as English. But Englishness, I now realised, contained elements of history, culture and perception to which I could lay no claim. I wasn't African either.³⁶

In the twenty years between her arrival in Britain and the present of the book's narration in the early 1970s, little seems to have changed which might enable Gilroy to be thought of – by herself and others – as part of the imagined community of postwar Britain. The displaced position of which she writes is yet to be conceived of as one of creative hybridity or binocular insight. Rather, the destabilizing of notions of national identification which migrants beckon is firmly resisted by many of the Britons which Gilroy meets through the workings of racism. The friendships she makes while working at the mail-order 'sweatshop' in the 1950s are at best temporary and quickly soiled by bigotry. When one colleague, Sue, moves to Swiss Cottage after winning the Pools, she tells Gilroy 'we been mates, but I don't want you to come visitin' me, see? Wouldn't do', she explained, "not with the sort of people where I'm goin'. I don't want to them to see me 'ob-nobbin' with nigs and such. Get it?"³⁷ The relentlessness of British racism is powerfully evoked in the book's design: nearly half of the book's thirteen chapters take as their title a racialized slur – such as 'I don't mind coloureds' – as if underlining the extent to which racist talk structured ordinary, day-to-day life in Britain by the 1970s.³⁷ For 'inside-outsiders' like Gilroy, the complexity and conundrum of her position was effectively denied by the tightening noose of racism which located her firmly outside the imagined community of 1970s Britain.

Gilroy was London's first black headteacher and was a committed educationalist throughout her life. Not surprisingly perhaps, she saw in the multicultural communities of children she taught the possibility of a future for Britain freed from the divisions of race and prejudice. At one point in *Black Teacher*, she glimpses the possibility of a different Britain when she watches her schoolchildren at play: 'As I looked out of the kitchen window at the children playing in the back garden, it was as if, for a moment, I saw beyond them and caught just the faintest, faraway glimpse of a multi-racial society.'³⁸ Yet this faint vision of a Britain transformed and democratic remained depressingly remote. The book closes with a visit to Gilroy in her school office of two adults who are unhappy with a letter which she has written to them about their child's behaviour. While the child's mother seems more reasonable, the grandmother has this to say to Gilroy: 'You know where you ought to be? You ought to be on telly with them Brooke Bond tea chimps. That's where you bloody ought to be – not here, telling us.'³⁹

Black Teacher offered a vision of Britain which, by the 1970s, had become an extraordinarily difficult place for those deemed to be culturally other. Settling in and reckoning with Britain had been a matter of ambiguous survival, and most postcolonial texts of Britain from this period offer bleak visions of loneliness, endurance and pain for 'inside-outsiders'. Sam Selvon's novel *Moses Ascending* (1975), the sequel to *The Lonely Londoners*, offered a strained comic depiction of Britain's stalled, suspended multiculturalism which held none of the tentative utopian optimism or energy of its far more illustrious predecessor. The Indian writer Anita Desai offered an experimental exploration of the solitariness and hardship of migrant life in her novel *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1968). Kamala Markandaya, a migrant from India who arrived in Britain in 1948, gave a sombre depiction of Indian migrants in Britain in her novel *The Nowhere Man* (1972), in which the central character, Srinivas, struggles to cope with racial abuse and his increasing social and psychological isolation. And in her first two novels, *In the Ditch* (1972, rev. 1979) and *Second-Class Citizen* (1974), the Nigerian migrant Buchi Emecheta fictionalized her grim experiences of settling in and reckoning with Britain through the semi-autobiographical character of Adah. The Britain which emerges from these two novels is both claustrophobic and carceral. Britain's white population is often indifferent to the plight of its migrant citizens, and most of the cross-racial relationships which are built in the novel seem transitory and exceptional. In contrast to the occasionally more buoyant representation of self-supporting migrants in 1950s Britain, the Nigerian diasporic community in Emecheta's work is represented as domineering and profoundly unhelpful for women such as Adah. As Emecheta suggested, by the 1970s the fate of Britain's 'inside-outsiders' was profoundly grim.

In the Ditch begins with Adah contemplating the rats and cockroaches which infest her squalid accommodation to which she has moved having left her abusive husband. Later she secures a room in a tower block in north London and builds some friendships with her female neighbours; but the sense of hopelessness and hardship endured by migrants is never vanquished in the novel, and the tower block in which she lives functions as an index for the horror of life in Britain as a whole: '[The stairs] were always smelly with a thick lavatorial stink. Most of the rubbish chutes along the steps and balconies were always overflowing and always open, their contents adding to the stink. The walls along the steep steps were of those shiny, impersonal bricks still seen in old tube stations, but even more like those Adah had seen in films of prisons.'⁴⁰ The fragile multicultural community of supportive working women which Emecheta depicts in the novel is short-lived as the local council finds new

accommodation for many of them, and the novel closes with the sense of Adah and her children moving into new accommodation only to face the next phase of struggle and endurance. *Second-Class Citizen* travels back in time and deals with Adah's decision to leave Nigeria in the early 1960s and her initial years with her husband, Francis, in London prior to their separation. Adah is depicted struggling with her fearful feelings of British officialdom, the abusive attitudes of her husband whose psychological make-up seems corroded by the racism and prejudice of the colonial mother country, and the generally unhelpful attitudes of the Nigerian diaspora community which is represented in highly unflattering ways in the novel. While Adah's idealism and snobbish naïvety are held up for questioning in the novel – Adah believes initially that Britain is a heavenly location which will free her from the patriarchal and financial confines of Nigerian life for women – her greatest struggle in Britain is with her fellow migrant Nigerians, especially the men, who act with hostility when she decides not to deposit her children with white foster parents. Francis's abuse, both physical and mental, indexes the lack of support for women, as Emecheta sees it, from the diaspora community; while her encounters with a white childminder (who is responsible for the near death of one of Adah's children) challenge colonial-learned myths of white superiority as well as any possibility of universal sisterhood. 'The concept of whiteness', she realizes, 'could cover a multitude of sins.'⁴¹ As in *Black Teacher*, the novel does offer a glimpse of an alternative imagined community more convivial than prejudicial, when Adah works as a librarian amongst other Commonwealth migrants from Canada, the Caribbean and Ireland. Her library colleagues encourage Adah to educate herself through reading and support her ambitions to be a writer. But the possibilities envisioned here seem fragile and impossible to concretize more widely. When Adah completes her first novel, to the delight of her colleagues, it is burned by Francis who accuses her of 'forgetting that you are a woman and that you are black'.⁴² And although she leaves him with the assistance of the courts, we already know from *In the Ditch* that Adah's unhappy existence as a migrant mother settling and reckoning with postwar Britain will only continue apace.

Just as Beryl Gilroy had done, Emecheta invested hope for future change in the next generation: the children of migrants born in Britain or raised there from early childhood. In *Second-Class Citizen*, Adah copes with the awfulness of her situation through a determination based upon her children's future: 'Her children were going to be different. They were going to be black, they were going to enjoy being black, be proud of being black, a black of a different breed.'⁴³ As the 1980s approached, these children began to come of age, with

significant consequences both for the social and political landscape of Britain and also for its postcolonial literary articulation. A new generation of home-grown postcolonial writers emerged who flatly refused to be assigned the position of 'inside-outsider' within the only country they knew. These writers arguably made much more headway in engendering a literary reinvention of Britain which both reflected and contributed to significant social and cultural change. In contrast to the writers of the 1970s, their mode was often experimental and innovative rather than documentary or formally orthodox. In the work of writers such as Linton Kwesi Johnson, Timothy Mo, Caryl Phillips, Hanif Kureishi and Grace Nichols, a new envisioning of Britain took hold which turned that place of 'inside-outsider' from one of dislocated non-belonging into a point of imaginative departure and radical reinvention. This new envisioning had three particular elements to it: the critical celebration of the hybrid position of the migrant or migrant-descended Briton; the sceptical assessment of the first postwar migrant generation; and the literary unearthing of Britain's mongrel history which challenged reactionary myths of Britain's centuries-long national or racial purity. While the practice of a more documentary literature of migrant immiseration (especially for women) continued apace, as evidenced by Joan Riley's important and deeply sombre novels *The Unbelonging* (1985), *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987) and *Romance* (1988), by the end of the 1980s a new mode of postcolonial writing in Britain had come, in an astonishingly short space of time, almost to define contemporary British writing as a whole, and not just its black British, or migrant, or postcolonial 'segment'.

A significant transitional figure in this respect was the Jamaican-born, London-raised poet Linton Kwesi Johnson, whose work captured the new, uncompromising militancy of the British-born and also pointed to the necessity for new forms of writing that were up to the job of bearing witness to the particular dislocations and displacements of the so-called second generation. Raised in inner-city Brixton and a witness to the increasing hostility visited upon young black Britons by the Metropolitan Police, Johnson's work fused together poetry with politics to offer an uncompromising response on the part of the second generation who were tired of being discriminated against at the levels of both state and street. To borrow A. Sivanandan's vivid phrase, Johnson's poetry articulated the 'different hunger' of a new generation often determined to fight back in no uncertain terms against racism and prejudice.⁴⁴ Inspired by the new musical youth cultures of Jamaica and London, especially the practice of DJs 'toasting' their own lyrics to instrumental versions of reggae hits, Johnson's poetry was often performed with music before enthusiastic

audiences of young black Britons. As an emerging new aesthetic, one that would proceed to influence later performance poets such as Jean 'Binta' Breeze, Benjamin Zephaniah and Patience Agbabi, Johnson's new dub poetry bridged Britain's new vernacular pop-music cultures and the more rarified terrain of literary representation. As Ashley Dawson explains, Johnson's work inaugurated a significant 'vernacular aesthetic' in postcolonial representations of Britain which 'offered a vital connection to the lives of black diaspora youths . . . [and the] circumstances confronted by black communities in Britain'.⁴⁵ By the end of the 1970s, he had published a significant number of collections such as *Voices of the Living and the Dead* (1974), *Dread, Beat and Blood* (1975) and *Inglan is a Bitch* (1980), as well as releasing several audio recordings (the LP *Forces of Victri* appeared in 1979, and heralded Johnson's long-standing collaboration with Dennis Bovell and his Dub Band).

It is tempting to regard Johnson's work as innovative primarily at the level of form, due to his use of music and rhythm and his deployment of a carefully accented Caribbean-English oral vernacular that indexes obstinate multicultural affiliations of Britain's new black youth. The content of his work seems much more documentary-minded, in appearing to record and depict the experiences of the second generation's sufferings, militant politics, forms of rebellion, and new cultural enthusiasms. His work challenged the prevailing view of young black Britons depicted in the newspapers and on television as a corrupting threat to the nation's health and future, 'as law-breakers and criminals, as a dangerous class or underclass'.⁴⁶ That said, Johnson's poems were much more strategic and anxious than faithful in their representation of black youth, and they tended to promote preferred images of an ideal – and idealized – black community rather than offer a snapshot of a pre-existing reality. His writing from this period often forged a vision of the second generation's struggle that was more prescriptive than descriptive, a confection rather than a portrait. In 'De Great Insohreckshan', his account of the race riots in Brixton in April 1981, he portrays an urban war between a racist state epitomized by the Metropolitan Police and the righteous, organized and determined youth whose rebellious response to oppression and prejudice is distinct from anarchic riotousness. As Johnson would have it, black Britons specifically attacked the mechanisms of a racist nation: a local pub known for its racism, but not its landlord; the police vans and the 'wicked wan plan', rather than the police themselves.⁴⁷ It is a moot point whether or not Johnson's vision of rebellious black Britain is reliably faithful, of course. But what is more important is Johnson's steadfast attempt to forge such unifying, dignified and highly supportive images in the first place. In Johnson's work there emerges a

vision of a radical and united generation of youthful new black Britons which is part of a wider attempt to expose the failure of Britain to accommodate its latest citizens in the imagining and administration of the nation.

Johnson's writing wanted to show how young Britons descended from once-colonized peoples resolutely would not accept the social and political position of 'inside-outsider'. His rendering of a 'black' Britain was inclusive and tended to rest on a political articulation of blackness as a shared condition of subservience rather than as a sign of essential racial identity. Hence, Johnson's sense of black Britain included British Asians as well as Caribbean- and African-descended Britons, and their white sympathizers. This political consolidation of the term 'black Britain' hardly lasted into the 1980s, due to the competing interests of those it circumscribed driven by differences in ethnicity, language, gender, sexuality and class. As Stuart Hall famously described it in his 1989 essay about Britain's burgeoning diasporic cultural endeavours 'New Ethnicities', there had clearly been achieved a significant moment in recent culture 'when the term "black" was coined as a way of referencing the common experience of racism and marginalisation in Britain and came to provide the organizing category of a new politics of resistance, among groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities'.⁴⁸ The aims of this strategy included fighting for access to representation and the contestation of the marginality through the production of positive images of black endeavour. Johnson's work might be thought of in these terms. But a second moment, coincident with the first, was also discerned by Hall, in which was recognized the 'the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category "black"'.⁴⁹ It is important to realize that these two moments are concurrent rather than mutually exclusive, and the revisioning of Britain by postcolonial writers since the 1970s might be thought of as inflected to various degrees by the aims of each moment. That said, in the 1980s, Hall's second moment seemed to arise more in the ascendancy as a number of postcolonial representations of Britain emerged which emphasized such varieties of experience and which were, perhaps most significantly, often critical rather than congratulatory of the migrant or migrant-descended peoples they portrayed.

In the 1980s, several writers broached the unhappy position of the 'inside-outsider' as enabling new ways of thinking that might challenge the discriminatory logic used to imagine British community. This new attitude was epitomized in the work of the Indian-born migrant writer Salman Rushdie, whose second novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) was published to major acclaim and was awarded the Booker Prize for fiction. Although *Midnight's Children*

concerned the fortunes of twentieth-century India rather than Britain, Rushdie's self-declared migrant-derived literary aesthetics emphasized hybridity, irreverence, plurality, parody, fragmentation and formal adventurousness. In his seminal essay 'Imaginary Homelands' (1982), Rushdie firmly aligned his migrant literary sensibility specifically to the transformation of Britain and its culture. More than most people, he argues, 'those who have been forced by cultural displacement ... accept the provisional nature of all truths' and understand keenly that '[m]eaning is a shaky edifice we build out of the scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved'.⁵⁰ This new style of thinking and writing might challenge received habits of thought which emphasized the pure, the holistic, the singular and exclusive. In Rushdie's view, the ways in which migrants craft new, almost incomplete ways of seeing from their mixed bag of multicultural reference points helps one recognize, on the one hand, that all forms of identity – racial, national, cultural – are themselves shaky edifices more heteroglot than whole, and, on the other, that the allegedly displaced position of the postcolonial Briton was not an aberrant nor contradictory one. In speaking of Indian-descended figures in Britain, Rushdie proposes that 'we are not willing to be excluded from any part of our heritage; which heritage includes both a Bradford-born Indian kid's right to be treated as a full member of British society, and also the right of any member of this post-diaspora community to draw on its roots for its art'.⁵¹ Rushdie offered a vision of British society as normatively multicultural, where the displacements of heritage do not inevitably lead to dislocation or alienation.

Rushdie's most famous literary exploration of these matters was his novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988), which explored a migrant and multicultural vision of Britain through the fantastical tale of two counterpointed cosmopolitan Indian migrants, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha. In a style indebted to the magic realism of Günter Grass and Gabriel García Márquez, as well as to Indian cinema and the lyrics of the Rolling Stones, the novel juxtaposes the emotional and social consequences of 1980s migrant Britain with dream sequences concerning the birth of Islam, as a way of exploring the partiality and hybridity of all forms of wisdom.⁵² *The Satanic Verses* includes three key elements which we might use to understand the more general concerns of postcolonial writing in Britain from this time. First, in his depiction of the fictional London enclave of Brickhall, Rushdie offers a vision of an embattled community of multicultural Britons fighting ardently against their marginalized status and declaring with confidence the fate of the nation to be remade by its migrant-descended peoples. At a meeting in Brickhall there is found 'every

conceivable sort of person – old, wide women and uniformed schoolchildren, Rastas and restaurant workers, the staff of a small Chinese supermarket in Plassey Street, soberly dressed gents as well as wild boys, whites as well as blacks'.⁵³ One character, a community leader called Dr Uhuru Simba, makes the following speech concerning Britain's inevitable multicultural transformation:

Make no mistake, ... we are here to change things. I concede at once that we shall ourselves be changed; African, Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Cypriot, Chinese, we are other than what we would have been if he had not crossed the oceans, if our mothers and fathers had not crossed the skies in search of work and dignity and a better life for their children. We have been made again: but I say that we shall also be the ones to remake this society, to shape it from the bottom to the top. We shall be the hewers of dead wood and the gardeners of the new. It is our turn now.⁵⁴

Rushdie's representation here of the inevitability of transformation that results from migration and settlement acts as the ultimate retort to those who would deny such Britons belonging by advocating Britain as racially or culturally pure. The riotous violence into which Brickhall descends marks both the resistance to as well as the inevitability of such change in Britain. The second key element is the distinctly critical representation of the migrant figure which is given in the novel, especially in the figure of Saladin Chamcha. Eschewing the desire to offer positive images of the migrant in the metropole, Rushdie uses Chamcha to interrogate migrant anglophilia, the continued pursuit of a colonial dream-vision of Britain and the disavowal of (in this instance) the South Asian past and heritage as part of Saladin's attempt to assimilate. For Rushdie, neither assimilation nor separatism will do: rather, the reinvention of Britain as place of quintessential hybridity and multiculturalism is the only acceptable possibility. Connected to this, and thirdly, is the emphasis which Rushdie places in the novel on Britain's international and colonial past, and extent to which the nation is itself a product of a long history of cross-cultural comings and goings, at home and abroad, epitomized by the multicultural melange of modern London. As he put it in an interview at the time, London was 'an artificial, invented space which is constantly metamorphosing. It doesn't have roots, it has foundations.'⁵⁵ In exposing such mongrelized foundations, *The Satanic Verses* opens a challenge to received ways of thinking about British history, and identifies the rewriting of history as a key strategy in the important reimagining of Britain as place of multiple cultures and races rather than the possession of only one rightful homogeneous people.

