



EDITED BY FREDERICK LUIS ALDAMA



ANALYZING



World



FICTION



NEW HORIZONS IN NARRATIVE THEORY

Analyzing World Fiction

Cognitive Approaches to Literature and Culture Series
Edited by Frederick Luis Aldama, Arturo J. Aldama,
and Patrick Colm Hogan

Cognitive Approaches to Literature and Culture includes monographs and edited volumes that incorporate cutting-edge research in cognitive science, neuroscience, psychology, linguistics, narrative theory, and related fields, exploring how this research bears on and illuminates cultural phenomena such as, but not limited to, literature, film, drama, music, dance, visual art, digital media, and comics. The volumes published in this series represent both specialized scholarship and interdisciplinary investigations that are deeply sensitive to cultural specifics and grounded in a cross-cultural understanding of shared emotive and cognitive principles.

Analyzing World Fiction

New Horizons in Narrative Theory

EDITED BY FREDERICK LUIS ALDAMA

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How to Use This Book

FREDERICK LUIS ALDAMA

The impulse behind the essays collected in *Analyzing World Fiction: New Horizons in Narrative Theory* spins out of a symposium sponsored by Project Narrative, “Multicultural Narratives and Narrative Theory.” This symposium, held at the Ohio State University during Oct. 25–27, 2007, brought together scholars from around the world working in, among other fields, narrative theory, U.S. ethnic studies, English studies and Anglophone literatures, linguistics, feminist and critical race theory, cognitive approaches to literature, and creative writing. Many of these scholars demonstrated how scholarship in narrative theory and work done under the umbrella designation of U.S. ethnic and postcolonial studies could create a productive synergy.

Nonetheless, although *Analyzing World Fiction* was inspired by this symposium—and seeds planted there grew into several of the following essays—the collection expands the purview to include analyses not just of African American, Asian American, Filipino American, South Asian Indian, and U.S. Latina literature but also of literature from China, France, and the Francophone Caribbean. Moreover, it does not limit itself to the analysis of literature, for it encompasses work on Afro-Caribbean British televisual stories and cinematic narratives by South Asian Indian and Mexican directors.

Whereas each contributor uses a distinct theoretical approach, they all share a common sensitivity to the exigencies of proof and corroboration, as well as an understanding that ideological dogmatism impedes the exploration of the principles and mechanisms involved in the production and reception of narrative fiction. In this, the essays I have collected here have affinities with the work I have been doing since the publication of *Postethnic Narrative Criticism* (2003), followed by *Brown on Brown* (2005) and *A User’s Guide to Postcolonial and Latino Borderland*

Fiction (2009). And, like the other scholars represented here, I consider both critical theory and critical practice to be most productively served by first understanding narrative fiction within its worldwide dimension and then analyzing its myriad expressions as particularities in each time and place. The kinds of fiction in which we are most interested all comprise unique, idiosyncratic works that cohere into unified wholes; at the same time, they are all part of the ongoing dialogue sustained by authors the world over.

Part I: Voice

Brian Richardson's essay, "U.S. Ethnic and Postcolonial Fiction: Toward a Poetics of Collective Narratives," opens the collection. Richardson offers a widely encompassing overview of the ways tools and categories (e.g., narrative, story and plot, narrative temporality, character, and "reception and the reader") can be used to enrich our understanding and appreciation of a great range of literary texts. In a discussion of point of view, Richardson teases out the various nuances of the "we" narrative and other unusual voices in Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Nuruddin Farah's *Maps*, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Grain of Wheat*. Focusing on the varying degrees of presence of multiple and divided voices, Richardson shows how authors can create all sorts of tensions among the individual, the community, and a dominant society. Indeed, the narrative voice provides authors writing under constraints of artistic and political censorship an important technique for speaking both to an "ideal reader" who will get the "deeper, hidden meanings" and to the censoring audience.

The subsequent essays in this section continue to sharpen our understanding of the way narrative techniques such as voice work in a number of world narrative fictions. For example, in "Language Peculiarities and Challenges to Universal Narrative Poetics," Dan Shen demonstrates how linguistic markers of tense in Chinese differ from English ones in ways that significantly alter the category of voice in narrative fiction. To understand the narrative richness in Chinese novels such as Mao Dun's *Shop of the Lin Family* and Cao Xueqin's *Dream of Red Mansions*, where the Chinese narrating voice lacks tense markers, we must keep in mind the tense-ambiguous category of the "finite blend." While Shen demonstrates certain overlaps between Chinese and non-Chinese literatures, such linguistic variations create differences in the device of voice.

In “Reading Narratologically: Azouz Begag’s *Le Gone du Chaâba*,” Gerald Prince also attends to nuances of language in his exploration of *beur* literature (i.e., works written in French by children of North African immigrants to France). Prince attends to code switching between standard French, French Lyonnais slang, and Algerian Arabic in Azouz Begag’s *Le Gone du Chaâba* and the way such linguistic shifts mark the narrator-protagonist’s movements among his neighborhood, his school, and the city. Prince’s focus on language and narrative voice “systematically” allows us to characterize the particular functioning of Begag’s “narrativity.”

Using the concept of the “narratee” originally introduced and sharpened by Gerald Prince in 1980, Robyn Warhol analyzes Bharati Mukherjee’s tense shifts and chronological disruptions, as well as the narrator-narratee configurations, in the novel *Jasmine*. In “*Jasmine* Reconsidered: Narrative Structure and Multicultural Subjectivity” Warhol identifies how the narrator-narratee configuration presents an instance of the impossibility of integrated subjecthood for its Indian narrator-character, known variously as Jyoti, Jasmine, or Jane. Unlike its alluded-to predecessor, *Jane Eyre*, where “the heroine’s subjectivity is monocultural [and] her reader—the narratee to whom she is speaking—perfectly aligned with the narrator’s and narratees’s values and teleology,” Warhol argues, *Jasmine* presents a character-narrator whose difference from other middle-class North American characters is marked both by the presence of such characters in the storyworld and the identification of a like-positioned narratee.

Also attending to the importance of voice, James Phelan teases out how Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* establishes at the outset a certain type of dynamic interaction among the various components of the narrative fiction blueprint and the reader. In “Voice, Politics, and Judgments in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*: The Initiation, the Launch, and the Debate about the Narration,” Phelan identifies “initiation” (the initial rhetorical exchanges among author, narrator, and audience) and “launch” (the taking off of the narrative when a “global instability” is introduced) to reveal the formal and political importance of Hurston’s initial use of an authoritative narrator who subsequently aligns the reader’s interest with the characters Janie and Pheoby and with the telling situation generally. In some cases of dialogue, Phelan further argues, Hurston presents a “block of monologic discourse from a collective voice” that guides the reader to “strongly negative ethical judgments of the speakers.” Phelan shows that as the narrative unfolds,

it triggers in the reader competing demands for a negative ethical judgment of the collective and a positive judgment of Janie.

In a shift from written narrative fiction to the function of voice in televisual narrative forms, Hilary Dannenberg considers how the first-person, polyphonic “we” narrative voice works in a number of documentaries, sitcoms, and comedy shows to displace official narratives of a pure British identity by placing at their center a range of black and Asian British experiences in the United Kingdom. In “Narrating Multiculturalism in British Media: Voice and Cultural Identity in Television Documentary and Comedy” Dannenberg analyzes Lenny Henry’s *This Is My Life*, revealing how the first-person narrative voice combines with a “satirical mock voice-over” to make for a “new narrator who blends the authenticity of personal historical knowledge with the satirical edge of comedy.”

Part II: Emotion

The essays that make up this part consider how formal structures and narrative techniques used in narrative fiction (film and literature) can convey the emotion of narrators and characters as well as cue and trigger emotive responses in readers and viewers. In “Anger, Temporality, and the Politics of Reading *The Woman Warrior*” Sue J. Kim considers how Maxine Hong Kingston’s *Woman Warrior* offers a “narrating-I” who draws us into her plight not by presenting an us (Asian and Asian American) versus them (U.S. mainstream) melodramatic sentimentality but rather by conveying a range of emotions that draws readers into a particularized Asian American experience and reminds them of the critical distance that separates the flesh-and-blood author from the fictional narrator and the characters. As Kim argues, *Woman Warrior* demands that we not read such a novel as an ethnographic document and instead consider seriously its aesthetics and thus its politics.

In “Agency and Emotion: R. K. Narayan’s *The Guide*,” Lalita Pandit Hogan argues against cookie-cutter postcolonial approaches that, for instance, declare an author’s use of the English language as somehow pro-colonial. Rather, she demonstrates how a traditionally acclaimed Indian “native” author such as R. K. Narayan writes in English yet remains a “syncretist,” borrowing broadly from numerous narrative conventions. In *The Guide* we see how Narayan, like other Indian authors, blends “aesthetic models and narrative tropes of the West with models and

tropes derived from the Sanskrit, Tamil, and Arabic-Persian traditions.” Narayan’s “integrative model” triggers specific “emotion memories” and offers a complex anticolonial critique.

In “The Narrativization of National Metaphors in Indian Cinema” Patrick Colm Hogan considers the relations among emotion, narrative, and metaphor. Specifically, he explores how metaphors of family (kinship, marriage, and home) organize and orient nationalist thought and action in six South Asian Indian films. In the analysis of director Yash Chopra’s *Dharmputra*, for instance, Hogan shows how the film expands the kinship metaphor into a national story. At the same time, the film avoids some risks of the metaphor by (narratively) criticizing its supposed literalization in a politics of ethnocultural purity.

In “Fear and Action: A Cognitive Approach to Teaching *Children of Men*” Arturo J. Aldama uses recent findings in the cognitive and neurobiological sciences to shed light on the ways audiences are affected by scenes of torture and threats of terror in the Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón’s *Children of Men*. His analysis shows how Cuarón’s mise-en-scène of immigration detention camps in a futuristic England alludes to the Abu Ghraib prison, to Nazi concentration camps, and to Latin American death squads. These and other evocations have a cognitive and emotive impact that moves audiences to question present realities while linking them to a dystopia represented in a very proximate future. Thus, Aldama concludes that Cuarón’s film as a whole asks audiences whether hope, as an executive cognitive order, is still possible in a world of pervasive and relentless political oppression.

Part III: Comparisons and Contrasts

Several essays seek to establish important differences and commonalities within and among different world narrative fictions. In “The Postmodern Continuum of Canon and Kitsch: Narrative and Semiotic Strategies of Chicana High Culture and Chica Lit,” Ellen McCracken uses the notions of paratext and implied author to tease out a rich array of different types of contemporary Latina narrative fictions: the consumable type seen in Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez’s *Dirty Girls Social Club* and the less readily digestible type seen in Sandra Cisneros’s *Caramelo*. McCracken explores how devices used in both types of fiction coupled with the paratexts (blurbs, cover photos, and the like) establish simple or complex text-to-reader contracts.