The success of Rushdie's migrant aesthetic can be measured by how quickly it became orthodox, to the extent that other postcolonial representations of Britain which are less overtly formally exuberant or spectacular have sometimes been neglected or measured unfavourably against Rushdie's rhetorical pyrotechnics. Indeed, the tendency of late twentieth-century postcolonial theory often was to support Rushdie's migrant model of knowledge as partial, unstable and endlessly metamorphosing, not least because several key postcolonial thinkers – such as Homi K. Bhabha – were themselves cosmopolitan migrants who had made good in the First World academy. Bhabha summed up this tendency in 1994 when he used Rushdie's work to announce that 'the truest eye may now belong to the migrant's double vision'.⁵⁶ During the 1980s and early 1990s, a number of important works were published which eschewed Rushdie's hyperbole but which were no less artfully crafted, and which made similar contributions to the literary reinvention of Britain by dealing with at least one of the three key areas mentioned above. Guyanese-born Grace Nichols's pithy and irreverent collection *The Fat Black Women's Poems* (1984) offered a witty critique of the representation of fat black women in Western culture through the ages, while touching more generally upon the pain and possibility of living as a migrant in Britain. She, too, saw migration as transformative and fertile. In 'Epilogue' she notes that, while having a lost a tongue from leaving home, 'from the root of the old one / a new one has sprung'.⁵⁷ While Japanese-born Kazuo Ishiguro might not readily be thought of as postcolonial due to his ancestry, he has often been considered in Britain within the same multicultural bracket as Rushdie and others, and his novel *The Remains of the Day* (1989) made its own playful critique of the nation. Ostensibly the story of an English butler taking a motoring holiday in 1956, the novel playfully inhabited the clichés of Britain's English gentry while subtly calling attention to the hidden history of aristocratic collusion with Nazi Germany's fascistic thinking. Again, this playful encounter with Britain's international past might be thought of as part of the wider literary critique of the nation's chequered history at the heart of postcolonial representations of Britain.

One consequence of the widespread enthusiasm for Rushdie's excitable and exuberant writing was the impression that it heralded the extent to which Britain was becoming more tolerant and multicultural, and indeed *had* changed for the better in recent years, especially when one looked back at the more gloomy writing of the 1960s and 1970s. But this was not necessarily the message of *The Satanic Verses*, which depicted a Britain still caught up in racial and cultural conflict; and indeed many texts from the time – such as *The*

Remains of the Day, for instance – were still suspicious of change as more an illusion than an actualization. Timothy Mo's second novel *Sour Sweet* (1982) offered a tender yet ultimately critical account of a migrant family, the Chens, struggling to settle in Britain while caught between the ignorance of the British and the compulsion of the diasporic Chinese, represented by a sinister Triad clan. Through the character and fortunes of Lily Chen, Mo offered a penetrating insight into the pain of trying to make a new life in a strange country and the temptations this creates to exaggerate one's dependence on ancestral learning in order to cope with the pressures of the present, in this instance with fatal consequences. Lily's steadfast adherence to what she regards as Chinese wisdom seems increasingly and tragically out of step with the realities of Britain, and ultimately proves costly to her family. *Sour Sweet* depicted in a sympathetic and sober sense the inevitability of change wrought by migration, while also inviting us to beware of lauding change for change's sake. The Triads' willingness to embrace cultural change in order to consolidate their illegal narcotics trade gives the lie to those who might quickly associate migrant-made makeovers with a new egalitarianism and social and cultural democratization.

Another significant text was Hanif Kureishi's first novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), which also explored both the necessity and the problems of change in late-twentieth-century Britain. A British-born son of an English mother and Indian father, Kureishi came to prominence in the 1980s primarily as a filmmaker, and his work in many ways was in keeping with Stuart Hall's 'second moment' of cultural endeavour. In films such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987) Kureishi offered a provocative depiction of a Britain in transition where the old certainties of race, roots and identity were becoming tangled by the contradictions of class, conviviality and eroticism – *My Beautiful Laundrette* caused a stir when first screened on British television's Channel 4 because of its depiction of an iconoclastic kiss between a Thatcherite British Asian entrepreneur and white working-class racist. *The Buddha of Suburbia* was a buoyant *Bildungsroman* featuring its mixed-race narrator, Karim Amir, who is by his own admission 'an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories.'⁵⁸ On the one hand, Kureishi charted a new Britain made possible by the innovative mixtures of ideas, politics and popular music of the late 1960s, where a countercultural revolution could be discerned brewing amidst the heady pursuit of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll. Set in the stifling south London suburbs where racist abuse seems part of the daily fabric, Karim yearns for 'a world of excitement and possibility'

epitomized by the cultural excitements of central London, where old notions of racial and national belonging seemed to be giving way.⁵⁹ But on the other hand, *The Buddha of Suburbia* represented the failure of the new counterculture to take hold and the calcification of exclusivist models of Britishness. Karim has ambitions to be an actor, but when he eventually moves to the city he is cast more than once as an Asian rather than a Briton, and is treated as an authentic 'inside-outsider' rather than an 'Englishman born and bred'. As one director bluntly puts it to him when discussing Karim's role as Mowgli in a production of Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, 'you have been cast for authenticity and not for experience'.⁶⁰ The 'world of excitement and possibility' never appears for Karim, who ends the novel about to star in a TV soap opera as a rebellious son of an Indian shopkeeper.

The Buddha of Suburbia told two unhappy truths about late-twentieth-century Britain and the difficult process of change. First, the countercultural energies of youth were deemed to have been usurped by a left-leaning middle-class white British intelligentsia which exploits figures like Karim while appearing fashionably to critique the political and social status quo. Second, Britons like Karim (and, indeed, Kureishi, and other such writers) had been admitted to the social and cultural institutions of Britain primarily as exotic figures, whose visibility and indulgence masked the continuation of illiberal ideas of race and unbelonging. Gloomily, *The Buddha of Suburbia* ends on the night of Margaret Thatcher's election as prime minister in 1979, which marked the beginning of a new phase of institutionalized racism in the history of modern and contemporary Britain.

As the writing of this period evidences more generally, the remarkable cultural energies and success of postcolonial writers from this period should not be mistaken as indexing the advent of wider social and material change for migrant-descended peoples. Indeed, much of this writing was pitted against a sense of Britain's multicultural transformation as being stalled or co-opted as the 1980s proceeded. Conjoined to this has been the emergence in postcolonial studies of a critical scepticism towards the new popularity of migrant and postcolonial writing, which parallels Kureishi's concerns about the attraction of the 'exotic' other in British culture. As critics such as Graham Huggan and Sarah Brouillette have recently argued, the success of these texts very much in the wake of Rushdie's celebrity might be thought of as a strategy of containment which finds in cultural difference the chance to pursue market interests by fetishizing as a commodity the 'inside-outsider' artist.⁶¹ This argument again should prompt us to hesitate before we regard the growing visibility of postcolonial writing in Britain as

automatically indexing significant social and material change of migrants and their descendants.

In an essay first published only a handful of years before his first novel, Kureishi called for ‘a fresh way of seeing Britain and the choices it faces: and a new way of being British after all this time’.⁶² Perhaps the writer who has done the most in recent years to inaugurate a ‘new way of being British’ that reaches beyond the familiar rhetorics of race and belonging, as well as cosy confections of multicultural tolerance and conviviality, is Caryl Phillips. Born in St Kitts and raised in the northern British city of Leeds, Phillips’s work bridges the migrant-moulded transformative optics of the 1980s and the twenty-first-century postcolonial writing in Britain, in which the preoccupations either with the select experiences of a singular character or distinct community of diasporic Britons (Chinese-Britons, Pakistani-Britons, etc.) have been replaced with far more distinctly multicultural milieus. Phillips’s early work dealt with two of the key elements of 1980s migrant writing considered previously. In his screenplay *Playing Away* (1987) he portrayed the strained tensions between Britain’s embattled urban black communities and white middle-class England which are exposed when a charity cricket match is arranged between a team from a rural English village and one from inner-city London. His first novel, *The Final Passage* (1985), offered a moving, critical account of ‘Windrush’ migration by focusing on the often neglected experiences of migrant women. But it is the third key element identified previously – the revelation of Britain’s cross-cultural history – that has been of particular interest to Phillips, and through which a transformed vision of Britain has been pursued. In *Cambridge* (1991), Phillips revisits Britain’s long involvement in the Atlantic slave trade by ventriloquizing two of its participants: Emily, the wife of a plantation owner who travels to the Caribbean to study colonial life in the early nineteenth century, and Cambridge, a slave who has recently spent some time in England. In juxtaposing their stories and their lives, Phillips reveals the complex relations between those caught up in the realities of slavery who thus cannot be easily divided into the tidy binaries of ‘white and black’ or ‘master and servant’, and instead emphasizes his characters’ correspondences and convergent experiences. This is also the case in *Crossing the River* (1993), which depicts the symbolic fortunes of three African characters who are sold into slavery by their father whose poverty led him to the ‘desperate foolishness’ of condemning his children to lives of servitude.⁶³ In this novel Phillips is also concerned with those whom the three children encounter: a well-meaning white American philanthropist, a white British woman to whom one of the three is married, the captain of a slave ship bound for the Americas. As in *Cambridge*, here Phillips

inhabits the different voices of his characters in a sequence of narratives which lack an overall narrating consciousness or uniform structure. This emphasizes the significance of heterogeneity and fragmentariness, while inviting the reader to make imaginative connections between narratives which at times seem only obliquely connected. In both novels, Phillips was keen to show that Britain's history of slavery is not marginal but central to its historical fortunes and contemporary condition, and that slavery was not solely a 'black' history but circumscribes all Britons regardless of race. In remembering the history of Britain's slaving and colonial past, Phillips has exposed the nation's cross-cultural and international legacies which brought black Africans to its shores in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and challenges those representations of Britain which see it as a white, culturally homogeneous nation only recently affected by migration from overseas. In Phillips's hands, his literary engagements with slavery – often carefully based on surviving accounts from the time, by the likes of Olaudah Equiano and Maria Nugent – embody the cat's-cradle of connections which combine black and white Britons historically, and affix Britain's historical fortunes with those of seemingly remote places in Africa and the Americas.

Phillips's critical literary rewriting of slavery stands alongside that of two other key British postcolonial writers who came to prominence in the 1990s. David Dabydeen's novels *The Counting House* (1997) and *A Harlot's Progress* (1999) also dealt imaginatively with Britain's slave past. The former unearthed the often buried history of indentured Indian labour in the Caribbean. The latter recreated Hogarth's eighteenth-century London from the point of view of Mungo, a black slave, and was part of Dabydeen's long-standing critical exploration of the representation of black people in British art which also preoccupies his long poem *Turner* (1994). Fred D'Aguiar's novels *The Longest Memory* (1994) and *Feeding the Ghosts* (1997) also function to tell hidden tales about Britain's history of slavery, while his collection of poetry *British Subjects* (1993) offered a hopeful transfigurative vision of Britain slowly succumbing to the new cultural energies of migrant-descended peoples, as epitomized by the popular Notting Hill Carnival held each August in London. More recently, Caryl Phillips has reflected soberly on the unhappy condition of contemporary Britain while also tentatively mooted a compassionate and redemptive vision of cross-cultural encounter that is pitted against the ongoing divisions of racial conflict. In his novel *A Distant Shore* (2003), Phillips depicts the lives of, first, a retired middle-aged English music teacher, Dorothy, and, second, Solomon, a refugee from Africa who takes up residence nearby and who is killed by local racists. Although their lives only momentarily touch in what is

a bleak tale of lovelessness and bigotry, the compassionate encounters which their lives envisage offer a different way of being British for white and black peoples.

For Phillips, a truly multicultural Britain which is meaningfully transformative can only work if all Britons are willing to think differently about themselves as well as others. Reviewing in 1998 the changes to Britain since the arrival of the SS *Empire Windrush*, Phillips was ultimately upbeat: 'Young British people, both black and white, are these days increasingly invested in cultural plurality as a signifier of their identity rather than crude notions of race. They are able to synthesise Wordsworth with Jamaican patties, or Romeo and Juliet with the music of Bob Marley.'⁶⁴ Such careful optimism, offered at the end of the twentieth century, can certainly be found in the work of Britain's twenty-first-century postcolonial writers, for whom many of the age-old divisions between white and black, native and foreign cultures, seems increasingly relaxed; although the prevailing tone is one of caution rather than celebration. On the one hand, there has remained in postcolonial writing in Britain a tendency to explore the particular experiences of one distinct community of migrant-descended peoples. This can be discerned in novels such as Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003), which concerns the fortunes of the Bangladeshi diaspora in London's East End, or in Courttia Newland's fictions of young black youth on inner-city housing estates, *The Scholar* (1997) and *Society Within* (1999). On the other hand, a second important area of contemporary postcolonial writing in Britain has continued to concern itself with the particular challenges of second-generation Britons, as in Hanif Kureishi's novel *The Black Album* (1995), Atima Srivastava's *Looking for Maya* (1999), Meera Syal's novels *Anita and Me* (1996) and *Life Isn't All Ha Ha Hee Hee* (1999), and the early writing of Andrea Levy, notably *Every Light in the House Burnin'* (1994) and *Never Far From Nowhere* (1996). But most important, perhaps, has been the emergence of an important new kind of postcolonial writing in Britain which insistently articulates the polycultural admixture of Britain past and present and, as in Caryl Phillips's work, is much more keenly concerned with the interactions between Britons of a variety of ancestral backgrounds.

The most visible example is Zadie Smith's debut novel *White Teeth* (2000), which was hailed when it first appeared as the novel of a culturally diverse Britain at ease with itself at last. A comic representation of the muddled lives of three families – white, Caribbean-descended, Indian migrant – in Willesden, London, *White Teeth* offers a cheerful yet probing vision of Britain's multicultural melange that remains cognizant of the evolving racisms of a changing nation and the growing attraction of fundamentalist groups for those Britons

who continue to be declared outsiders within the nation. As the narrator declares:

It is only this late in the day, and possibly only in Willesden, that you can find best friends Sita and Sharon, constantly mistaken for each other because Sita is white (her mother liked the name) and Sharon is Pakistani (her mother thought it best – less trouble). Yet, despite all the mixing up, despite the fact that we have all slipped into each other's lives with reasonable comfort (like a man returning from his lover's bed after a midnight walk), despite all this, it is still hard to admit that there is no one more English than the Indian, no one more Indian than the English. There are still young white men who are *angry* about that; who will roll out at closing time into the poorly lit streets with a kitchen knife wrapped in a tight fist.⁶⁵

Smith's admirable attempt to render the pain and pleasure of a polycultural nation does not always deliver results, however. Arguably, her predominantly satirical representation of the problems of 'all the mixing up', especially as experienced by racialized Britons, explains more than it explores their anxieties of belonging. Also, the distinctly urban setting of the novel, acknowledged in the quotation above, conceals the extent to which Britain may not necessarily be transforming at the same rate, or even at all, beyond its major cities, the traditional locations for migrant settlement. A more probing and penetrative rendering of Britain's mixed-up peoples is given in Andrea Levy's novel *Small Island* (2004), which revisits and revises the historical moment of the arrival of the SS *Empire Windrush* in order to tell stories of the coming together of white Britons and black migrants in the austere aftermath of World War II. Levy's novel exposes the intertwined lives of so-called natives and migrants in Britain engendered by the history of colonialism and the common cause of fighting fascism, and challenges once and for all the notion that Britain has ever been a singular, discrete island nation with little visible connection to colonial and international affairs. For Levy as it was for Phillips, the history of postwar migration is not solely a black or diasporic one: it circumscribes and has impacted upon all Britons. In excavating the nation's mongrel history through her depiction of the legacies of cross-cultural relations and the consequences which they bear, Levy rewrites Britain's past as quintessentially polycultural in order to further its continued transformation in the twenty-first century. Her ability to articulate the emotional dispositions of her characters means that her rendering of wider matters of nation and identity possesses a vital degree of experiential sensibility often lacking from the wisecracking comedies of Zadie Smith.

Smith's and Levy's attempts to think about, and across, how Britain's different cultures are forever mixed up also reflects a similar process in the work of other key contemporary writers. Gautam Malkani's first novel *Londonstani* (2007) seems a vivid account of young British Asians growing up in a fast-moving, entrepreneurial Britain; until the twist at the novel's end suggests that we have been reading about a multicultural rather than strictly migrant-descended community where identities are increasingly mixed-up and mongrelized, and where today's 'inside-outsider' may be the so-called white British native. The daughter of an English mother and Nigerian father, Bernardine Evaristo has also pursued the open circuits of racial and cultural admixture in a series of formally experimental novels in verse, such as *Lara* (1997; revised 2009), *The Emperor's Babe* (2001) and *Soul Tourists* (2005). *The Emperor's Babe* concerns a comical representation of Roman London that unearths Britain's quintessential cross-cultural condition as a way of adding to the wider revision of the nation with which many postcolonial writers of Britain have been concerned. *Soul Tourists* points to a particularly exciting new departure in exploring Britain's cross-cultural history in the context of the wider context of Europe's history of migration and diaspora – a matter also pursued with great import in Mike Phillips's thriller *A Shadow of Myself* (2000). For these writers, a commitment to Britain's polycultural future is pursued through a transformative postcolonial way of seeing which continues valuably to imagine Britain otherwise, as a response to the perpetuation of prejudice.

As the work of this latest generation of writers suggests, we have come a long way from the assimilative visions of Equiano and Sancho, and from the colonial visions of belonging to Britain which framed and fractured the experiences of many postwar migrants. While Caryl Phillips was correct to assert in 1998 that 'there is no doubt that in the past fifty years Britain *has* changed and it has changed radically', it is also fair to say, with some unhappiness of course, that Britain remains a difficult place for those who are deemed culturally different.⁶⁶ The popular demonization of British Muslims in the wake of the terror attacks in the United States in 2001 and Britain in 2005 and the denigration of refugees and asylum seekers at the levels of state and street are two of several challenges which remain to be overcome. So it would certainly be unwise to conclude, as does Bruce King, that Britain's meaning has changed 'from white to multiracial [a]s part of a modernisation brought about by free-market economics and culture'.⁶⁷ The revisioning of Britain and Britishness still has a long way to go; while any gains made thus far are a consequence of hard-fought, long-standing battles won by migrant-descended peoples and their supporters, rather than the gift of a liberal market sensibility that usually

considers postcolonial writing as creating the chance to make a fast buck out of the latest exotica rather than seeding a new way of being British. To be sure, postcolonial writing in Britain bears witness to the necessity and impact of change, both culturally and socially. Its popularity within British literature in general is a sign of how many writers, over many decades, have creatively used their position of ‘inside-outsider’ to challenge the border logic which declares that they do not belong, with the aim of dissolving this disenfranchising position once and for all. Yet their popularity is also a sign of containment, and we might continue to worry about the ways in which such writing is often marketed as exotic and chic in contemporary British culture and hence maintains the position of ‘inside-outsider’. As postcolonial writing has perpetually warned, Britain’s incomplete process of cultural transformation and democratization demands continued vigilance rather than complacency.

Notes

1. Colin MacInnes, ‘A short guide for Jumbles (to the life of their coloured brethren in England)’, in *England, Half English: A Polyphoto of the Fifties* (1961; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), pp. 23, 24.
2. Colin MacInnes, *London, City of Any Dream* (New York: Bramhall House, 1962), p. xiii.
3. MacInnes, ‘A short guide for Jumbles’, p. 33 – italics in the original.
4. Caryl Phillips, *A New World Order: Essays* (London: Secker & Warburg, 2001), p. 4.
5. Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, ed. Vincent Carretta (London: Penguin, 1995), p. 77.
6. Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 3.
7. Cited in Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto, 1984), p. 10.
8. S. I. Martin, *Britain’s Slave Trade* (Basingstoke: Channel 4/Macmillan, 1999), p. 88.
9. Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* (London: Pluto, 2002), p. 2.
10. See Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1792* (London: Methuen, 1986).
11. C. L. Innes, *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain, 1700–2000* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 17.
12. Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, p. 78.
13. Ignatius Sancho, *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African* (1782), ed. Vincent Carretta (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 331.
14. Sukhdev Sandhu, *London Calling: How Black and Asian Writers Imagined a City* (London: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 44.
15. Susheila Nasta, *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 17; see Innes, *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain*.
16. Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 130.
17. See Louise Bennett, *Jamaica Labrish*, notes and intro. Rex Nettleford (Jamaica: Sangster’s Book Stores, 1966).

18. Susan Okonkon, *Black Londoners, 1880–1990* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998), p. 93.
19. E.R. Braithwaite, *To Sir, With Love* (1959; London: Vintage, 2005), p. 35.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
21. For more on Una Marson and *Caribbean Voices*, see Delia Jarrett-Macauley, *The Life of Una Marson, 1905–65* (Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 157–74.
22. Philip Nanton, ‘What does Mr Swanzy want? Shaping or reflecting? An assessment of Henry Swanzy’s contribution to the development of Caribbean literature’, *Kunapipi: Journal of Post-Colonial Writing*, 20.1 (1998), 11–20, here 17.
23. Gail Low, ‘Publishing histories’ in David Richards and Shirley Chew (eds.), *A Concise Companion to Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 204–28, here 214.
24. George Lamming, *The Emigrants* (1954; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 61.
25. For a purposeful reading of the cramped confines depicted in Lamming’s novel, see James Procter, *Dwelling Places: Postwar Black British Writing* (Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 36–45.
26. Lamming, *The Emigrants*, p. 266.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 237.
28. V.S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Men* (1967; London: Penguin, 1969), p. 19.
29. Braithwaite, *To Sir, With Love*, p. 34.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
31. See, for example, John Clement Ball, *Imagining London: Postcolonial Fiction and the Transnational Metropolis* (University of Toronto Press, 2004); John McLeod, *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* (London and New York, 2004); Susheila Nasta (ed.), *Tiger’s Triumph: Celebrating Sam Selvon* (Hebden Bridge: Dangaroo, 1995) and *Home Truths: Fictions of the South Asian Diaspora in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); Procter, *Dwelling Places*. Some of the ideas I raise in my discussion of *The Lonely Londoners* are explored more patiently in my book *Postcolonial London*, pp. 24–40.
32. Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* (1956; London: Penguin, 2006), p. 15.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
36. Beryl Gilroy, *Black Teacher* (London: Cassell, 1976), p. 34.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 10.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
40. Buchi Emecheta, *In the Ditch* (1972; Heinemann: London, 1994), p. 17.
41. Buchi Emecheta, *Second-Class Citizen* (1974; London: Heinemann, 1994), p. 44.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
44. A. Sivanandan, *A Different Hunger: Writings on Black Resistance* (London: Pluto, 1982), p. 49.
45. Ashley Dawson, ‘Linton Kwesi Johnson’s dub poetry and the political aesthetics of carnival in Britain’, *Small Axe*, 21 (2006), 55.
46. Paul Gilroy, *‘There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack’: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (1987; Routledge: London, 1992), p. 75.
47. Linton Kwesi Johnson, *Mi Revalueshanary Fren: Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 61.

48. Stuart Hall, 'New ethnicities', in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds.), *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (1989; London: Routledge, 1996), p. 441.
49. Ibid., p. 443.
50. Salman Rushdie, 'Imaginary homelands' (1982), in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1991), p. 12.
51. Ibid., p. 15.
52. As is well known, Rushdie was forced into hiding due to the perceived blasphemy against Islam committed by *The Satanic Verses*. For accounts of the so-called Rushdie Affair, see Malise Ruthven, *A Satanic Affair: Salman Rushdie and the Wrath of Islam* (London: Hogarth, 1991) and Kenan Malik, *From Fatwa to Jihad: The Rushdie Affair and Its Legacy* (London: Atlantic, 2009).
53. Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Viking, 1988), p. 413.
54. Ibid., p. 414.
55. Quoted in Lisa Appignanesi and Sara Maitland (eds.), *The Rushdie File* (London: Fourth Estate, 1989), p. 9.
56. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 5.
57. Grace Nichols, *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (London: Virago, 1984), p. 64.
58. Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 3. For an excellent discussion of the 'black British Bildungsroman', see Mark Stein, *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004).
59. Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, p. 19.
60. Ibid., p. 147.
61. For a discussion of the global popularity and marketing of postcolonial writing as a commodity, see Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) and Sarah Brouillette, *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
62. Hanif Kureishi, 'The rainbow sign' (1989), in *Dreaming and Scheming: Reflections on Writing and Politics* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), p. 55.
63. Caryl Phillips, *Crossing the River* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993), p. 1.
64. Caryl Phillips, 'The pioneers: fifty years of Caribbean migration to Britain' (1998), in *A New World Order*, p. 280.
65. Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2000), p. 281-2.
66. Phillips, 'The pioneers', p. 280.
67. Bruce King, *The Oxford English Literary History*, vol. 13: 1948-2000: *The Internationalization of English Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 322.

Postcolonial writing in France

DOMINIC THOMAS

Our problem is that we did not invent printing or the Bic pen, and that we'll always end up at the bottom of the class thinking we could write the history of our continent with spears. Do you get my drift? And what is more, we have a bizarre accent that comes out in our writing, and people don't care for it.¹

Introduction: framing postcolonial France

By the end of the nineteenth century, the British and the French shared the ambiguous prestige of wielding the most powerful empires and colonies. Their respective projects varied considerably in terms of geographic spheres of influence, and naturally so did the cultural strategies deployed. Any consideration of the legacy of these historical encounters must necessarily acknowledge these factors, particularly when one analyses the mutually constitutive nature of cross-cultural contact between these regions of the world. The shared historical experience needs to be foregrounded: 'France and Africa share a common history, expressed jointly by the role France has played for centuries in Africa north and south of the Sahara, and by the more recent presence in the Hexagon of Africans who have, in turn, through their actions, their work, their thinking, had a concrete impact on the course of French history.'² In this regard, the French context is all the more complex given the concerted effort made by the colonial authorities in shaping policy through a *civilizing mission* determined to establish cultural prototypes in France *overseas*. To accurately contextualize the landscape of postcolonial writing in France, its particularities and specificities, will necessarily entail reflection on the transition from the colonial to the postcolonial and a consideration of the dynamics of race relations in order to address the multiple ways in which immigrant and ethnic minority authors have dramatically expanded and diversified the parameters of writing in French. This is also a pan-European phenomenon, because 'every European power contributed to the expansion of Europe's borders overseas.

Every European power is experiencing today the “return of empire” on their soil.³ However, postcolonial writing *in France* and postcolonial writing *in French* require further attention as referential categories because of the concrete and symbolic importance of the French language itself.

In the English-speaking world, we have become accustomed to the various usages and registers of the term ‘postcolonial’. But in France, where colonialism itself remains a highly contested and politicized subject, postcolonial studies are almost invisible (particularly in the field of French studies), often denigrated in intellectual debates, and associated with broader social mechanisms pertaining to various ‘memory wars’, the politics of reparation, and disparate claims for social rehabilitation.⁴ In recent years, various texts have endeavoured to redress this imbalance, underscoring the need to bring ‘France’s colonial past to the forefront of national thinking and historiography, in order to produce perspectives that make postcolonial situations intelligible.’⁵ During the 1980s and 1990s similar forms of resistance were in evidence in the United Kingdom and United States in institutions of higher education,⁶ but by contrast the field of ‘francophone’ studies is today an integral component of ‘French’ studies, the contours of which are delineated by writing in French in a global framework that includes the Caribbean, Indochina, the Maghreb, sub-Saharan Africa, France, Mauritius, etc., but also authors writing in French from such areas as Quebec or other European countries (writers such as Milan Kundera, Andrei Makine, etc.) that were not colonial territories.

In many ways then, the label ‘francophone studies’ has emerged as an analogous term to the more widely circulating ‘postcolonial’, but is employed in an incorporative transcolonial structure to simultaneously designate *both* colonial era *and* postcolonial era writings. For some, certainly, as the minority rights advocacy organization called Indigènes de la République (launched in 2005) confirms, its members self-designate as ‘descendants of slaves and deported Africans, daughters and sons of the colonized and of immigrants’.⁷ But France’s experience overseas did not end on a common date – the French federation in Southeast Asia lasted until 1954, colonial rule in Algeria until 1962, most of francophone sub-Saharan Africa had achieved independence by 1960 but the Republic of Djibouti did not become independent until 1977, and France retains control over its Overseas Departments (French Guiana, Réunion, Martinique and Guadeloupe) and Territories, collectively known as the DOM-TOM. An exhaustive analysis of this vast colonial and postcolonial encounter would call for a much longer study; given the relative importance of Africa and the multiple ways in which that particular history intersects with

questions of immigration and integration in contemporary French society, the primary focus of this chapter will be provided by writings by African authors or by authors of African descent. Naturally, some degree of attention will also be accorded to other dimensions of ‘postcolonial’ France and consequently briefly engage with francophone Caribbean, Maghrebi and Vietnamese writing.

Postcolonial precursors

Prior to 1946, the presence of students in France from the various colonies was negligible, an indication as to the concerted effort the French authorities were making in developing colonial schools.⁸ Relatively few texts were published during this period. The most indicative were Ahmadou Mapaté Diagne’s *Les Trois Volontés de Malic* (1920; broadly speaking, a text anchored in the tradition of colonial apologia), Bakary Diallo’s *Force-Bonté* (1926; an autobiographical narrative about a soldier returning to Africa from the *tirailleurs sénégalais* battalion) and Lamine Senghor’s *La violation d’un pays* (1927; an early anti-colonial text). The student presence grew exponentially after World War II, and these intellectual migrants were designated interchangeably as ‘étudiants coloniaux’ (colonial students), ‘étudiants d’outre-mer’ (overseas students) and ‘étudiants noirs’ (black students).⁹ The creation in 1950 of the Fédération des Étudiants d’Afrique Noire Française (FEANF, Federation of Students from French sub-Saharan Africa) further enhanced this presence. Journals such as *La Revue du Monde Noir* (established in 1931) and *Légitime Défense* (1932), influential texts by leading intellectuals and founders of the Negritude movement such as Léon-Gontran Damas’s (French Guiana) *Pigments* (1937), Aimé Césaire’s (Martinique) *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (1939) and Léopold Sédar Senghor’s (Senegal) *Chants d’ombre* (1945) and *Hosties noires* (1948), the creation of the publishing house and journal *Présence Africaine* in 1947 (Mudimbe), alongside events such as the Premier Congrès des écrivains et artistes noirs (First Congress of Black Writers and Artists), held in Paris 19–22 September 1956, contributed to a dynamic cultural environment.

These diverse experiences are precursors of what Boniface Mongo-Mboussa has described with reference to contemporary writings as the ‘novel of emigration’, whereby the subject matter is provided by exposure to the French metropolitan context, one that compels protagonists to confront the circumstances of colonialism while also negotiating acculturation in mainland France.¹⁰ Representative works include Ousmane Socé’s *Mirage de Paris* (1937, a demystification of the French colonial project through a young Senegalese man’s visit to the 1931 International Colonial and Overseas

Exposition), Camara Laye's *L'Enfant noir* (1954, an analysis of the influences of colonialism and colonial education on a Mande community in Guinea and the accompanying cultural and social dislocation), Bernard Dadié's *Un nègre à Paris* (1959, a questioning of the foundations of the Occidental colonial project), Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *L'Aventure ambiguë* (1961, conflicting cultural allegiance arises as the outcome of French colonial education) and Ousmane Sembene's *Le Docker noir* (1956, an account of the social relations between various minority communities in the French port of Marseilles).¹¹

The question of postcolonial writing in France is thus a multifaceted one given that the *francophone* authors who reside and publish in France are a heterogeneous category, where some self-identify as immigrants, others were born in France of immigrant families or have roots located outside the metropole, and yet others who are living in the metropole as exiles or alternatively ethnic minorities. The historical context is therefore important particularly when post-World War II migration patterns shift from guest worker and family reunification models as a result of governmental concerns with immigration following then-President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's call for 'zero immigration' after 1974. The question of postcolonial writing in France is therefore simultaneously organized around a transnational dialogue with former colonial territories *and* a process of articulating the complexities of otherness in mainstream French society.

The publishing industry is somewhat indicative of the uniqueness of the French context. On the one hand – and this represents a significant distinction with postcolonial writing in English – Paris continues to serve as the publishing capital of the francophone world *and* (with the exception of French-speaking zones such as France, Belgium, Quebec, Luxembourg and Switzerland) most francophone regions of the world are located in areas disproportionately impacted by poverty and in which books published in France generally exceed purchasing expenditure capabilities. The circulation and consumption of print culture is thus a complex issue. As Pascale Casanova has argued in *The World Republic of Letters*:

The position of Francophone writers, on the other hand, is paradoxical if not tragic as well. Since for them Paris is not merely the capital of world literary space, as historically it has been for writers everywhere, but also the very source of the political and/or literary domination under which they labour. . . Making matters worse, the power of Paris is still more domineering and more keenly felt by Francophone writers for being incessantly denied in the name of the universal belief in the universality of French letters and on behalf of the values of liberty promoted and monopolized by France itself.¹²

This has created a complicated relationship between authors and the publishing establishment. Entry into the literary scene has often been very difficult – to a certain extent this has accounted for the emergence of specialist book series, such as the Hatier *Monde noir* (Black world) list and Gallimard's *Continents noirs* (Black continents) – but these have been criticized for ghettoizing authors based on ethnic factors. Yet, surprisingly enough, francophone authors have been the recipients of numerous prestigious literary awards, such as the Goncourt Prize (Tahar Ben Jelloun from Morocco in 1987 and Patrick Chamoiseau from Martinique in 1992) and Renaudot Prize (Edouard Glissant from Martinique in 1958, Yambo Ouologuem from Mali in 1968, Ahmadou Kourouma of the Ivory Coast in 2000, Alain Mabanckou from Congo in 2006 and Thierno Monénembo from Guinea in 2008). What is more, none of the awardees of the Goncourt, Renaudot and Femina prizes in 2006 (that included Jonathan Littell, Alain Mabanckou and Nancy Huston, respectively) were born French. This led many critics to question the health of French literature, all the more so given that 'Their writings', as Alec Hargreaves has argued, 'are still to a large extent ignored by cultural elites in France. Far from celebrating rootlessness, one of the main driving forces behind their work is to stake a place for themselves within French society.'¹³ Increasingly though, people are willing to recognize that the internationalization of literature in French has contributed in positive ways to its enrichment. Furthermore, the fact that the recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2008, J. M. G. Le Clézio, is an author who describes himself as Franco-Mauritian, has served to further blur the tenuous distinctions between what is considered *French* and *francophone*.