In “Initiating Dialogue: Narrative Beginnings in Multicultural Narratives” Catherine Romagnolo asserts that narrative beginnings can destabilize preconceptions of U.S. ethnic identity and experience. In an analysis of Julia Alvarez’s *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, Romagnolo demonstrates how the loosely defined family relationships in the family tree that appear at the beginning of the novel begin to do the work of the novel as a whole: to “destabilize traditional immigration paradigms that rely on notions of definitive cultural origins and concrete new beginnings.” In looking at the different ways that Alvarez, Zora Neale Hurston, and Toni Morrison utilize narrative beginnings, Romagnolo reveals how a number of narrative fictions establish at the outset the construction of an array of U.S. ethnic gendered experiences and worldviews.

The next two essays in Part III focus primarily on Asian American novels. In “‘It’s Badly Done’: Redefining Craft in *America Is in the Heart*,” Sue-Im Lee shows how Carlos Bulosan does not so much write a clumsy novel, as some would have it, as willfully invent a wobbly narrator—a single narrator entity that is at once naive (an “experiencing self”) and knowing (a “narrating self”). Lee explores the full social and political implications of Bulosan’s invention, whereby the “experiencing self” becomes the object that must be explained by the “narrating self” in ways that continually unbalance both.

In “Nobody Knows: *Invisible Man* and John Okada’s *No-No Boy*” Josephine Nock-Hee Park uses Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* to unlock John Okada’s *No-No Boy*. Both novels follow the journey of raced outsiders: Okada’s “nobody” or “no-no boy” and Ellison’s invisible man. As Park shows, however, the characters’ outsider status does not absent them from history. Their various refusals to identify as part of the nation (their “invisibility”) put into high relief racist policies toward African Americans and Japanese Americans in different historical moments. And both novels find expression for their “strategies for resistance” not just in character action but in the very narrative form itself; they choose the vehicle of the “improbable fiction,” Park argues, rather than a straightforward realism in order to “weave a grim fable around an empty center.”

Paul Breslin’s essay “Intertextuality, Translation, and Postcolonial Misrecognition in Aimé Césaire” offers new translations of key passages of Césaire’s *Une Tempête* and *La Tragédie*, to powerfully demonstrate how readers tend to prefer works that do not resist translation (either into their own language or into the categories of familiar theories) to those that do. Yet, as Breslin observes, resistance to translation is often

a sign of greater complexity and originality of insight. *La Tragédie du roi Christophe* tells about postcolonial events that readers don't want to hear about, whereas *Une Tempête* tells readers what they want—and expect—to hear.

The collection ends with William Nericcio's afterword, "How This Book Reads You: Looking beyond *Analyzing World Fiction: New Horizons in Narrative Theory*," Nericcio forcefully reiterates the necessary move to study narrative fiction in all its guises as always comparative and worldly. He reminds us that while authors, artists, and directors alike use universal storytelling techniques and structures, they do so to create vitally new idiosyncratic narrative fictions. As he states, "We'll need a bigger closet."

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Analyzing World Fiction

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PART I

VOICE

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CHAPTER 1

U.S. Ethnic and Postcolonial Fiction: Toward a Poetics of Collective Narratives

BRIAN RICHARDSON

Books and journal articles on narrative theory have largely neglected postcolonial literature until very recently (e.g., Prince, “Postcolonial Narratology”; Gymnich); nevertheless, some of the most fascinating narrative experiments have been conducted by postcolonial authors. The same is largely true for U.S. ethnic literature, though in this case the situation is not quite so dire. In the first part of this essay, I will look at several areas where narrative theory can help identify distinctive achievements by postcolonial and U.S. ethnic authors. I will ask two related questions: how can narrative theory help us better understand U.S. ethnic and postcolonial fiction, and what are the larger implications of these narrative practices for narrative theory as a whole? Finally, I will discuss the poetics of collective narratives, an especially compelling poetics that emerges from this analysis. The development of narrative techniques has expanded enormously since 1950; U.S. ethnic and postcolonial authors have made a number of original contributions to this transformation in the ways narratives are constructed, and their work has often gravitated to certain distinctive strategies. Employing some of the categories of narrative theory can help delineate these achievements as they are made to serve as useful supplements to predominantly ideological and socio-historical perspectives.

Narration

The first of these newer narrative strategies is the use of innovative kinds of narrators; moving beyond traditional first- and third-person forms, Jamaica Kincaid uses a kind of second-person narration in *A Small Place*

that is compelling both politically and narratologically: “You disembark from your plane. You go through customs. Since you are a tourist—to be frank, white—and not an Antiguan black . . . you move through customs with ease” (4–5). The kind of second-person narration pioneered by authors such as Michel Butor or Italo Calvino is here transformed ideologically, for the “you” is marked racially and nationally. Another powerful postcolonial deployment of voice is the alternation between first-, second-, and third-person narration in Nurrudin Farah’s *Maps* as questions of identity, including gender, national, and territorial identity, are embodied within this shifting and unstable series of voices. As Rhonda Cobham writes, “the inability of the narrative voices that define Askar to differentiate between Askar [the protagonist] and Misra [the woman who mothers him], between maleness and femaleness, and between age and youth or accuser and accused works also as a metaphor for the shifting status of the signifier ‘nation’ within the Ogaden and for Somalia as a whole” (52).