Literary diversity and French-language writing

Francophone Caribbean authors from Guadeloupe, Haiti and Martinique have made important contributions to both literature and to the process of advancing its theoretical reception while also enhancing its contextualization. Initially expressing adherence to Negritude models and to connections with the African continent and the history of transplantation, alternative paradigms emerged including *antillanité* (Caribbeanness) and *créolité* (creoleness) that stressed cultural and linguistic roots in slavery while also insisting on the specificity of the Caribbean context as a composite identity, as the site of intersections between both indigenous and external cultural influences that were not exclusively African, but rather also Indian, Chinese, French, etc. Authoritative works by Édouard Glissant, such as *Le Discours Antillais* (1981) and *Poétique de la relation* (1991), and by Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant

and Jean Bernabé (*Eloge de la créolité*, 1989) foregrounded Caribbean diversity. Indicative of this questioning are the novels of authors such as Maryse Condé (*Traversée de la Mangrove*, 1989, *Moi, Tituba, sorcière noire de Salem*, 1986, and *Histoire de la femme cannibale*, 2005), Simone Schwarz-Bart (*Ti Jean l'horizon*, 1979), Suzanne Dracius (*L'Autre qui danse*, 1989), Daniel Maximin (*Isolé Soleil*, 1981, *Souffrières*, 1987, and *Tu, c'est l'enfance*, 2004), Édouard Glissant (*Sartorius*, 1999, and *Ormerod*, 2003), Patrick Chamoiseau (*Solibo magnifique*, 1991, *Texaco*, 1992, and *Un dimanche au cachot*, 2007), Dany Laférière (*Le Goût des jeunes filles*, 2005, *Vers le sud*, 2006, and *Je suis un écrivain japonais*, 2008) and Gisèle Pineau (*L'Exil selon Julia*, 1996, *Chair piment*, 2002, and *Morne Câpresse*, 2008).

Authors from the Maghreb occupy a noteworthy position on the postcolonial landscape, and have focused on a broad range of issues ranging from the cultural (language, tradition), religious (Islam, secularism, fundamentalism), social (gender), to the political (colonial history, postcolonial nation building, terrorism). The most widely read and cited include Tahar Ben Jelloun (*L'Enfant de sable*, 1985, *La Nuit sacrée*, 1987, and *Sur ma mère*, 2008), Assia Djebar (*L'Amour, la fantasia*, 1985, *Vaste est la prison*, 1995, and *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*, 2002), Yasmina Khadra (*Les Hirondelles de Kaboul*, 2002, *L'Attentat*, 2005, *Les Sirènes de Baghdad*, 2006, and *Ce que le jour doit à la nuit*, 2008), Boualem Sansal (*Le Serment des barbares*, 1999, and *Le Village de l'Allemand ou le Journal des frères Schiller*, 2008), and Salim Bachi (*Le Chien d'Ulysse*, 2001, *Tuez-les tous*, 2006, and *Le Silence de Mohamet*, 2008). Questions of exile, ambiguous national affiliation, colonial memory and trauma, and cultural and linguistic identity-related questions characterize literary production by 'franco-Vietnamese' authors. While much can be learned from juxtaposing different colonial and migratory experiences, writers such as Linda Lê (*Calomnies*, 1993, and *Personne*, 2003) have often been reluctant to associate themselves with discussions concerning ethnic identity formation and postcolonial approaches to their work, whereas others, such as Anna Moï (*Riz noir*, 2004, *Violon*, 2006, and *L'Année du cochon de feu*, 2008) have made themes that are inextricably linked to the field of postcolonial studies (exile, travel, colonial contact, violence, etc.) central to their writings.

'The children of the postcolony'

As Franco-Djiboutian author Abdourahman A. Waberi has argued, one can broadly speak in terms of generational categories when one considers franco-phone sub-Saharan African literature, comprised of the pioneer writers of the 1920–30 period, the Negritude movement from 1930 to 1960, decolonization

and postcolonial disillusionment from the 1970s onwards, and finally a fourth generation that would include the ‘children of the postcolony or the trans-continental generation’.¹⁴ Texts published up until the 1960s were for the most part concerned either with the colonial authorities or with travel to France as a logical outcome of colonial schooling or for employment purposes. Protagonists in contemporary works set in France (or simultaneously in Africa and France) have shifted their attention to the question of belonging and integration into French society. But the first group of writers to receive attention were those who were for the most part born or who grew up in France of North African parents, and who began publishing around the beginning of the 1980s. Collectively known as the ‘Beurs’ (a term created using the linguistic device known as *verlan* (backslang) in which the dominant consonants of the word ‘Arab’ are accordingly reversed in order to arrive at a term that conveys the complexity of multiple cultural affiliation to France and their Arab origin), they are ‘Unlike the older generation of North African writers’, Hargreaves argues, since ‘the Beurs have undergone their formative experiences as part of an ethnic minority within France, where they have shared through family home in both the material disadvantages and the cultural traditions associated with first-generation immigrants. Beur authors have in this sense been the first to write from within the immigrant community itself.’¹⁵ In turn, Michel Laronde highlighted how ‘the term *beur* must be understood in its ethnic dimension (novels written by the *Beurs*) and also expanded toward a dialectic meaning (works that address the circumstances of young maghrebis in contemporary French society)’.¹⁶

The most important authors, in terms of their publishing record, critical reception and the scholarly interest they have generated, include Azouz Begag, Mehdi Charef, Ferrudja Kessas, Farida Belghoul and Soraya Nini. Other writers, such as Leïla Sebbar, who has written extensively about immigration and acculturation, are often not treated as part of this corpus because they grew up in other countries (Algeria in her case) prior to moving to France – of course, this serves to draw attention to the ways in which these categories are not designed to be all-inclusive, but rather to assist in the process of discussing the broader issue of belonging. Sebbar’s work, including *Shérazade, 17 ans, brune, frisée, les yeux verts* (1982), has explored the challenges young immigrants of Algerian descent face living in France, challenges that are inscribed in a longer historical context in works such as *La Seine était rouge, Paris Octobre 1961* (1999), in which Sebbar returns to the scene of the infamous murders by the French police of Maghrebi anti-war demonstrators in the streets of Paris. Arguably the most interesting of these writers is Azouz Begag who, in addition

to writing works of fiction, is also a trained sociologist and specialist in immigration policies, who served as the inaugural Minister for Equal Opportunities in France from 2005 to 2007. His numerous works include *Le Gone du Chaâba* (1986) and *Béni ou le paradis privé* (1989). In *Le Gone du Chaâba*, Begag recounts the story of young boy born in France to Algerian parents growing up in a shantytown in Lyon. The narrative shifts from the public sphere, in which the central protagonist describes his experiences of acculturation in the local French school, to the private sphere of the home, a socio-cultural microcosm of Algeria. Skilfully navigating between two often disparate worlds, reflecting on the powerful assimilationist pull of French Republican ideals (which the narrator has profound respect for), the narrative provides an insightful perspective on the challenges to inclusion and the kinds of particularities individuals are compelled to abandon in order to gain access to mainstream French society. Naturally, these do not occur without obstacles and confrontation with an insensitive society, in which colonial hierarchies are shown to have survived and continue to inform an increasingly intolerant 'postcolonial' society. In *Béni ou le paradis privé*, the selection criteria employed to grant access to a nightclub is tantamount to racial profiling and the language adopted to deny entry originates in official discourse whereby the nightclub itself emerges metaphorically as a border control post responsible for determining those deemed suitable for inclusion in French society.

Similar issues confront the young narrator in Farida Belghoul's novel *Georgette!* (1986), a young girl forced to wrestle with the demands and exigencies of both the school and her home, epitomized in this instance by the tensions that arise over her school notebook that requires her to write in French from left to right whereas her familial expectations are anchored in familiarity with Arabic script that operates conversely. Likewise, Ferrudja Kessas's *Beur's Story* (1990) explores the domestic tensions that arise from the sociocultural circumstances in which they find themselves – respect for family values and cultural norms while concurrently seeking broader acceptance into French society. Like many texts of this generation, this struggle is also rendered additionally complex by the various ways in which gender roles and expectations are attributed. These connect in powerful ways with the question of belonging and identity formation in society, the subject of Soraya Nini's *Ils disent que je suis une beurette...* (1993). As Nini demonstrates, identities are mutable, self-ascribed and externally determined based on ethnic and social criteria. But increasingly, as Mehdi Charef's *Le Thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed* (1983) convincingly shows, it is the alienation and social marginalization, circumscribed by residence in the French *banlieues* (housing projects located

at the periphery of urban centres), that becomes the dominant concern. Home to the most economically disadvantaged members of French society, these spaces of exclusion are defined by harsh living conditions, violence, police brutality and elevated levels of unemployment. The harsh realities on the ground prove to be quite the contrary to the exoticism associated with Charef's 'Orientalist' title; what we have here then, is an account of a lost generation, victims of the failed economic and social integration policies of the 1980s and 1990s that will arguably provide the coordinates for the uprisings of 2005 to which we will return shortly.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, a new phenomenon became observable, captured by Bennetta Jules-Rosette in her book *Black Paris: The African Writer's Landscape* (1998). Whereas Beur authors were categorized based upon a set of temporal and ethnic factors, 'which cannot be reduced to the circumstances in which they were conceived and elaborated . . . important aspects of the creative process can be understood only if we know something about the raw materials out of which these authors have fashioned their writings',¹⁷ Jules-Rosette has identified 'Parisianism' as a structuring principle, whereby 'Parisianism refers to a literary interest in Paris as the social context for the author's works, the subject matter of their writings, and the source of their focal audience.'¹⁸ The primary focus is provided by the work of Yodi Karone (*Nègre de paille*, 1982, *À la recherche du cannibale amour*, 1988) and Simon Njami (*African Gigolo*, 1989), works that effectively map out a new topography of the city, feature trials and tribulations of the protagonists as they negotiate a space for themselves in France, such that 'This alternative environment has become the incubation cubicle for a new style of African writing.'¹⁹ Calixthe Beyala, a prolific author, media personality and activist, also played an important role during this period, documenting through such works as *Le Petit Prince de Belleville* (1992) the African influences on various Parisian neighbourhoods, examining in *Les Honneurs perdus* (1996) the complex transversal movements of African diasporic populations between Africa and France and how these impact upon cultural and social values (especially in terms of gender relations), while also reflecting on the parameters of an Afro-French identity in *Lettre d'une Afro-française à ses compatriotes* (2000).

Critics such as Bernard Magnier also recognized the transformation that was occurring during this period and the continuity one could delineate with Beur literature. In an essay published in 1990, 'Beurs noirs à Black Babel', Magnier signalled the importance of locality, 'They live and write in Paris'²⁰ and of ethnicity: 'They are "blacks beurs" or "beurs noirs" for some, "negropolitans" or "Gallo-negroes" for others. They live and write in Babylone-sur-Seine, in the "black Babel" of Paris or its banlieue.'²¹ In this capacity,

The pioneering writers of 'Parisian life' experienced the trauma of being elsewhere and discovered the difficulties of exile, but they knew their stays were limited and they could find comfort knowing that sooner or later they would return to the native land. But the 'new heroes' don't have this perspective – one they may not automatically even wish for – and they often live adventures that are also not without ambiguity, in a land that is not entirely foreign to them without nevertheless not entirely belonging to them.²²

Migritude and world literature in French

This period coincides with a tangible increase in the production of immigrant narratives.²³ Jacques Chevrier has described this phenomenon using the term 'migritude',²⁴ a reference that establishes a historical connection with an earlier African presence in France that is inseparable from the conceptualization of Negritude philosophy, but that is here updated by anchoring the signification in the context of contemporary migration. As I argued in *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration, and Transnationalism*, the emphasis 'has shifted in order to explore the failure of the nationalist imperative and the resulting impact on African societies and populations of the partial dissolution of incorporative state structures in favor of supranational economic, juridical, and political mechanisms'.²⁵ As such, 'This neologism', as Chevrier explains, 'designates both the thematic of immigrations that is at the heart of contemporary African works, but also the expatriate status of most of the writers. . . their inspiration comes from their hybridity and decentered lives, elements that now characterize a kind of French-style "world literature"'.²⁶ To this extent then, 'migritude' symbolizes a kind of 'third space' that comes from a 'questioning of certain prevalent discursive configurations' and 'simultaneous disengagement from both the culture of origin and the receiving culture. . . within a new identitarian space'.²⁷

Works of literature have thus expressed these changes in population movements from the global south towards Europe, the precariousness of migrant subjects, the disillusionment, dangers and increasingly harsh legal responses in the form of border control, detention and forced repatriation. Daniel Biyaoula's *L'Impasse* (1996) and *Agonies* (1998) and Fatou Diome's *La Préférence nationale* (2001) and *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003), for example, address the question of integration and identity formation. Gaston-Paul Effa offers an original perspective on these matters: *Tout ce bleu* (1996) is divided between Cameroon and Paris, thereby inscribing the bifurcated existence of the central protagonist. *Voici le dernier jour du monde* (2005) reverses the traditional narrative structure when a young protagonist decides to 'return' to

Africa, a land he has never visited and a visit that will compel him to ‘test’ his Western education and received images of a continent that has always been ‘his’, while in *Nous, enfants de la tradition* (2008), Effa turns his attention to the pressures exerted on migrants to send money home, thereby perpetually situating them between two worlds. Alain Mabanckou, in *Bleu Blanc Rouge* (1998), exposes and dismantles the myths associated with migration (such as economic opportunity), and more recently, in *Black Bazar* (2009), shifts his attention to the difficulties of juxtaposing the injustices of colonial history with the imperatives of inclusion in a newly configured *black France*. Works such as Abdourahman A. Waberi’s *Transit* (2003) and Sayouba Traoré’s *Loin de mon village, c’est la brousse* (2005) confront the administrative difficulties that accompany (im)migration, and the instability and insecurity that go together with this practice. Naturally, the cultural, economic and social circumstances often coupled with immigration are not the exclusive questions found in works by African writers published in France today, and many new and exciting works have turned their attention to environmental concerns and petroleum politics (Bessora, *Pétroleum*, 2004), globalization and Africa (Waberi, *Aux États-Unis d’Afrique*, 2006), child soldiers (Kourouma, *Allah n’est pas obligé*, 2000), genocide in Rwanda (Monénembo, *L’Aîné des orphelins*, 2000), and even selected topographic settings that are neither in Africa or in Europe but rather in Central and Latin America and Cuba (Tchak, *Hermina*, 2003, *Le Paradis des chiots*, 2006, *Filles de Mexico*, 2008).²⁸

In the epigraph to this chapter, Mabanckou’s allusion to a ‘bizarre accent’ to describe African literary expression partially reflects the growing awareness of the diversity of writing in French and the need to disassociate this corpus from a hegemonic notion of Frenchness. The ‘French-style world literature’ evoked by Chevrier above would find concrete expression in 2007 when forty-four writers published a manifesto on 16 March 2007 in *Le Monde* newspaper under the title ‘Pour une “littérature-monde” en français’²⁹ calling for a world literature in French. A volume of essays, *Pour une littérature-monde*, was subsequently published by Gallimard, and included short essays by the signatories. These interventions emphasized the complexity and breadth of postcolonial writing in France:

Let us be perfectly clear: the emergence of a world literature in French, consciously affirmed, open to the world, and transnational, effectively signs the death certificate of francophonie . . . The center, relegated to a place among other centers, it is to the formation of this new constellation that we bear witness, one in which language can be emancipated from its exclusive pact with the nation.³⁰

The writers, including Tahar Ben Jelloun, Maryse Condé, Ananda Devi, Nancy Huston, Dany Laferrière, Gilles Lapouge, J. M. G. Le Clézio, Amin Maalouf, Alain Mabanckou, Anna Moï, Jean-Luc V. Raharimanana, Boualem Sansal, Brina Svit and Abdourahman A. Waberi, have origins in countries as varied as France, Algeria, Congo, Mauritius, Morocco, Guadeloupe, Madagascar, Djibouti, Haiti, Vietnam, Slovenia, Canada, Lebanon, and reflect the diversity of French-language writing today. As Mabanckou has argued:

In the end, saying that a francophone author enriches or saves a language is far from being a compliment. Such remarks set up a relationship of subordination in which francophone literature ends up being considered purely for its social function, for what it brings to the French language. This has the effect of denying these writers any kind of creative agency, the very potential of elaborating an aesthetic project outside of the cumbersome struggle associated with caring for a wounded language stuck in its blind pursuit against a carefully marked enemy, namely the English language . . . *World literature in French* is the culmination of the multiplicity of *experiences*, the recognition of the power of art . . . *World Literature in French* is both the recognition and the awareness of our contribution to human intelligence, with this tool that is the French language, this tool that many inherited in problematic ways, others by choice, and others even because their ancestors were Gauls.³¹

A world literature in French introduces a new model with which to contextualize many of the questions that pertain to an examination of postcolonial writing in France. The framework shares numerous points of commonality with the pre-existing category that is francophone studies, but nevertheless provides an opportunity to rethink the historical ties between the French nation and those authors who are actively producing works in a shared language, albeit one in which one can detect a range of ‘bizarre accents’.