Probably most compelling is the large and diverse group of postcolonial authors who have used “we” narration to articulate collective struggles against colonialism: Raja Rao (*Kanthapura*), Ngugi wa Thiong’o (*A Grain of Wheat*), Ayi Kwei Armah (*Two Thousand Seasons*), Edouard Glissant (*La Case du commandeur*), Patrick Chamoiseau (*Texaco*), and Zakes Mda (*Ways of Dying*). These authors come from a broad range of places, from India to the Caribbean to East, West, and South Africa; all have found “we” narration to be a crucial strategy in forging a postcolonial narrative voice. Glissant has even called for a “*roman du Nous*” to articulate the distinctive Antillean experience. Some of the interesting features of this kind of narration are evident in a brief passage at the beginning of *Texaco*, where it is noted that well-to-do individuals would drive by the slum and observe its inhabitants: “But if they stared at us, we certainly stared back. It was a battle of eyes between us and the City” (10). The speaker is here not just narrating the general sensibility of the community but also depicting its shared field of vision and thus providing an unusual and fascinating collective focalization.

In some cases this technique draws on indigenous narrative practices; Zakes Mda has noted that “the communal voice ‘we’ is quite common in both the Nguni and the Sotho groups of languages—especially in day to day speech. . . . In the narration of legends, myths and history (often the boundaries are blurred here) we do find the communal voice” (personal e-mail to the author, Dec. 18, 2006). Early in the text of *Ways of Dying*, Mda inflects this indigenous practice with a distinctively postmod-

ern sensibility: “We know everything about everybody. We even know things that happen when we are not there. . . . We are the all-seeing eye of the village gossip. When in our orature the storyteller begins the story, ‘They say it once happened . . .’ we are the they” (12). Communal sensibility is here re-empowered and invested with something approximating omniscience.

African American and Native American authors also employ “we” narration. Hertha D. Sweet Wong notes that “a Native autobiographer, whether a speaking or a writing subject, often implies, if not announces, the first person plural—we—even when speaking in the first person singular. ‘We’ often invokes *a* (sometimes *the*) Native community.” The “we” form is also used in contemporary Native American fiction, such as the sections narrated by the tribal elder, Nanapush, in Louise Erdrich’s *Tracks*. Richard Wright uses a transgenerational “we” that embraces enslaved Africans and contemporary African Americans in his 1941 nonfictional work *12 Million Black Voices*, as Joel Woller has discussed. Together, these works reveal the “we” voice’s usefulness in representing a collective subject in opposition to the hegemonic paradigm of the isolated Western consciousness. (I discuss a number of these strategies in the context of world literature in my book *Unnatural Voices*.)

Narration can be still further varied and multiplied to create a distinctive, unique fusion of past and present, fiction and nonfiction, and myth and history. As N. Scott Momaday notes in the preface to his text *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, “The stories [here] are told in three voices. The first voice is the voice of my father, the ancestral voice, and the voice of the Kiowa oral tradition. The second is the voice of historical commentary. And the third is that of personal reminiscence, my own voice. There is a turning and returning of myth, history, and memoir throughout, a narrative wheel that is as sacred as language itself” (3).

Story and Plot

A number of minority and postcolonial authors have interrogated and extended the traditional concept of plot. Rather than limit themselves to telling the story of an individual or family, these authors radically expand the conventional limits to the concept of a story. Patrick Chamoiseau’s *Texaco* (1992) traces the history of a Caribbean community over 150 years. A number of African American dramas similarly chronicle a century or more of a group’s historical experience by focusing on several

unrelated individuals who are connected not by blood but by history (see Richardson, "Genre"). These include Langston Hughes's *Don't You Want to Be Free?* (1938), Amiri Baraka's *Slave Ship* (1967), and Leslie Lee's *Colored People's Time: A History Play* (1983). The beginning of Hughes's play is set in Africa, while Baraka's play starts on a slave ship in the Atlantic; the multicontinental spatial settings are as capacious as are the plays' temporal ranges. Caryl Phillips pushes this juxtaposition further; his work *Crossing the River* (1993) challenges the very definition of narrative. Constituting a preface and four sections that are set in three continents over two and a half centuries, these narratives of the African diaspora are independent when treated as the stories of unrelated individuals; the parts are instead connected merely thematically. But the book, through its genre identification as "a novel," insists on its status as a single narrative and thereby invites us to read it as a united, if episodic, story of the African experience around the Atlantic. The larger point is that all the central characters have histories that are similar or analogous to one another in important ways. There is no reason to assume that Martha, the freed slave who dies in Denver on her way to California to look for her child, is a close relative or direct descendent of the characters presented in an earlier time frame. But in an important sense she is a later avatar of them, emblematic of the familial quests and dislocations that haunt them all. Finally, it might be noted that other postcolonial authors situate their narratives within an even longer temporal period. Ayi Kwei Armah's novel *Two Thousand Seasons*, as its title announces, covers the history of black Africans for a thousand years. Qurratulain Haider's *River of Fire* probably has the longest scope, stretching from the fourth century BCE to postindependence India and Pakistan. Such emplottings serve to organize and characterize a group's identity over time, emphasizing common features and typical experiences.

As Edward Said has amply demonstrated, origins and beginnings are of particular significance to postcolonial and U.S. ethnic studies, and the ideological importance of these concepts is paramount. One might, however, also point to recent narratological approaches to beginnings that, following the lead of J. Hillis Miller, contest the possibility of any absolute beginning and affirm instead that all narratives, fictional and nonfictional, are always already *in medias res*. This will give us another perspective from which to look, for example, at the various deconstructions of beginnings and origins in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, the story of Saleem Sinai, whose narrative begins thirty-one years

(and 150 pages) before he is born and foregrounds the arbitrariness and fictionality of official accounts of beginnings as it stresses the hybridity of people, communities, and nation-states. The dramatized countdown to his birth (which occurs at the same time as the birth of the independent nation of India) further emphasizes the inherently fictitious nature of all ascribed beginnings. It is worth noting that Catherine Romagnolo outlines a new theory of narrative beginnings (here and in “*Recessive Origins*”) that includes a category for thematic beginnings to create a theoretical space for ways in which personal and national origins are woven into distinctive narrative forms in the fiction of U.S. ethnic women writers such as Julia Alvarez and Amy Tan.