Banlieue writing

The debates triggered by the call for a world literature in French become all the more relevant when one situates them in the broader context of postcolonial France. Questions of recognition and claims for incorporation are in fact far more widespread than the manifesto of the forty-four may suggest, and certainly since the 2005 French riots and uprisings, questions of social (in)visibility have been at the forefront of political discussions. In the same year as the call for a world literature in French reverberated, a collective of ten young ethnic minority authors, artists, musicians and rappers published a manifesto entitled ‘Qui fait la France?’ (www.quifaitlafrance.com). Readers were prompted to

reflect on the question ‘Qui fait la France’ (Who makes/up France?), a suggestive play on words whereby the ‘qui fait’ sounds like the neologism ‘kiffer’ that has entered into public discourse and means ‘to love/be crazy about something or someone’. The constitutive nature of French–other relations were thus insisted upon, alongside an explicit and unambiguous call for social inclusion and belonging. The common denominator among these young artists and activists – no longer regrouped as merely ‘Beurs’ or ‘black authors’, but rather across ethnic lines and for the most part as residents of the *banlieues*, this manifesto called for the implementation of a strategy that would allow for a demoralized generation to celebrate the potentialities of a multicultural France, not as minority populations but rather as complete partners in the project of building a new kind of France:

Because we believe that France is a modern country in which coexistence can occur by opening people’s minds, through the recognition of common suffering, and the narration of its diversity and imaginary . . . Because we refuse to remain spectators to human suffering, the victims of which are the most fragile, underprivileged, and invisible; because this country, our country, has all it needs to become exemplary again, as long as it accepts itself as it is rather than as it was; We, artists, have decided to join forces and to work together against inequality and injustice; We, the children of a plural France, want to promote this diversity which is an asset and an opportunity for tomorrow . . . We, a composite of mixed identities, we are joining forces in the struggle for equal rights and respect for all, above and beyond geographic origins and social conditions; We, citizens from here and elsewhere, open to the world and its richness, intend to fight against the shameful prejudices that have fossilized our country and undermined our ability to live together . . . We, the children of the Republic, want to be participants in spreading the power of its message, its inspirational power, and in translating its values and principles into action . . . Together, we exist.

The tone of this manifesto is all the more remarkable given that so much of the analysis concerning the 2005 riots blamed either the unwillingness of ethnic minorities to integrate into French society or alternatively the system itself for ineffective integration policies. In fact, this manifesto provides an affirmation by the ‘invisibles of the French Republic’³² that they constitute not so much a threat – their arguments do, after all, express adherence to Republican ideals – but rather and somewhat paradoxically, an asset as members of a plural society.

Not surprisingly, this emerging category of *banlieue* writing exposes social injustice and inequality and, in doing so, effectively records the realities of a part of society that had previously been either ignored or reductively ‘represented’ by outsiders. Works thus reflect many of the problems intrinsic to

those areas that accommodate the disadvantaged global underclass, such as violence, over-representation in prisons, high unemployment rates, poverty, and so on, but also introduce universal themes such as family relations, love, and friendship. Titles are indicators of various shared concerns, such as race and racial tensions (Mahany, *Je kiffe ma race*, 2008, Ryam, *Banlieue noire*, 2006, Boulin, *Supplément au roman national*, 2006, and *La Question blanche*, 2008), discrimination and the lack of opportunity (Amellal, *Discriminez-moi. Enquête sur nos inégalités*, 2005, Djouder, *Désintégration*, 2006), violence (Razane, *Dit violent*, 2006, Patricot, *Azima la rouge*, 2006), social uprising (Rachedi, *Le Poids d'une âme*, 2006), law and policing (Tadjer, *Bel-Avenir*, 2006), adolescence and youth culture (Guène, *Kiffe kiffe demain*, 2004, *Du rêve pour les oufs*, 2006, Djaïdani, *Bounkæur*, 2000, and *Viscéral*, 2007, Goumane, *Dembo Story*, 2006) and schooling (Rouane, *Pieds-blancs*, 2006).

These works have achieved considerable recognition, some achieving best-seller status in mainstream bookstores (Guène, Tadjer, Djaïdani), while also contributing to what one might describe as a democratization of readership given that these authors have been able to bring their personal stories to a larger French society while also attracting a new generation of readers to their texts. Faïza Guène has been inspirational in this regard. Born in 1985, her novels have already been translated into over twenty languages – her work is a long way from the Beur generation authors and her tone is confrontational while also exhibiting a skilful degree of humour in her insightful commentary on French society: 'It is school that sent me to see her [the social worker]. The teachers, in between strikes for once, figured I'd better see somebody because I seemed shut down or closed off or something . . . Maybe they're right. I don't give a shit. I go. It's covered by welfare.'³³ Her assessment of the French authorities' commitment to achieving social equality and of opportunities for social mobility in a more general manner, 'It's like a film script and we're actors. Trouble is, our scriptwriter's got no talent. And he's never heard of happily ever after',³⁴ is nevertheless tempered by a refusal to embrace the downbeat and pessimistic register of many earlier works and a newfound optimism can be traced through a willingness to engage with society as exemplified by the protagonist Doria's concluding statement: 'Me, I'll lead the uprising . . . It will be an intelligent revolution with no violence, where every person stands up to be heard.'³⁵

The French *banlieues* are genuinely global, ironically, of course, located at the periphery of major French cities. The struggle for incorporation and the process of rethinking the homogeneity of French society has begun; whether or not the French authorities accept the challenge this represents remains to be

seen. But writers, intellectuals and social activists will surely continue to contribute to the project of defining the coordinates of postcolonial France in ways that will more accurately reflect its complicated history, and making sure that mechanisms are put into place that will ensure that newly dismantled centres are not accompanied by new peripheries.

Notes

1. Alain Mabanckou, *Black Bazar* (Paris: Seuil, 2009), p. 13.
2. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire, 'La fracture coloniale: une crise française', in Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire (eds.), *La Fracture coloniale: la société française au prisme de l'héritage colonial* (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), p. 30.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
4. Achille Mbembe, 'La République désœuvrée: la France à l'ère post-coloniale', *Débat*, 137 (2005), pp. 159–75.
5. Blanchard, Bancel and Lemaire, *La Fracture*, p. 30.
6. Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction* (London: Arnold, 2003); Anne Donadey and H. Adlai Murdoch, *Postcolonial Theory and Francophone Literary Studies* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005).
7. <http://indigenes-republique.org>
8. Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Ideal of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford University Press, 1997).
9. Fabienne Guimont, *Les Étudiants africains en France: 1950–1965* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), p. 13; J. P. N'Diaye, *Enquête sur les étudiants noirs en France* (Paris: Editions Réalités Africaines, 1962).
10. Boniface Mongo-Mboussa, 'Les méandres de la mémoire dans la littérature africaine', *Hommes et Migrations*, 1228 (2000), 76.
11. Dominic Thomas, 'Francocentrism and the acquisition of cultural capital', *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration, and Transnationalism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), pp. 41–81.
12. Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 124.
13. Alec G. Hargreaves, *Immigration and Identity in Beur Fiction: Voices from the North African Community in France* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1991), p. 172.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
16. Michael Laronde, *Autour du roman beur: immigration et identité* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993), p. 6.
17. Hargreaves, *Immigration and Identity*, 7.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Benetta Jules-Rosette, *Black Paris: The African Writers' Landscape* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 1998), p. 147.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 103
23. Susan Ireland and Patrice Proulx, *Immigrant Narratives in Contemporary France* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001).

24. Jacques Chevrier, 'Afrique(s)-sur-Seine: autour de la notion de "migritude"', *Notre Librairie* 155–6 (2004), 96–100.
25. Thomas Dominic, *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration and Transnationalism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 2.
26. Chevrier, 'Afrique(s)-sur-Seine', p. 96.
27. Ibid., p. 99.
28. Patrice Nganang, *Manifeste d'une nouvelle littérature africaine* (Paris: Homnisphères, 2007).
29. Michael Le Bris, 'Pour une "littérature-monde" en français', *Le Monde des Livres*, 16 March 2007, p. 2.
30. Ibid.
31. Alain Mabanckou, *Bleu Blanc Rouge* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1998).
32. Achille Mbembe, 'La République et sa bête: à propos des émeutes dans les banlieues de France', *Africultures*, <http://africultures.com> accessed 11 August 2005.
33. Faïza Guène, *Kiffe Kiffe Tomorrow*, trans. Sarah Adams (London: Chatto & Windus, 2006), pp. 1–2.
34. Ibid., p. 10.
35. Ibid., p. 179.

Postcolonial writing in Germany

SARA LENNOX

In the strictest sense of the term, Germany is not rich in postcolonial literature, and that is a consequence of its brief colonial history.¹ Though Germans' 'colonial fantasies'² stretch back centuries and individual Germans were often involved in voyages of scientific exploration, pursued missionary or commercial activity elsewhere, or participated in other countries' colonial ventures, state-sponsored German colonialism did not begin until after German unification in 1871. German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck initially opposed German overseas expansion, but in 1884 reversed course and joined Germany's European rivals in the scramble for Africa. On 24 April 1884 Bismarck proclaimed that the parts of Southwest Africa granted to tobacco merchant Adolf Lüderitz were now under German protection. Despite Bismarck's explicit instructions to the contrary, colonial explorer Carl Peters soon thereafter declared the coast of East Africa to be a German protectorate. Bismarck himself ordered a German gunboat to secure Togo and Cameroon as protectorates in the summer of 1884, and in the Pacific he mainly claimed areas in which German commercial interests were already active. At the Berlin West Africa (Congo) conference of 1884–5, the European colonial powers confirmed the colonial subdivision of Africa among themselves. By 1885 Germany had acquired its entire colonial empire: four African territories (Southwest Africa, Togo, Cameroon and German East Africa) and several territories in the Pacific (northeastern New Guinea, part of Samoa, the Bismarck, Marshall, Caroline and Mariana Islands, and Kiautschow on the Shantung Peninsula in China).

German conduct in the colonies depended on the nature of the land and on specific German interests. In contrast, say, to France's *mission civilisatrice*, Germans' ambitions for their colonies were almost exclusively economic, and their greatest effort was invested in inducing Africans to work hard. Despite often brutal measures (including a genocidal war against the Herero and other peoples in German Southwest Africa in 1904 and the suppression of the Maji-Maji rebellion in German East Africa in 1905–7), German commercial

endeavours were mostly unsuccessful, and only Togo, Samoa and Kiachow ever turned a profit. Though Bismarck had favoured classical trading colonies, with commercial enterprises incurring most of the expense, other groups in Germany regarded settlement colonization as an opportunity to preserve 'traditional', i.e. pre-industrial, German ways of life. But with the exception of parts of Southwest Africa, none of the German colonies was really suitable for European settlement, and no more than 20,000 Germans were present in Africa even at the height of the German colonial period. Colonizers were aware early on of the threat an educated populace might pose to German rule, and language and educational policy directed towards local populations remained contradictory; even elementary education was never made compulsory for African children, little secondary education was provided, and only in Tsingtao was a tertiary school established. Missionary schools (attended by the vast majority of the very small percentage of children in school at all) preferred education in local languages, and only government schools promoted the learning of German. But in any case, Germany was not prepared for world war in its colonies. Togo fell to British forces as early as August 1914, Southwest Africa in July 1915, Cameroon in 1916 and German East Africa in November 1917. The Versailles Treaty turned Germany's colonies into League of Nations mandates of the various victor powers. Germany was henceforth a postcolonial country, but the official language of the territories it had colonized was no longer German.

But it is also possible to understand the designation 'postcolonial literature in Germany' in a somewhat broader sense than simply writing in German by authors from countries Germany formerly colonized, and that is the course I will pursue in this chapter; otherwise it would not make much sense to talk about postcolonial literature in Germany at all. Germany did not cease to ally itself with other colonial powers after its formal colonization ended (though it publicly prides itself on escaping the throes of decolonization). Though Hitler himself was more interested in intra-European imperialism, powerful groups during the Nazi period sought the return of the colonies. Clarence Lusane maintains that people of African descent were not targeted for discrimination during the Third Reich because Nazi officials hoped that they could help to administer the colonies after the final victory.³ Pascal Grosse has argued that Germany's new status as a postcolonial country in the 1920s with a special commitment to defending European whiteness may have played some role in bringing the Nazis to power.⁴ After 1945 West Germany was happy to broker for other colonial powers in Africa and had an especially warm relationship with apartheid South Africa.⁵ And, to the dismay of leftist German students,

West Germany was a committed junior partner to the United States during the Vietnam War. However, as the then-popular chant ‘USA-SA-SS’ suggests, German support for US neo-colonial policies prompted more political soul-searching about its roots in Germany’s own particular troubled past than in Germany’s acquiescence to a larger neo-colonial order, and efforts to determine how anti-colonial and black struggles elsewhere may have shaped German oppositional politics in the 1960s are only beginning now.⁶

Writing a history of postcolonial literature in Germany thus blazes rather uncharted ground, since oppositional writing in Germany has often turned to the leftist literary traditions of Weimar Germany; modernist writing in West Germany (to the degree that the term is apt for writers like Günter Grass, Heinrich Böll and Uwe Johnson) focused on intra-German problems like National Socialism and the postwar division of Germany, while East Germans were constrained to write some version of socialist realism; and post-1980s postmodernism frequently abjured politics altogether. Postcolonial studies is a lively and productive field in German English departments, but scholars of German literature have been at something of a loss to identify a German-speaking population to which the term could be applied. If, as has sometimes been maintained, postcolonial studies came into its own when postcolonial scholars entered the Western academy, the advent of postcolonial studies in German departments in Germany is delayed, since to my knowledge no scholars of postcolonial background have been hired there (though young postcolonial scholars, of course, receive doctorates from those departments, and numerous postcolonial scholars can be identified in other academic fields in Germany). *Faute de mieux*, some scholars of German literature have proclaimed texts to be ‘postcolonial’ in which a white German writer considers the non-Western world while utilizing postmodern literary strategies.⁷ The German Research Society (DFG) Network ‘Postkoloniale Studien in der Germanistik’, based at the University of Mainz, has more recently focused mostly on colonial and postcolonial discourse analysis and on multiculturalism and migrants’ literature, but seems not to have confronted the possibility that postcolonial literature might be an epistemological project drawing eurocentric paradigms into question. ‘Postcolonial’ has also occasionally been used to describe the situation of East Germans vis-à-vis West Germans, since West Germany’s swift assumption of control over the East after 1989 has often been termed colonization.⁸ Other German studies scholars and migrant authors⁹ have vehemently rejected the term ‘postcolonial’ to describe Germany’s migrant populations, and more particularly the large Turkish-German community, since the historical relationship of Germany to

Turkey could never have been termed colonial. Scholars of German migrant literature have not generally distinguished between migrants from within and outside Europe¹⁰ (possibly because all migrants from countries other than those of northwestern Europe are racialized to some degree in Germany), and whether Turkey is or is not part of Europe is of course a political question. Only very recently have scholars of Germany begun to think of German history and culture in postcolonial terms; indeed, historian Sebastian Conrad observed in 2001: 'While [the postcolonial studies] approach is established in England and France, with few exceptions it scarcely exists in research on Germany, even less so in research undertaken on the German research terrain.'¹¹

However, recently representatives of migrant and other minority groups in Germany have seized hold of the term 'postcolonial' for their own purposes. In the volume *Re/Visionen: Postkoloniale Perspektiven von People of Color auf Rassismus, Kulturpolitik und Widerstand in Deutschland* (*Re/Visions: Postcolonial Perspectives of People of Colour on Racism, Cultural Politics, and Resistance in Germany*), its three editors, all Germans of colour, declare that a conception of the migrant as 'guestworker' deriving from some area around the Mediterranean is no longer adequate to the changed conditions of a unified and globalized post-Cold War Germany, where, on the one hand, everyday racism is more likely directed at 'Islamic communities, illegalised migrants from Latin American and Asia, German-Turks alleged to be unwilling to assimilate, and criminalised Africans', and, on the other hand, the term 'migrant' fails to distinguish between white Wall Street bankers and Turkish cleaning women and also can not address discrimination against black Germans.¹² The concept 'people of colour' on which their volume draws, they explain, is a self-designation elaborated in the US to enable the alliances between 'all racialised people of African, Asian, Latin American, Arab, Jewish, indigenous, or Pacific background' at which they aim, and they appropriate 'postcolonial perspectives' to describe the political project of critique of domination that their volume undertakes.¹³ In accordance with a more global usage, their title proclaims that postcolonial populations particularly include those who can claim the transnational designation 'people of colour'. To be sure, 'people of colour' also constitute an imagined community whose borders are both vague and porous, and it is not clear that racial categories derived from the US are completely adequate to the German situation (as a number of recent books applying 'critical whiteness studies' to Germany have shown). Moreover, the question of racialization is a particularly complicated one in Germany. Before German citizenship laws were changed on 1 January 2000, automatic German citizenship was conferred only on the basis of *jus sanguinis* or the 'law of blood', biological descent from those who counted as Germans.

Until that date, even those born in Germany and whose families had lived there multiple generations, including southern and eastern Europeans, were still considered as ethnic others. Jews in Germany, now frequently immigrants from Russia, though often subjected to fawning philo-Semitism, also continue to be racialized. Where to situate populations of Turkish background is a problem even for the editors of *Re/Visionen*; though Turkish-Germans do not figure in the description of the ‘people of colour’ of whom the title speaks, Turkish-Germans do contribute to the volume, whose essays are otherwise entirely by people of colour (a singular occurrence in the German publishing industry).

In the face of this confusion, the use of ‘postcolonial’ as an inflationary category designating any writing to be ‘postcolonial’ that is not produced by the hegemonic white German mainstream seems to obscure more than it clarifies. In Germany, ‘postcolonial literature’ has not been consolidated as a project, let alone an acknowledged body of writing with an archive of traditions on which writers can draw. To my knowledge, whatever the term means, no overview of postcolonial literature in Germany yet exists. To launch this category, and bring German usage more in line with what ‘postcolonial’ means internationally, I will focus here only on writers from formerly colonized countries, though not just from those colonized by Germany. Because I hope this chapter will be especially helpful for scholars and students of German literature, I will offer detailed analyses only of authors who write in German and not of the many writers living for shorter or longer periods in Germany who write in other languages. On the other hand, postcolonial literature is obviously produced within the larger context of (and often in interaction with) the cultural production of migrant and ethnic minority communities, and clearly postcolonial theory and criticism also provide useful tools for understanding their texts, too. For the editors of *Re/Visionen*, ‘postcolonial’ designates a perspective, not an identity, and the term ‘people of colour’ points to difficult strategic alliances between groups impacted by German power structures in very different ways. To acknowledge the project on which the authors collected in *Re/Visionen* are embarked, I will also sketch out in broad strokes the historical contexts and cultural accomplishments of the other groups in Germany that are sometimes linked to postcolonial writers.

Dualla Misipo

At least in the narrowest definition of the term, Dualla Misipo and Kum’a Ndumbe III, writers from Germany’s former colony Cameroon, are Germany’s

first two postcolonial authors, simultaneously opposing European colonialism and its legacies in Europe as they drew upon its literary strategies of representation. Both members of the Cameroonian elite from Douala, they owed their fluency in German directly to the German colonial encounter, since, after German-language education in a government school, sons of leading Douala families were sent to Germany for further education. Indeed, Cameroon's colonial martyr, Rudolf Duala Manga Bell (b. 1873), a member of the same royal family as both writers, amply models the contradictory position in which a German education situated Cameroonian elites; he was also educated in Europe, possibly receiving a legal education in Germany, and then attempted to hold Germans up to the legal standards of their own treaties to prevent Germans from moving Douala people inland so that European-only settlements could be situated on the banks of the Wouri River. Despite Manga Bell's appeals to the German Reichstag, German journalists and other European contacts, the Germans proceeded with their plans, also removing Manga Bell from his position as paramount chief in 1913. Then, fearing he intended to organize a Cameroon-wide revolt, the Germans charged Manga Bell with high treason and hanged him on 8 August 1914 (a week after the beginning of World War I). Seven weeks later German Cameroon fell to the Allies.¹⁴

Misipo is the first author of a postcolonial German novel, *Der Junge aus Douala: Ein Regierungsschüler erzählt* (The Boy from Douala: A Government Pupil Tells His Story).¹⁵ Born in 1901 in the German colony of Cameroon, Misipo graduated from the government school in Douala in 1913 and was sent to Germany for further education, becoming an assistant to the German ethnographer Leo Frobenius after completing his medical studies in the late 1920s. In 1931 he left Germany for France because of the growing Nazi threat and remained in France after World War II, contributing to several German journals to express his dissatisfaction with the concept of Negritude.¹⁶ Scandalously, Misipo's novel was never really published and is available only as the 1973 reprint of a badly typed manuscript.¹⁷ Though several sources list the composition date of the novel as 1930, since the manuscript begins with a prefatory note that alludes to Cameroon's independence in 1960 and television and atomic energy are mentioned elsewhere in the novel, it is more likely that the final version of the text was completed later.

This charming and accomplished, though also decidedly unradical, novel tackles the problem of German and European racism head-on. Its complexly structured narrative borrows from European modernist fiction to move via free association between the schoolboy adventures of its first-person narrator Njemebe in Douala and his later experiences in Germany before, during and

after World War I. With no apparent irony, Misipo presents his readers with a protagonist who surpasses the Germans he meets in every way; indeed, the novel begins with a sporting event in Darmstadt attended by almost all of its population including the Grand Duke of Hesse and his retinue in which the protagonist not only wins the 100-metre race (recalling Jesse Owens) but sets a new record. His struggles in Douala to learn the German language, including brutal beatings by his German schoolmaster, are vividly detailed, focused on the proper conjugation of the verb in the German sentence ‘We have done our duty’, which then becomes a motif throughout the novel. By the time of his graduation Njembele has mastered the colonizers’ languages, speaking German, Latin, French and English. Indeed, he is told by Germans that his own German is not only flawless, but very distinguished, in contrast to the deep Hessian dialect of his loving, and lovingly rendered, foster parents. He has also mastered the colonizers’ canons à la ‘our ancestors the Gauls’, in later years still able to recite parts of Caesar’s *De bello gallico* in Latin, Victor Hugo’s poem ‘L’Expiation’ in French, and Sophocles’ *Antigone* and Goethe’s *Iphigenie* in German, and during a visit to cultured German acquaintances he is able effortlessly to perform Mozart’s *Don Juan* impromptu on the violin. It is no wonder that as a medical student Njembele’s idol is the nineteenth-century German anthropologist Rudolf Virchow, whose studies of craniometry led him to conclude that all peoples of Europe were of mixed race and that no race was superior to any other, opinions Njembele elsewhere in the novel claims as his own.

Misipo skilfully formulates his assault on European racism by holding Europeans up to their own standards of European Christianity. Njembele repeatedly declares himself astonished by European practices contrary to their own declared beliefs, like competition between the Catholic and Protestant churches in Douala, Europeans’ slaughter of each other in World War I, and especially like South African apartheid, US segregation and lynching, and general European ignorance about fellow humans in Africa. A little incredibly (though necessary for Misipo’s purposes), no single individual he encounters in Germany treats him with less than respect and dignity, yet he is repeatedly harassed by groups of Germans, and public outrage about his relationship with his white girlfriend Marianne is intensified by the concurrent propaganda campaign against the ‘Black Horror on the Rhine’, the occupation of the German Rhineland by French colonial troops purportedly a threat to white womanhood. Here, as in many of the semi-autobiographical novels of Germany’s postcolonial populations, relations between white Germans and protagonists from elsewhere are figured as romantic affairs within which couples may or may not learn to understand and love each other.

To Njembe's skill at negotiating German culture Misipo juxtaposes his deep-rootedness in Cameroonian traditional culture, instilled in him by his non-German-speaking grandmother (who is contrasted to his Europeanized parents) to ensure that his European education does not estrange him from his African home. Some good portion of the novel consists of Njembe's recounting to German listeners Cameroonian tales of mighty African princes or horro once told by bards or *korrongo* of Waganna, another word for Cameroon. Misipo is clearly ambivalent about modernity both in Europe and in Africa (including that inflected by African American influences); Cameroonian horro, the narrator tells us, no longer break a lance for their beloved, but have now become salesmen who wrangle in trains over money matters; and to an ignorant German inquiry about wild men in Africa Njembe contrasts the ridiculous gyrations of 'shimmy-boys' in a jazz club called 'Spleen': 'a modern and civilised dance of highest perfection!' he remarks scornfully. Indeed, he wins the love of Marianne (herself daughter of an elevated German academic family and a tennis-playing, motor-car-driving 'modern girl') by telling her the tale of a horro who woos and wins a king's daughter to become ruler himself. (Perhaps, in wooing and winning Marianne, also the name of the French republic's national emblem, Njembe is celebrating the reunion of Germany and France as well.) The novel's somewhat hasty and overly rhetorical conclusion, not up to the quality of preceding portions of the text, shows that Misipo cannot reconcile the contradictions that inflect his novel. Njembe garners Marianne's parents' consent to their marriage by appealing once more to Christian principles, and her mother concedes somewhat abruptly that European Christians have no right to discriminate against other races. Hopefully but not very convincingly the narrator concludes: 'Racism as ideological system is a special product of European civilisation, but the *true marriage of love* is one of the pillars of eternal truth that finds an echo in every corner of our little planet'.¹⁸

A subsequent publication, *Korrongo: Das Lied der Waganna* (Korrongo: The Song of Waganna), further elaborates the traditional Cameroonian elements of his first novel.¹⁹ The text derives from a Cameroonian epic that relates events from the twelfth through fourteenth centuries: in a cycle of four narratives, the four destructions of the Falaka, the capital of the Waganna, are recalled. In an article published in *Présence africaine* in 1961, Misipo notes that his source for the tale of Korrongo is the work of Frobenius, whom he calls the "Tacitus of Africa".²⁰ In an introduction, the author explicitly compares his text to medieval European literature's tales of knights, troubadours and *Minnesänger*. But again these traditional stories are placed within a fallen world, where heroes are

no more, where the *korrongo* or oral poet now tells tales only in European bars, and where only the very old recall the heroic tales by the fire at night.²¹ The observation that Simon Gikandi made of early anglophone East African literature might also apply to this text: it is 'a vague and tentative attempt, by an isolated colonial elite, to recuperate a precolonial African tradition in literary discourse'.²² In an autobiographical novel written by Misipo's son in 2001, the protagonist recounts that his father 'had found his hero in a bard by the name of Korrongo', seeking 'his refuge, his secret garden, in a sort of epic poem ... If the true poet is one who stirs and touches the soul, as Voltaire says, in the world of today he is also one who flirts unhappily with utopia.'²³

Kum'a Ndumbe III

Prince Kum'a Ndumbe III, hereditary ruler of the Bele Bele/Bell family of Douala, also draws on Cameroonian traditions in his texts but to very different political ends. Born in Douala in 1946, he came to Germany at age fifteen to complete his high school education in Munich, then received his doctorate in history, politics and German from the University of Lyons in 1975 with a dissertation entitled *Hitler voulait l'Afrique: les plans secrets pour une Afrique fasciste 1944-1945*. From 1979 to 1987 he taught German studies at the University of Yaoundé, then returned to the Otto Suhr Institut of the Free University of Berlin, where in 1989 he completed a *Habilitation* in political science entitled *Was will Bonn in Afrika? Zur Afrikapolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (What Does Bonn Want in Africa? On the Africa Policies of the Federal Republic of Germany). With short interruptions Kum'a Ndumbe III taught at the Otto Suhr Institut from 1990 to 2001, when, despite vigorous protests by students, the OSI (the biggest political science department in Europe) determined that budget constraints demanded the elimination of all instruction about Africa. Since 2002 he has lived in Douala.²⁴

Though Kum'a Ndumbe III, a prolific writer, now focuses mostly on politics and policy, between 1968 and 1970 he wrote four plays in German, which were published only in 2006. (Five other plays he wrote in French were published in the 1970s.) His remarks on African literature in *Was will Bonn in Afrika?* suggest why his own writing may not have appealed to German publishers and also align him with other anti-colonial writers: 'African literature has an aggressive and uncomfortable effect on Europeans. It demands a confession of guilt and a change of behavior.'²⁵ The plays of Kum'a Ndumbe III accordingly aim at provoking a reassessment of colonialist and neo-colonialist assumptions and promoting a commitment to changing oppressive structures, often expressed

via a celebration at the end of the play that expresses a new collective vision. Formally, Kum'a Ndumbe III's plays seem to resemble those of Brecht in their utilization of actors who step out of character and speak directly to the audience, titles to instruct the audience about events in the play, and musical interludes; Richard Bjornson notes Kum'a Ndumbe III's familiarity with Brecht's distancing techniques, but he also observes that several Cameroonian playwrights of Kum'a Ndumbe III's generation developed similar notions of 'total theatre', drawing on techniques widely employed in traditional Cameroonian dramaturgy.²⁶

Most evidently an indictment of neo-colonial European involvement in Africa is the play *Kafra – Biatanga: Tragödie Afrikas* (Kafra – Biatanga: Africa's tragedy).²⁷ The title of the play obviously alludes to two tragic efforts at secession in Africa, the Belgian-supported secession of Katanga from the Congo in 1960 (resulting in the execution of Patrice Lumumba by the secessionist regime in 1961) and Biafra's secession from Nigeria in 1967, as the author's transposition of syllables in the countries' names and expressionist-inspired deployment of allegorical types reveals his commitment to a structural and widely generalizable understanding of political violence in Africa. Represented as types of their profession, a Petroleum Agent and a Uranium Agent persuade the President of an Industrial Nation that the secession of the Biatanga region from the nation of Kafra could loosen the economic hold of Kafra's former colonizers and permit its own profitable exploitation of Biatanga's natural resources. Peace is restored in Kafra only when the Industrial Nation installs a compromise cabinet – all of whose ministers are in the hands of the Industrial Nation. In the last scene, all actors appear dancing on stage to recite the play's moral: 'We learned one thing / The poor get poor / The rich get rich / That's what we learned.'²⁸

Ach Kamerun! Unsere alte deutsche Kolonie ... (Ah Cameroon! Our Old German Colony ...) is directed more obviously at Germans alone.²⁹ Subtitled 'a documentary play', the play begins with a German firm's successful effort in 1868 to convince the Duala King Bell to grant a trade concession, the first step towards German colonization of Cameroon. In scenes that sometimes verge on slapstick, German administrators determine to expropriate the Cameroonians by moving them away from their hereditary homes on the river, claiming their presence imperils German health and cleanliness. When Duala Manga (i.e. Rudolf Duala Manga Bell) demands the right to represent their claims in Berlin, the answer is 'resounding laughter from a loudspeaker'.³⁰ Duala Manga calls for rebellion, and in the play's last passage he and his secretary are sentenced to immediate death by hanging. Appended colonial documents substantiate the historical events depicted in the play.³¹

Lumumba II focuses on European colonialism, German fascism and the corruption that has plagued African countries since independence.³² In its first scene a European Governor praises Europa for sending her sons to rescue Africa from darkness and barbarism, as a projection reads: '1884: Berlin Conference. The European powers divide the African continent – private property of the white man – among themselves anew'.³³ Lumumba, a figure representing the imprisoned African freedom fighter, appeals to the European values of 'libertas equalitas fraternitas', but his African guards instead don white masks to debate how many Jews they are willing to trade for trucks. Though the play's jolly praise of corruption recalls *The Threepenny Opera*, an ironic resolution like Brecht's is not granted to Lumumba; instead, the General declares: 'The world is not a theater. Shoot him!'³⁴

Das Fest der Liebe: Die Chance der Jugend (The Festival of Love: The Chance of Youth) celebrates the other great revolutionary force of the student movement, love, while giving expression to the hopes of the ebullient era in which it was written.³⁵ An African student falls in love with a European girl, both members of a group of students engaged in dangerous political struggle, and, despite protests from the group that they are wasting time, refuse to construct a clear dividing line between public and private life. Yet, as accords with the other plays of Kum'a Ndumbe III, these utopian lovers also finally opt for politics, the girl leaving to fight for 'oppressed people' in Greece and the African student joining a different but related struggle in South Africa.