Finally, we should note the work of those authors who alter the beginning of the physical book, such as Ishmael Reed, who places the first chapter of *Mumbo Jumbo* before the title page, copyright notice, and other editorial paraphernalia, so that the reader opens the book to the first words of the narrative proper, as the book’s *synuzhet* precedes the printed paratext that is intended to frame it.

At the other end of the narrative, one frequently finds a resistance to traditional forms of closure and a desire to write “beyond the ending,” in the phrase of Rachel Blau DuPlessis. *Midnight’s Children*, being yoked to modern Indian history, can no more end than history can cease, even though the narrator-protagonist feels himself about to explode in the novel’s final pages. The sense of continuity between the fictional narrative and the trajectory of history frequently lies behind such anticlosural gestures, such as the ending of Aimé Césaire’s *Une Tempête*, which leaves his Prospero and Caliban locked in struggle for control of the island. Similarly, the final tableau of *Endgame*, Beckett’s rewriting of *The Tempest*, reveals Clov frozen at the edge of the stage, unable to leave the Prospero-like Hamm. (Nels Pearson offers an impressive postcolonial account of *Endgame*.) Perhaps the most radical such gesture appears at the end of Baraka’s *Slave Ship*, where the audience is invited to join the characters in insurrection—and a dance on stage. Other postcolonial texts end with an act of conception or a birth (e.g., Ngugi’s *A Grain of Wheat*; *Midnight’s Children* similarly concludes with the birth of Aadam Sinai), inverting the trajectory of a work such as *David Copperfield*, which commences with a birth, and thus providing another way of ending *in medias res*. It appears that lives deeply imbricated within contemporary events will not attain any sense of closure until the events that surround them have progressed further or come to a pause.

Narrative Temporality

By reconfiguring a number of Shandean types of temporal play, Rushdie transforms Sterne's clever literary device into a tool of social critique. Rushdie's play with temporality is perhaps most prominent in the twenty-fifth chapter, "In the Sundurbans," in which he employs the techniques of magical realism especially thoroughly. The narrator, like other Pakistani soldiers, has committed atrocities against the citizens of Bangladesh and cannot acknowledge his identity. He takes on a new name, and his body begins to become invisible. Time becomes skewed, follows unknown laws, and bends mysteriously. Among other things, the narrator refers to having experienced in the jungle a midnight that literally lasted 635 days.

The reconstruction of a lost or disfigured past is sometimes associated with a narrative confrontation with traumatic events. This trauma can be re-created within the text for the reader to experience, if only in a very faint image of the unspeakable original horror. Three fairly recent postcolonial and minority narratives fabricate temporality and its reception in similar ways. Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* share a similar kind of narrative construction: each work begins with a confusing jumble of seemingly unrelated scenes. As the reader continues, the events appear to link up into three or so main story lines; these, we eventually learn, are separated temporally as well—that is, each fits into an early, middle, or later sequence. This narrative innovation and its repetition have obvious ideological implications specifically for the representation of the trauma of enslavement and colonization (and their aftermath). Traumatic events remain powerful through time and come unmoored from the sequence that should contain them; these novels inscribe this effect in their temporality. Discussing Roy's novel, Elizabeth Outka notes that "disordered time," where past events blend with and haunt the present, is one of the most common aftereffects of traumatic experiences:

Roy demonstrates this complex melding both within her characters' experiences and within her narrative structure, offering a vivid map of trauma's lingering disruptions. . . . Time's hybridity within Roy's novel arises in part from the constant need to negotiate between a persistent colonial past and a postcolonial present, and this negotiation in turn contributes to the multiple traumas experienced by the central charac-

ters. The cultural hybridizations often create, in short, the conditions for the traumatic temporal hybridizations. (1)

Character

One hardly needs a narrative theorist to explain the ways that character is contested in literary discourse, as anti- and postcolonial authors strive to undo the deleterious stereotypes perpetrated by apologists of empire and racism. Significant portions of such divergent books as Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Tayeb Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North* document how the personalities of black characters cannot be perceived or imagined by the English and Euro-American men and women around them. In an anti-imperial Irish drama written in 1904, banned in Great Britain but staged in Ireland through a loophole in the censorship act, we encounter a garrulous, impoverished, heavy-drinking fellow called Haggerty who speaks in a pronounced Irish brogue. An Englishman is about to hire him when a genuine Irishman points out that Haggerty is actually from Glasgow and has never been to Ireland. He explains:

Don't you know that all this top-o-the-morning and broth-of-a-boy and more-power-to-your-elbow business is got up in England to fool you, like the Albert Hall concerts of Irish music? No Irishman ever talks like that in Ireland, or ever did, or ever will. But when a thoroughly worthless Irishman comes to England, and finds the whole place full of romantic duffers like you, who will let them loaf and drink and sponge and brag as long as he flatters your sense of moral superiority by playing the fool and degrading himself and his country, he soon learns the antics that take you in. He picks them up at the theatre or the music hall. (905–906)

Here, the “stage Irishman” is physically presented and dramatically exposed in the theater in front of an audience that is all too ready to accept the stereotype as an accurate representation of actual Irishmen in this play, *John Bull's Other Island*, by George Bernard Shaw.