The emergence of 'migrants' literature'

The literary texts of Dualla Misipo and Kum'a Ndumbe III are direct products of German colonization in Cameroon, but the next wave of writing by non-Germans in Germany was a consequence instead of economic conditions in Cold War West Germany after 1945. In the 1980s and 1990s, Chancellor Helmut Kohl frequently insisted that the Federal Republic of Germany was not an 'immigration country', yet West Germany's 'economic miracle' could not have been achieved without the assistance of the foreign workers recruited in the postwar period to overcome its labour shortage. The West German government signed recruiting agreements with Italy (1955), Spain and Greece (1960), Turkey (1961), Morocco (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1964) and Yugoslavia (1968), ending recruiting in 1973 in the wake of the oil crisis. By then 11.9 per cent of Germany's work force consisted of 'guestworkers', about 23 per cent of whom were Turkish. Foreign workers were initially expected to

'rotate' back to their homelands every five years, but from the late 1960s onward increasing numbers chose to remain in Germany, often joined by their families. After 1989, the end of the Cold War and accompanying political and economic readjustments brought another wave of refugees, asylum seekers, and legal and illegal economic migrants to Germany. By 1996, 7.2 million 'foreigners', that is, residents without German passports, lived in united Germany. Though the right of asylum is anchored in Germany's Basic Law, in 1993 Germany's four major political parties responded to racist and xenophobic alarm about immigration by agreeing to an 'asylum compromise' that severely limited eligibility for asylum in Germany. The citizenship law in 2000 gave citizenship to all children born in Germany if their parents had resided legally in Germany for eight years, though by age twenty-three such children are required to opt for German citizenship or choose that of some other country. On 1 January 2005, a new Immigration Act officially recognized Germany as an immigration country (*Einwanderungsland*).³⁶

Foreign workers certainly wrote about their experiences in Germany from the time they arrived there, often describing their painful accommodation to Germany. In its first incarnation in the German language, such writing was known as *Gastarbeiterliteratur* (guestworker literature). In the spirit of the (not entirely unpatronizing) solidarity with the working class that informed the waning social movements of the 1970s, Franco Biondi from Italy, Rafik Schami from Syria, Jussuf Naoum from Lebanon, and Suleman Taufiq from Syria, none of them workers themselves, founded the series *Südwind Gastarbeiterdeutsch* in 1980 to publish a number of anthologies of writing by workers. About the same time Inge Ackermann and Harald Weinrich of the Institute for German as a Foreign Language at the University of Munich, aiming to encourage foreigners' integration, sponsored contests for all sorts of foreigners writing in Germany (united only by the fact that German was not their first language) and published the also mainly realist winning results in inexpensive collections.³⁷ In the 1980s other German publishers discovered that German migrants' literature sold, and a number of foreign-born writers emerged to fill that market niche. In indirect response to US social movements focused on race and ethnicity, US Germanists were the first scholars to focus on migrants' literature in an effort to read these publications as literary, not transparent sociological documents, to explode the stereotypical expectations imposed on foreign writers, and to reconceive German literature as extending beyond texts written by white ethnic Germans. Only slowly have literature departments in Germany begun to focus on such non-canonical texts.

Turkish-German writers

In the 1990s (which distinguished scholar of Turkish-German literature Leslie Adelson calls ‘a dizzying decade of structural transformation affecting Germany, Europe, and what many might call the world at large’),³⁸ especially writers of Turkish background devised new syncretic strategies of representation to respond to their circumstances in Germany. Among the very many Turkish-German writers who have emerged since German unification, three figures stand out. Linguistically inventive Emine Sevgi Özdamar was the first Turkish-born writer to win the distinguished Ingeborg Bachmann Prize in 1991 and, along with short stories and plays, has since published three major novels, *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* (Life Is a Caravanserai, 1992), *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn* (The Bridge of Golden Horn, 1998) and *Seltsame Sterne starren zur Erde* (Strange Stars Stare Down to Earth, 2003). Critics who initially accused her of self-orientalization now recognize that her innocent narrators are ironic, that her vivid stories may be closer to surrealism, and that she innovatively combines elements of Turkish and German literary traditions to focus on a protagonist whose Turkish-German biography shares elements of the author’s own. Poet, novelist, essayist, journalist and public intellectual Zafer Şenocak has attracted much attention with volumes of essays that challenge (among other things) German refusal even to contemplate postnationalism, including *Atlas des tropischen Deutschland* (1992; translated as *Atlas of a Tropical Germany*, 2000), *War Hitler Araber?* (Was Hitler an Arab? 1994), *Zungenentfernung: Berichte aus der Quarantänestation* (Removing the Tongue: Reports from the Quarantine Station, 2001), and *Das Land hinter den Buchstaben* (The Land behind the Letters, 2006) as well as a tetralogy of avant-garde novels that dissolve conventions and boundaries of genre, nationality, ethnicity, sexual identity and religion, including *Der Mann im Unterhemd* (The Man in the Undershirt, 1995), *Die Prärie* (The Prairie, 1997), *Gefährliche Verwandschaft* (Perilous Relationship, 1998) and *Der Erotomane* (The Erotomaniac, 1999).³⁹ Finally, Feridun Zaimoğlu burst explosively onto the German scene with *Kanak Sprak* (1995), a collection of highly stylized edited interviews with young urban males hostile to assimilation, written in the allegedly authentic slang of such *Kanaken*, a derogatory term designating a non-German underclass modelled most evidently on US ‘gangstas’. It seems clear to most scholars of Turkish-German studies, now a burgeoning subfield at least in the US, that Turkish-German migrants are not usefully inserted into postcolonial frameworks and are better understood using new concepts of diaspora, migration studies, minority cultures and literatures, entangled

relationships of Turkish and German history and culture, and perhaps transnationalism (though to date little comparative scholarship addresses Turkish diasporic communities within and outside Germany and work on Turkish-German literature is mostly confined to its German context). However, more narrowly postcolonial texts in Germany are produced within the larger context of migrants' literature primarily shaped by Turkish-German writers.

Arab-German writers

As the title of Mohammed Esa's recent paper at the 2007 conference of the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages, 'Arab and German – An Oxymoron No More',⁴⁰ suggests, Arab-German studies has not yet been constituted as a subfield of German studies, scholars rarely consider writers from Middle Eastern countries in connection with each other (or at all), and, though from the days of *Südwind Gastarbeiterdeutsch* Arab writers have published in German (most first beginning their writing career in Germany), none of them has attracted much scholarly attention. The Arab-German authors associated with efforts to promote 'guestworker literature', Naoum, Taufiq and Schami, initially published anthologies focused on migrants' everyday difficulties, given titles like *Im neuen Land* (In the New Country, 1980), *Zwischen Fabrik und Bahnhof* (Between the Factory and the Train Station, 1981) and *Ein Gastarbeiter ist ein Türke* (A Guestworker Is a Turk, 1983). But their own texts, along with those of Salim Alafenish, a Bedouin, and the Iraqi woman writer Huda Al-Hilali, draw strongly on their countries' oral and written narrative traditions. Frequently invited to tell stories to German audiences, Schami, a popular best-selling author, writes down his extemporaneous stories only after he has shared them with his audience and weaves satire, irony, anecdotes and puns into his labyrinthine tales, conceived as a fusion of Western and Eastern motifs. Naoum also tells stories but draws on the narrative tradition of coffeehouse tales, while Al-Hilali acts out her stories in traditional Iraqi dress and Alafenish tells laconic stories of Bedouin desert life.⁴¹ Other Middle Eastern writers of their generation pursue somewhat different strategies: Palestinian Ghazi Abdel-Qadir writes highly regarded books for children and young adults vividly portraying life in the Middle East, while Wadi Soudah uses humour and satire to consider the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank. Although some scholars have come to these Arab-German writers' defence, it's not clear that, whatever their thematic purposes, their recourse to the very orientalizing forms and contents the German public expects from them does not simply reinforce stereotypes and clichés about Arab cultures (at

a time when many Germans think Islam is irreconcilable with Europe), and their books are often marketed so as to emphasize their childlike and fantasy elements. Though the editors of *Re/Visionen* claim ‘people of colour’ of Arab background for their postcolonial purposes, whether these Arab-German authors should be considered postcolonial remains an open question.

Zé do Rock

The relationship of Latin American to postcolonial studies is a challenging question in the best of cases.⁴² Moreover, great numbers of immigrants from Latin America do not live in Germany; the few writers of Latin American origin came to Germany individually for quite different reasons; and, with one exception, they have achieved little recognition. But the exuberant Brazilian-German author Zé do Rock (pseudonym for Claudio Matschulat) has attracted both critical and popular attention for three lengthy novels that mix a hilariously simplified revision of German orthography and syntax with fragments of other languages (and become progressively more difficult to read). (His project, Zé do Rock reports, began as a parody of Germany’s controversial spelling reform in the 1990s.) The title of *Fom winde ferfeelt* (1995) is impossible to translate, a phonetically spelled pun on the German title of *Gone with the Wind* that disrupts the title’s romantic mood by substituting an incongruous term for the equivalent of ‘gone’. *Fom winde ferfeelt* is something like a travel journal with many pop elements, recording the first-person protagonist’s improbable travel experiences and irreverent observations as he hitchhikes through 102 countries while supplying increasingly complex instructions on how the German language must change over time from 1995 to 2011. Zé do Rock’s description of the book on his website gives a sense of its form and content: ‘This is the story of my ferst book, fom winde ferfeelt, wich shoold be cauld be “Eezy Riter” in english. Or maybe “Pissing in the Rane”, “The last samba in Kyoto” or “Winds up”’.⁴³

The subtitle of his second book *UFO in der Küche* (UFO in the Kitchen, 1998) is ‘Ein autobigrafischer seiens-fikschen’ (an autobiographical science-fiction, spelled phonetically). In this book a protagonist named Pe du Jazz is abducted by aliens to a parallel galaxy, rides a meteorite back to the South Pole and makes his way back to Brazil though now unfortunately in the year 2019, where he discovers not only that his girlfriend is twenty years older and has three children, but also that there are now two of *him*. His most recent book, *Deutsch gutt sonst Geld zuruck* (German Good or Money Back, 2002) is a wild collection of stories, essays, and photographs, formulated on the one hand in

‘Siegfriedisch’, a German from which all foreign elements have been removed (so that, for instance, ‘Pope’ becomes ‘Gottesobermann’), and on the other in ‘Kauderdeutsh’, a German that promiscuously borrows words and syntax from everywhere else, particularly English. Readers are provided with vocabulary lists, exercises for practice, and very silly answers. Zé do Rock suggests that in Kauderdeutsh his book might be characterized as ‘Wilde Mix’.⁴⁴

Is Zé do Rock a postcolonial writer? He can easily be termed ‘postmodern’, if that term still has purchase, and his transnational, even trans-galaxy, framework is a welcome relief from the narrow provincial concentration on Germany alone that informs many books published in Germany even by ‘foreigners’. He certainly foregrounds signification and gleefully draws the relationship between language and referent into question; indeed, it is a joy to watch him not only appropriate the German language from Germans, but with some arrogance instruct them in how they might be using it better. One sage linguist suggests that what Zé do Rock is writing is an example of ‘foreigner talk as monster talk’, constituting ‘writing back’ in the most literal sense by using ‘native speakers’ deliberate simplification of their language when speaking to foreigners or their notions of how foreigners speak their language, especially foreigners considered to be culturally or racially inferior’.⁴⁵ Veronika Fuechtner, the foremost expert on Zé do Rock, suggests that it’s not possible to answer the question of the author’s postcolonial affiliations definitively. To claim him unequivocally as a postcolonial writer is only possible if questions of race and the subaltern are disregarded, ‘especially if you compare his case with the Indian context. He is a descendant of European immigrants: he is a privileged white Brazilian in Brazil, who becomes a “brown” Brazilian in Germany. His ancestors were not part of a “native” elite that was ruled, managed and educated. So that makes it more complicated, which is probably generally true for Brazilian colonialism in comparison to others.’⁴⁶ Though at the outset of his publishing career Zé do Rock was reluctant to be considered a migrant author, his books playfully probe questions very relevant to both migrant and postcolonial populations.

Yoko Tawada

Whatever Japan’s relationship to colonialism and postcoloniality, Yoko Tawada, born in Tokyo in 1960, is an author of world-class status who publishes prolifically in German and Japanese and whose writing is informed by thematic and formal questions central to postcolonial literature. As Christine Kränzle observes, the multiple sites from which Tawada writes, and her

interest in their consequences for subjectivity and language, make her less a migrant writer in the German context than a transnational writer of German.⁴⁷ Kränzle considers three of Tawada's texts, *Wo Europa anfängt* (Where Europe Begins, 1991), *Talisman* (1996) and *Überseetzungen* (Overseas-tongues, but also a pun on the German word meaning translations, 2002), to be examples of the genre of travel writing that 'explore diverse experiences of mobility, from migration, to colonial expansion, to more cosmopolitan forms of leisure travel and tourism'.⁴⁸ Though travel is portrayed as destabilizing homogeneous identities, Tawada does not romanticize nomadism or mobility, but sees it instead as dislocating and disorienting as well as liberating, often referring to the I-narrator as a wandering or lost soul, or alternatively, a person with 'many souls and many tongues'⁴⁹ or with a lost ear and no tongue at all. From a feigned childlike perspective, Tawada defamiliarizes the places through which her protagonist travels in often dreamlike and surreal scenes in which she may take literally the written or spoken language that she encounters, frighteningly confuse one language with another, or create 'fictive ethnographies' of strange native customs like German women's earrings, surely worn to ward off evil spirits. The validity of textual constructions, indeed, of many sorts of constructions, is problematized: as she notes in the epigraph to *Talisman*: 'One shouldn't really tell anyone, but Europe doesn't exist.'⁵⁰

Tawada's texts might be conceived as 'writing back', but she might also be understood as defamiliarizing language, all languages, altogether, as all their practices are strange to her. As one of many examples, she writes for instance with puzzlement: 'Much about language is mysterious. One can draw everything into question, but nobody doubts that elephant is a noun. ... There are many adjectives that end with 'ant' like for instance significant, redundant, elegant or arrogant. But nonetheless one knows that elephant can never be an adjective.'⁵¹ Language has a materiality for her as, spoken, it demands strange contortions of her tongue so that she must eat it, or, written, so that she notices single letters but not the meaning of the whole word. Amazing to her are also words in different languages that sound the same: *Rahmen*, the German word for framework, and *ramen*, a kind of Japanese soup.⁵² In her interest in language and its strangeness, she pays homage to and builds upon earlier German antecedents: Paul Celan, Ernst Jandl, Else Lasker-Schüler, Heinrich von Kleist. Tawada's gentle but enormously provocative dreamlike texts advance new transnational notions of epistemology, subject construction, time, and space that transform global and German literature.

Black German writing

Black or Afro-Germans (the terms are used mostly interchangeably) would vehemently resist being termed a postcolonial population if that term designates a group that is 'not from here'. Black Germans must so frequently combat the presumption that they are African or African American that in a special issue of the journal *Callaloo* Michelle Wright called them 'Others-from-Without from Within'.⁵³ Most black Germans are children of one white German parent (because of the law of *jus sanguinis* they could not be German without German 'blood') and one parent from somewhere in the African diaspora who met his (usually) white German partner under any number of circumstances. Until recently many black German children were raised by their white German mothers and frequently grew up without any contact with other black people, though they now emphatically claim an identity as black rather than as biracial. The term 'Afro-German' emerged from a 1984 seminar taught at Berlin's Free University by African American poet Audre Lorde to describe the group of young German-speaking women of colour on Lorde's course who hitherto had no common self-designation for themselves at all. With Lorde's encouragement, the volume *Farbe bekennen: Afro-deutsche Frauen auf der Spur ihrer Geschichte* (1986, translated as *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*, 1992) was born, its biographical material and dialogues linked by the first history of Afro-Germans, a text originally written as the master's thesis of black German author May Oritz (who later assumed her Ghanaian father's name Ayim). That volume launched a movement that includes several national organizations (for instance, the ISD, Initiative of Black Germans, its name later changed to the more inclusive Initiative of Black People in Germany to acknowledge that not all people of African descent in Germany can claim citizenship, and ADEFRA, an organization of Afro-German women), many cultural institutions and events, and a number of anti-racist initiatives.

Since the end of the 1990s, autobiographies delineating what it has meant to be black and German at different times and places in Germany have begun to appear, including Ika Hügel-Marshall's account of growing up in 1950s Bavaria and her quest to find her African American father in *Daheim unterwegs: Ein deutsches Leben* (1998, translated as *Invisible Woman: Growing up Black in Germany*, 2000); the recollections of Hans Massaquoi, son of the Liberian consul's son and a German woman, of a childhood in Hamburg under National Socialism in *Destined to Witness: Growing up Black in Nazi Germany* (1999) and emigration to the United States in *Hänschen klein, ging allein ... : Mein Weg in die neue Welt* (Little Hans, went alone ... [the first lines of a

German children's song]: My Way to the New World, 2004); and Abini Zöllner's witty account of the daughter of an African father and Jewish mother growing up in East Germany, *Schokoladenkind: Meine Familie und andere Wunder* (Chocolate Child: My Family and Other Wonders, 2003).

Co-editor of *Farbe bekennen* as well as of the collection *Entfernte Verbindungen: Rassismus, Antisexismus, Klassenunterdrückung* (Distant Connections: Racism, Sexism, Class Oppression, 1993), Mai Ayim was the leading creative spokesperson for the black German community until her suicide in 1996. Her first volume of poetry, *Blues in schwarz weiss* (1995), intended to be accessible and its poems often delivered by Ayim as dramatic performances, draws on African American and African tradition to thematize the difficulty of claiming both a black and German identity in a country where that is not acknowledged to be possible. That difficulty is exacerbated after German unification, when Germany celebrates 'without immigrants refugees Jews and Black people / it celebrates in its intimate circle / it celebrates in white'.⁵⁴ The poems of her second poetry volume, *Nachtgesang*, published posthumously in 1997, explore exclusion, marginalization and xenophobia but also focus on 'loneliness, melancholy, despair, and death'⁵⁵ as she dealt with her own mental and physical illness. Also published after her death was a volume of essays given the title of one of her poems, 'Grenzenlos und unverschämt' (Borderless and Brazen).⁵⁶ Since her death Ayim and her writing have taken on a representative function for a larger black European and diasporic community, as evidenced by the West Indian British-based dub poet and musician Linton Kwesi Johnson's 'Regge fi May Ayim' and the May Ayim Award, the First International Black German Literature Prize, bestowed in 2004 at an elaborate ceremony at the House of World Cultures in Berlin.

The Nigerian-German poet Olumide Popoola, co-editor of the poetry volume *Talking Home: Heimat aus unserer eigenen Feder: Frauen of Color in Deutschland* (Talking Home: Home from Our Own Pen: Women of Colour in Germany, 1999), thematically follows the path blazed by Ayim but in spirited bilingual spoken-word performances emphasizes binational and transnational connections even more strongly, proclaiming for instance: 'I am not / what I don't choose to be / -ich bin nichts was ich nicht selbst wähle [I am nothing that I don't choose to be] / ... I am not an African princess / I am / Nigerian German reality / reality / reality // yes / real'.⁵⁷ Since she moved to London, Popoola's bilingual poetry has also drawn upon West Indian traditions of oral performance. Winner of the 2004 May Ayim Award for poetry, her poem 'undercurrents' reads in part: 'look! / she wearin her *funky* che guevara shirt / she up with the trend / today, she a revolutionary friend // & him / him is

taken' de time to please / him is goin' on a big great / him is gettin' himself something from germany to keep / RAF the shirt say / -R.A.F. / but he don't know what it mean'.⁵⁸ If, as the collection *Re/Visionen* suggests, postcolonial designates a stance of resistance and defiance towards dominant eurocentric paradigms, then black German writing like that of Ayim and Popoola deserves that classification, and the bold initiatives and coalitions formed by this native-German speaking community of colour have also opened doors for cultural production by other individuals and communities of colour in Germany.

Recent African writing in German

Beginning in the 1980s, a new generation of African travellers or immigrants to Germany began writing in German; since the recent turn of the century, as Germans abandoned the intense self-reflection that accompanied unification and, in the wake of the centenary of the Herero genocide, rediscovered their implication in colonialism, mainstream German publishers have discovered that writing by Africans also sells. (Countless volumes co-written by Germans feature beautiful but suffering African women on their covers, with male brutality, prostitution and female genital mutilation common textual foci, but I won't be considering such books here.) Many texts by Africans are accompanied by illustrations of African art, doubtless intended to underline their Africanness and authenticity for German readers. Descriptively, these African authors are postcolonial by definition, but whether each of their texts meets the formal criteria for postcolonial writing remains an open question. Recent writing in German by Africans includes no texts at all that continue the anti-colonial opposition of Kum'a Ndumbe III, his choice of collective dramatic form, his connections to a literary tradition devised to express opposition to dominant social structures; these authors live in a different era. Not surprisingly, most frequent are autobiographical accounts of coming to terms with a temporary or permanent life in Germany, sometimes the single text that the writer has authored. They range widely in their degree of outrage or conciliation as well as in talent and literary ambition. Like Dualla Misipo, almost all those authors of autobiographies (and the figures they represent) came to Germany as single individuals, frequently as students, not as part of a collective migration (like earlier guestworkers) or displacement (like the Middle Passage). Many find (and some reject) love with a white German woman or man, and almost all encounter substantial racism from other white Germans. Some have attempted to represent African tales in German, and it is unclear how to understand their political function, whether those should be

regarded as efforts to assert a counter-narrative to German modernity or to accede to the folkloric expectations Germans impose on them. Some respond to Germany in poetry, and some authors attempt multiple genres. By the first decade of this century, some African authors had also begun more generally to consider the issues of Africans now living in a multicultural Germany. Most definitively postcolonial and most recent in appearance are texts in German that address the condition of the postcolony. I believe this is a breakthrough for the German language: no longer considered relevant only for representing the concerns of Germans or Germany, German has become a postcolonial world language like English or French that can be used to address circumstances all over the world. Recent authors' intertextual indebtedness to traditions of francophone or anglophone African writing remains for comparatists to explore.⁵⁹

Though the autobiographies vary in literary quality and emphases, all foreground the relationship of the postcolonial African central figure to Germany as a First World country; as Ato Quayson says in his Introduction to this volume, the relations of colonial space-making have come to affect the dynamics of race relations within the ex-colonial European metropolitan centres themselves such that they have all become discursively postcolonial. In the quite widely read and controversial *Unter die Deutschen gefallen* (Fallen into the Hands of the Germans, 1992) Nigerian Chima Oji lambasted Germans for repeated acts of housing discrimination and racist assessments that caused him to fail courses and examinations, and required practical training even when his accomplishments exceeded those of the Germans against whom he was measured. Though Nigeria may once have offered an alternative, Oji finds when he returns after fourteen years that Nigerians now are also corrupted and debased by their encounter with modernity: 'Corruption and mismanagement dominated the country, unbridled consumer behavior coupled with an entirely shameless greed ruled the heads and – even worse – the hearts of Nigerians.'⁶⁰

However, other autobiographies still presume a Negritude-like African authenticity that is challenged or threatened by the encounter with Germany. In *Der Blues in mir* (The Blues Within Me, 1986), a multimedia creation that includes the author's woodcuts, newspaper clippings and copies of German documents (detailing German efforts to deport him) as well as poems and a prose text, the multimedia artist El Loko (the artist's name of Edoh Lardemash Lucien Loko) laments Europe's influence over him and other Africans: 'The poisonous serum, that Africa perhaps once even took willingly, will still have effects for centuries. And exactly that is the blues within me',⁶¹

but finds himself able to affirm his African identity through his very accomplished artistic productions. In the lyrical prose fragments of *Verlorene Gefühle: Leben zwischen zwei Heimaten* (Lost Feelings: Life between Two Homes, 1995) that correspond to his uncertainty and insecurity in both countries, Pierre Kembo Mayamba flees violence in Zaire for the xenophobic atmosphere of early 1990s Germany. In contrast, in *Mein Freund der weiße Mann* (My Friend the White Man, 1997) Cameroonian Jean Paul Lissock's protagonist happily marries his German girlfriend and with his father-in-law's financial assistance opens three successful shoe stores. Most literarily accomplished of these books is ... *dann ist das Herz verwundet: Eine Begegnung der Kulturen* (... then the Heart Is Wounded: An Encounter of Cultures, 1997) by Cameroonian Kolyang Dina Taiwé, a collection of short essays and poems about the specificities of life in Bremen and Germany (including a letter meditating on the racist attacks on a Turkish family in Solingen, one cause for the 'wounded heart' of his title), semi-autobiographical narratives about the difficulties of love between a German woman and an African man, and very beautiful poems about the children who carry the possibilities of the future. German readers seem also eager to learn more about survivors of African atrocities, as in Thomas Mazimpaka's *Ein Tutsi in Deutschland: Schicksal eines Flüchtlings* (A Tutsi in Germany: History of a Refugee, 1998) and are piqued by the contrast between German 'democracy' and Ethiopian royalty in Asfa-Wossen Asserate, *Ein Prinz aus dem Hause David: Und warum er in Deutschland blieb* (A Prince from the House of David: And Why He Stayed in Germany, 2007).

In contrast to Arab-German writers or Misipo's *Korrongo*, few African writers now transcribe or invent African tales for the Germans. Jean-Félix Belinga Belinga from Cameroon is an exception, and *Ngono Mefane, das Mädchen der Wälder* (Ngono Mefane, the Girl of the Forests, 1990) is a charming fantasy with multiple adventures, told by a grandmother to her grandson, of a feisty young girl who turns to the help and friendship of magical animals to save the land of people. Patrick Addai writes children's books like *Die Grossmutter übernimmt das Fernsehen* (The Grandmother Takes the Place of Television, 1999) and *Worte sind schön, aber Hühner legen Eier: Sprichwörter, Geschichten und Mythen aus Ghana* (Words are Pretty, but Chickens Lay Eggs: Proverbs, Stories, and Myths from Ghana, 2007), organized around proverbs but also providing fable-inflected explanations for Ashanti customs. These texts might be read alternatively as cultural assertion and resistance; as cultural mediation, making traditional African themes and narrative forms available to a German audience; or as playing to German stereotypes regarding African authenticity, primitiveness and difference. In the 1990s poetry collections by Noah K. Ndosi

from Tanzania (*Echos der Erinnerung*, Echoes of Memory, 1991), Idrissa Keïta from Mali (*Aus Afrika*, From Africa, 1992, and *Wenn der Wind bläst*, When the Wind Blows, 1994) and Belinga Belinga (*Gesang der Trommel*, Song of the Drum, 1998), though not strikingly original and often enough descending to clichés, articulate colonial/postcolonial conflicts between Africans and Europeans but also hopes for future harmonious relations, as in the last poem of Keïta's second collection 'Am Ende' (At the End): 'Let the industrial countries define Africa / as they want // Whether as continent of horror / or of beauty // When they are tired of their inventions / and investigations / in the full moon they will discover Africa's / wisdom under the sound of drums'.⁶²

Cameroonian André Ekama's two recent collections of stories, *Schwarzer sein im weißen Himmel* (Being Black in White Heaven, 2007) and *Der einsame Kandidat* (The Lonely Candidate, 2008) might be variously termed postcolonial, transnational, or migrants' literature. His texts are the first to deal with figures from many different African countries who move comfortably between a modern Africa and Germany. Written in an unadorned prose about breakneck-paced, incongruous and often quite funny events, his texts address figures who, though frequently indignant about bureaucratic and popular racism and insulting encounters with German locals, coldness, tempo and cost in Germany, and strange German customs, ultimately mostly find a happy and permanent accommodation with Germany, while still retaining ties to Africa and an extensive African community in Germany. Two of his figures even run for mayor of their Germany community, as Ekama himself did in Mannheim. Daniel Mepin's novel *Die Weissagung der Ahnen* (The Prophecy of the Ancestors, 1997) is unusual in beginning with a focus on Cameroonian civil war from the perspective of a single puzzled Cameroonian ethnic group and then following one of its sons sent to a racially antagonistic GDR to study (the only African novel in German to my knowledge that addresses East Germany), who marries a German woman there. When both partners lose their jobs as a consequence of German unification and his wife files for divorce, the protagonist hangs himself. In *Das afrikanische Auge* (The African Eye, 2007) Luc Degla from Benin recounts both semi-autobiographical accounts of a first-person protagonist in Braunschweig, Moscow and Africa and accounts of other Africans, Braunschweiger and other 'foreigners', often organized around a humorous anecdote. The poems of his volume *Frechheiten* (Cheekiness, 2008) manifest the same saucy wittiness. Degla won the third prize for prose at the 2004 May Ayim Award ceremony.

Quite unanticipated by German literary scholars are Africans writing in German about Africa, since Germanists have hitherto mainly considered writing

by 'foreigners' as 'intercultural' enrichment to German culture; indeed, these texts may even explode the notion of German national literature. Why these authors write in German, usually not their first European language, is not clear: Albert Gouaffo speculates that for Cameroonians the turn to German is an effort to heal themselves from the influence of France.⁶³ The subgenre was inaugurated by Belinga Belinga's collection of tales of village life in Cameroon *Wenn die Palme die Blätter verliert* (When the Palm Loses its Leaves, 1988), which tilts strongly towards traditional values, since 'the city is our enemy, and our life is becoming more dependent on the enemy'.⁶⁴ A decade later his children's book *Wir drei gegen Onkel Chef* (We Three against Uncle Chief, 1998) shows how a village can correct its own problems when three young friends displace a corrupt village elder and replace him with a new leader from another ethnic group who has married the mother of one of the children. Less optimistic about the fate of African countries, in *Sina: Das Kongo-Schicksal* (Sina: The Fate of Congo, 1997) Espérance-François Ngayibata Bulayumi offers an allegorical 'report' on the mysterious village of Musuni that, he concedes, is 'only a metaphor that reflects life in Kongo'. 'Sina' means history or root, and this complex and fascinating text draws with explicit syncretism in turn on fantasy, fable, parable, Congolese legend, and social, political and ecclesiastical history to explain why, as a consequence of European colonization, Congo, 'the gigantic fragile neighbor of Ruanda and Burundi, is a powderkeg'.⁶⁵ Hilaire Mbakop's *Mambé's Heimat: Ein Streifzug durch den Alltag Kameruns* (Mambé's Home: An Excursion through Everyday Life in Cameroon, 2007) takes a scathing look at today's Cameroon via the conceit of a Cameroonian man returned from America who wanders through Yaoundé in search of meals, entertainment and an apartment to detail the social and economic inequality, corruption, treachery, deceit, venality, greed, lust and filth that now obtains in the capital city of the protagonist's 'home' country. In *Im Spinnennetz der Privilegien* (Within the Spider's Net of Privileges, 2008), Ekama similarly considers the corruption of individuals and officials in the fictional African country of Kimangali.

Of particular note are two volumes about Cameroon by Philomène Atyame, one of the few African women writing in German (and decidedly not a victim). Atyame's first novel, published in two versions as *Der schwarz-weiße Kontinent: Die quidproquos* (The Black and White Continent: The Quid pro Quos, 1998) and as *Abengs Entscheidung: Eine schwarz-weiße Liebe in Kamerun* (Abeng's Decision: A Black-White Love in Cameroon, 2002), reveals the influence of Özdamar and Tawada in its highly figurative language, in its slightly surreal descriptions, and in the perceptions and opinions of its often naïve figures, towards which the narrator maintains an amused ironic distance. The novel explores

the possibility of reconciliation between Africa and Europe through the lens of a love affair between Abeng, a female student of German, and a white German technician posted to Douala. Abeng must also choose between modernity and tradition, between marriage to Manfred or to the husband from her own ethnic group that her beloved late grandfather has chosen for her, but succeeds in negotiating the trade-offs or 'quid pro quos' necessary for bicultural understanding, and the novel celebrates her decision with an elaborately depicted wedding, both modern and traditional. A much different text in the vein of Bulayumi (though not at all similar to him in form) is her 2006 narrative *Mord ohne Anklage: Eine Erzählung nach wahren Ereignissen in Kamerun* (Murder without Charge: A Story of True Events in Cameroon), which metonymically illuminates conditions in 1980s Cameroon by focusing on a village murder motivated by struggles over land ownership, village intrigues and European powers committed to unsavoury investments.

As this chapter's division into individual authors and regional groups suggests, it is not yet possible to produce a synthetic history of postcolonial literature in Germany, to identify trends in its development, or even to identify more than the most general of generic conventions upon which the various writers this chapter addresses draw. Most of the authors here at best speak for and from their own national/ethnic group, and some have written entirely in isolation from a community of other postcolonial or diasporic writers. It is possible that, when current German literary history is later periodized, 'postcolonial literature' will for historical reasons prove not to have been a particularly important phase,⁶⁶ and German writing by people of colour and others outside the white German mainstream will have moved quite quickly instead to transnational configurations, an approach that has also recently made a substantial impact on German studies scholarship. If poststructuralism may be understood as the internal critique of eurocentrism, for complex reasons that critique made little impact on Germany, and now a related but more grounded critique of eurocentrism and its accompanying blindnesses and exclusions is being advanced on another front, by writers in Germany many of whom might as easily be termed multi-ethnic as postcolonial. Slowly those writers, and the groups they belong to, are also beginning to speak to each other within the German nation and also transnationally, to groups outside Germany. In a country where assimilation is the prescribed and expected course for foreigners, groups not yet considered German are beginning to say no to those practices and epistemologies in a range of literary and non-literary registers and to align their counter-strategies with those of other transnational groups. That is suggested by the volume *Re/Visionen*, which

draws its inspirations from the anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles of other countries and aims at coalitions among people of colour in Germany whatever their origins, as well as by the volume collecting the submissions for the May Ayim Award. The editors of the volume write in their introduction:

In its cultural plurality Germany is feeling its way slowly towards countries like England, France, and the USA in its efforts to provoke innovation and renew itself ... The announcement of this prize that transcends national boundaries and language communities is a survival reflex by people from the Black diaspora postulating new cultural definitions. The almost 100 submissions in English and German from the whole world document the interest and need for such a forum at the global level ... Keep jammin.⁶⁷

Notes

1. The following account of German colonialism is drawn from Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox and Susanne Zantop, 'Introduction', in Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox and Susanne Zantop (eds.), *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 1–29.
2. See Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770–1870* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).
3. Clarence Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims: The Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
4. Pascal Grosse, 'From colonialism to national socialism to postcolonialism: Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*', *Postcolonial Studies*, 9.1 (2006), 25–52.
5. See especially Kum'a Ndumbe III, *Was will Bonn in Afrika? Zur Afrikapolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1992).
6. See, for instance, Maria Höhn and Martin Klimke, *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs, and Germany* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
7. See, for instance, Paul Michael Lützeler (ed.), *Schriftsteller und 'Dritte Welt': Studien zum postkolonialen Blick* (Tübingen: Stauffenberg, 1998); Herbert Uerlings, *'Ich bin von niedriger Rasse': Post-kolonialismus in der deutschen Literatur* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006); and to some degree the DFG-Netzwerk Postkoloniale Studien in der Germanistik.
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10. See, for instance, Julia Abel, Hansjörg Bay, Andreas Blödorn and Christof Hamann (eds.), *Text + Kritik Sonderband Literatur und Migration* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2006), among many other volumes.
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24. Information available on the website of AfricAvenir, www.africavenir.com.
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40. I thank my colleague Mohammed Esa for his generosity in sharing his work on Arab-German writers with me. His website www2.mcdaniel.edu/german/arab-german/index.htm is also very useful.
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50. Yoko Tawada, *Talisman* (Tübingen: Konkursbuch Verlag Claudia Gehrke, 1996).
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