A self-conscious treatment of stereotyping is often part of postcolonial and U.S. ethnic characterization and reception. Langston Hughes's play *Simply Heavenly* contains a particularly rich passage that points to the onerous representational burden thrust upon blacks in America. A black

man who has repudiated every distinctive feature of African American culture—and who is referred to simply as “that character”—criticizes other residents of Harlem for performing what he sees as stereotypic acts. In response to this criticism, Miss Mamie retorts:

Why it’s getting so colored folks can’t do nothing no more without some other Negro calling you a stereotype. Stereotype, hah! If you like a little gin, you’re a stereotype. You got to drink Scotch. If you wear a red dress, you’re a stereotype. You got to wear beige or chartreuse. Lord have mercy, honey, do-don’t like no blackeyed peas and rice! Then you’re a down-home Negro for sure—which I is—and proud of it!
(125–126)

This passage suggests some of the struggle involved in living within opposing ideologies’ attempts to name the typical. We see the difficulty of having both to combat the majority culture’s degrading stereotypes and to elude an official hermeneutics that labels all difference as inferiority—while still maintaining some sense of authenticity. Here, it is important for narrative theorists to learn from postcolonial and other subaltern scholars.

Historically, narrative theorists have had much to learn. In a book on character theory, Martin Price identifies Dr. Aziz as “the most fully realized character” in E. M. Forster’s novel *A Passage to India* (301); Rawdon Wilson goes further, singling out Aziz as the paradigmatic “round” or multifaceted character. Forster’s characterization of Aziz, according to Wilson, includes a personalized view of causality, no sense of what constitutes evidence, major beliefs determined by his emotions, a subjective notion of reality, a private idea of freedom that ignores guaranteed rights and the rule of law, and (despite his profession as a physician) an unscientific mind (744–746). As all postcolonial scholars know, however, these features all partake of the imperial West’s construction of the Oriental. As Said summarizes: “On the one hand there are Westerners, and on the other there are Arab-Orientals; the former are (in no particular order) rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion; the latter are none of these things” (*Orientalism* 49). Wilson, like Price, has taken a centuries-old imperialist stereotype and identified it as a fully rounded character that has the aura of the real.

As I have shown, authors employing “we” narratives tend to provide collective characterizations of entire groups. Other authors instead frag-

ment their characters and present them as juxtaposed parts of different, incompatible selves. Both these tendencies figure prominently in the work of Rushdie, an author whose characterizations draw on post-modern techniques as well as refigurings of Indian myths and epics. The narrator of *Midnight's Children*, Saleem Sinai, is self-consciously (and utterly implausibly) yoked to history, always present at the crucial location just as the most important historical events are about to occur. He both allegorically represents India and is in part composed of other individuals. "I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well. Consumed multitudes are jostling and shoving inside me" (4). Not only does this develop the idea of a multipersoned character, but it also contains an allusion to the god Krishna, whose special powers were discovered by Yasoda when she looked down his throat and, startled, saw the entire universe there. Krishna is also an avatar or incarnation of Vishnu, and Rushdie employs the trope of the avatar in reference to similar personalities in different people separated over time. In addition, Saleem loses his identity for a while. Fighting in the atrocity-filled war with Bangladesh, his actions are so horrific that he can no longer refer to himself in the first person: "I insist: not I. He. He the buddha. Who . . . would remain not-Saleem; who, in spite of running-from, was still separated from his past" (414–415). Here Rushdie invokes the discourse of Buddhist strivings to free the soul from the ego and its desires so as to describe Saleem's very different slide into non-Being, one that bears more resemblance to what I have called the "pseudo-third-person" narration found in Borges and Beckett (*Unnatural* 10–13, 110–111).

In *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie takes these ideas further, as characters cross conventional boundaries that normally circumscribe autonomous individuals, current and historical personages, literal and allegorical figures, and fictional and nonfictional subjects. The central characters are two professional impersonators, Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta. Chamcha can mimic any voice but has lost his own (because of his brown skin he has no chance to be seen on camera in the United Kingdom); Farishta is an Indian Muslim movie star who acts the roles of Hindu gods. The novel begins with the two of them falling from an exploding airplane. As Aleid Fokkema states in a perceptive essay on the subject, "They fall in unison, clasping each other, and soon exchange their identities; becoming, for a moment, one and indistinguishable, 'Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha' (5). The text happily admits that the 'impossible' (6) happens, Chamcha ends up with Gibreel's halitosis"

(58). Fokkema goes on to add that they are depicted as *blended* alter egos. Numerous other transformations of the characters occur as well: Chamcha grows horns and hooves in an embodiment of an allegorical demonization. Most subversive, both narratologically and theologically, is the sequence in which the all-too-human Farishta dreams, enacts, and becomes the archangel Gibreel, who speaks to Mohammed: “*Mahound comes to me for revelation, asking me to choose between monotheist and he-nothoist alternatives, and I’m just some idiot actor having a bhaenchud nightmare, what the fuck do I know, yaar, what to tell you, help. Help . . .*” (109). Soon, it begins to seem that the archangel is actually “*inside the prophet*”: “Not possible to say which of us is dreaming the other” (110). The supernatural figure is fused with the satirical one; dreams invade reality; the inveterate actor is both playing and being his greatest role.

Ethnic drama of the United States also provides some rich examples through experimental forms of enacted representation. Baraka’s *Slave Ship* suggests powerful continuities in the recurring patterns of rebellion and accommodation by having the same actors play the multigenerational characters that continue to repeat the same oppositions over time. Monique Mojica’s play *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* (1990) is an especially rich investigation of the socially constructed and tragically misperceived nature of Native American identity. Pocahontas is presented in three different forms: in her youth, when she was named Matoaka; as Pocahontas, the adult savior of Captain John Smith; and as Lady Rebecca after she married John Rolfe and moved to London. There is also a character called “Storybook Pocahontas” that embodies a simplistic, Manichean Euro-American myth and another called “Princess Buttered-on-Both-Sides,” a contemporary Native American who relives the Pocahontas story and is trapped within others’ stereotypes. She is also a contestant in a Native American beauty contest and performs with her band, Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots (the Blue Spots are backup singers who vaguely resemble the Supremes). In addition, Princess Pocahontas embodies the transformative aspect of the Coyote mythic trickster figure. She is transformed into many other figures, including a Native divinity, a spirit animal, and a cigar-store squaw. Tellingly, all these personae are performed by the same actress.

Reception and the Reader

Many minority and postcolonial writers have had to address different, incompatible audiences. In 1928 James Weldon Johnson wrote, “the

Aframerican faces a special problem which the plain American author knows nothing about—the problem of the double audience. It is more than a double audience; it is a divided audience, an audience made up of two elements with differing and often opposite points of view” (qtd. in A. D. Miller 304). Raymond Hedin has described how nineteenth-century African American writers negotiated these divided and often opposed audiences. Commenting on some of the more politically radical yet hermeneutically subtle stories in Charles W. Chesnutt’s collection *The Conjure Woman*, he observes: “In the Post-Reconstructionist era, a white listener cannot plausibly be asked to embrace the full implication of such tales; but he can become a strategically placed misreader . . . through whose gaps in perception the tales can seep, damaged but recoverable” (193).

Political censorship in colonized countries regularly produces texts intended for two audiences: one that allows their publication and another that understands their deeper, hidden meanings. To take a famous, spectacular example, in June 1900 the conservative Irish newspaper *Irish Society* printed an unsigned poem entitled “An Ode of Welcome” to celebrate the return of Royal Navy ships from South Africa during the Boer War. It contains the requisite patriotic themes, images, and gendered national allegory:

The Gallant Irish yeoman
Home from the war has come
Each victory gained o’er foeman
Why should our bards be dumb.

How shall we sing their praises
Our glory in their deeds
Renowned their worth amazes
Empire their prowess needs.

So to Old Ireland’s hearts and homes
We welcome now our own brave boys
In cot and Hall; neath lordly domes
Love’s heroes share once more our joys.

Love is the Lord of all just now
Be he the husband, lover, son,
Each dauntless soul recalls the vow
By which not fame, but love was won.

United now in fond embrace
 Salute with joy each well-loved face
 Yeoman: in women's hearts you hold the place.

The poem, however, was written by an anti-imperial Irishman, Oliver St. John Gogarty, to produce derision for the British, and his plan worked. The poem is an acrostic, with the first letters from each line producing an assessment of the virtues and rewards of British imperialism opposite to that inscribed in the poem proper.

In 1882 Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wrote a novel, *Anandamath*, that depicted Hindu nationalists' victorious struggle over British forces. He was able to get the book published in British-ruled India because he framed the text with anti-Muslim rhetoric and a pacifistic epilogue. As Sangeeta Ray notes, "critics have explained the discrepant conclusion [to the novel] as Bankim's lip-service to the pressures of censorship" (*Engendering* 33). Many other such examples could be adduced; what I wish to stress here is the construction of works that appeal to a disempowered audience that is able to discern a hidden subversive meaning as well as the safer surface meaning. In this manner, specific audiences are constructed and invited to participate in the struggle against oppression.

It may also be observed that in "we" narratives, the "narratees," or "narrative audience" addressed by the narrator(s), are often actual or potential members of the disempowered group, or at least sympathetic figures that can appreciate its special knowledge and unusual experiences. Most significantly, the "we" narrator can be the most compelling kind of "engaging narrator," to use Robyn Warhol's term, as "we" narration is used to present a shared, collective sensibility and to articulate a common consciousness and thereby invite readers to participate in that subject position.

Now that I have identified the many ways that narrative theory can help us identify and understand interesting or unusual narrative strategies in U.S. ethnic and postcolonial narratives, how ought we to theorize these results? The way the issue is often framed increases the stakes of the answer. On the one hand, it is often suggested that narratology is a theoretical approach firmly grounded in the standard Western canon of the last two centuries or so that falsely claims to be universal and as such can never begin to do justice to the wide range of non-Western or minority works that it necessarily excludes and thereby marginalizes. It is a pseudo-universalism, dangerous because deceptive. On the other hand, insofar as narrative theory genuinely seeks and often succeeds in identifying patterns common to all narratives, it necessarily precludes the

possibility of any significant independent local counterpoetics. One may fruitfully discuss common, widespread, or typical features of, say, the Asian American novel or the colonial Indian novel in English, but there is no evidence that we need a new narrative theory to do so. I strongly suspect that we will no more be able to find a single, autonomous postcolonial poetics, Latino/a poetics, or African American poetics than we have been able to articulate a comprehensive feminist poetics. Colonial and postcolonial authors have always utilized a variety of aesthetics and poetics; I do not believe there is or can be a single essence that runs through them all. The task for narrative theory is to come up with a framework sufficiently capacious to encompass these resonant texts.

Postcolonial texts, like many minority or marginalized works, often do evince a number of common features, as I have demonstrated. Repeatedly we observe these authors taking one or more of the basic elements of narrative and providing a multiple, collective entity instead of the conventional singular figure of traditional Western narrative. We find merged speakers and a collective consciousness in narration; joint plots of multiple individuals and extended groups; a polychronological temporality within which those plots are related; and the use of multiple, collective, and fused characterization to tell the stories of groups. These features are particularly evident in “we” narratives, where the choice of narrating pronoun easily produces a shared perspective, focalization, narratee, collective narrative agent, and plot that easily transcend the typical range of a conventional single subject. These narratives are addressed to a clearly identified audience that shares many characteristics of the protagonists. Together, these form an alternative collective poetics that draws on pre-, non- and postcapitalist conceptions as well as the most radical techniques of avant-garde and postmodern experimentation. This strikes me as a particularly powerful and radical transformation of the traditional elements of fiction and demonstrates the signal importance of what minority and postcolonial texts can provide to narrative theory. At the same time, narrative theory can identify precisely which elements of narrative are transformed and clarify exactly how this transformation is achieved. Pursuing a collectivist narrative theory will push us into new, unexpected regions and provide a new and at times unexpected cluster of texts. Of course, not all minority or postcolonial works employ collective narrative categories, and such collectivism is present in other works by other historically marginalized authors, such as women and gays. Susan Lanser has done a magnificent job in identifying many collective features of narration in novels by women in her work *Fictions of Authority*; her studies of Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford*, Sarah Orne

Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs*, and Monique Wittig's *Les Guérillères* are particularly resonant in this context. A collectivist poetics can also be found in other writers who have adapted narrative forms to embody a group identity and shared experiences. These include works celebrating a socialist depiction of industrial workers and peasants, studies of men in combat or at sea, and narratives that reproduce the experiences of rural life, usually in a precapitalist setting where a *Gemeinschaft* is present. Such works include Conrad's *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1899), Henri Barbusse's *Feu* (1916), Ignazio Silone's *Fontemara* (1930), and the stories of rural communities by Faulkner and Yiyun Li.

In conclusion, I suggest that an analysis of some of the distinctive features of U.S. ethnic and postcolonial narratives shows narrative theory to be useful in identifying and understanding the original and significant features of these works and thereby allowing us to better appreciate them both ideologically and aesthetically. For several decades, discourse analysis has brought substantial insight into postcolonial works. Aimé Césaire has stated: "while using as a point of departure the elements that French literature gave me, at the same time I have always strived to create a new language, one capable of communicating the African heritage. In other words, for me French was a tool that I wanted to use in developing a new means of expression. I wanted to create an Antillean French, a black French that, while still being French, had a black character" (*Discourse* 67). We need to further explore the many innovative narrative forms created by postcolonial authors, beginning with Glissant's "*roman du Nous*." For this, the methodology of narrative theory will be both essential and revealing.

Though this essay does not discover any overriding African American, Latino, Native American, or postcolonial poetics, it does show how many of the distinctive features of some of postcolonial and U.S. ethnic minority texts participate in the creation of an alternative poetics based not on the story of an individual during a portion of his or her life span but on that of a group occupying several spaces and often existing over an unconventionally long time period. Such narratives are not limited to minority and postcolonial authors, but these authors often produce them with a special power and urgency. Collectivist narratives have been developed over the last 150 years, often in mutual conversation with one another, with a subaltern group that lacks an authorized voice, with philosophical stances such as Marxism or Marxist-inflected anticolonialism, and with a dialectic between folk and avant-garde narrative techniques. This is an extraordinary and exciting creative achievement that calls out for more sustained investigation.

CHAPTER 2

Language Peculiarities and Challenges to Universal Narrative Poetics

DAN SHEN

In the early 1960s through 1970s, classical narratologists primarily sought to establish a universal grammar of narrative and a poetics of fiction. Although postclassical narratologists have increasingly engaged in narrative criticism, they have continued seeking to establish various models of narrative poetics, though with more modest claims—“about ‘most narratives’ or ‘narratives of a certain historical period’ rather than about ‘all narratives’” (Phelan and Rabinowitz 2; see also Shen, “Why Contextual”). In either case, little if any attention has been paid to multicultural particulars. But narratives in non-Western cultures may have various features closely associated with language peculiarities that defy accommodation to a more or less universal narrative poetics. Revealing these features may help us to see more clearly the characteristics of narrative traditions in different cultures. This essay will investigate how certain peculiarities of the Chinese language lead to narrative modes not found in Western narratives. Interestingly, peculiar linguistic and narrative conventions that tend to remain opaque within the boundary of a single culture may figure prominently when two languages and two narrative traditions meet and conflict in the process of translation. This essay will demonstrate such prominence through an investigation of translation from Chinese to English.

Chinese Peculiarities and Modes of Speech or Thought

In narrative fiction, a character’s speech or thought may appear in a range of reporting modes, with different communicative and expressive functions, that form important means for the narrator to vary point

of view, tone, and narrative distance. In the 1960s through the 1980s, modes of speech or thought presentation attracted a lot of attention from narratologists and stylisticians, who offered diverse classifications.¹ Leech and Short (318–324), for example, suggest a classificatory scheme that includes the following:

Direct Speech (DS): He said, “I’ll come back here to see you again tomorrow.”

Indirect Speech (IS): He said that he would return there to see her the following day.

Free Direct Speech (FDS):

- (a) He said I’ll come back here to see you again tomorrow.
- (b) “I’ll come back here to see you again tomorrow.”
- (c) I’ll come back here to see you again tomorrow.

Free Indirect Speech (FIS):

- (a) He would return there to see her again tomorrow.
- (b) He would come back there to see her again tomorrow.

Narrative Report of Speech Act (NRSA):

- (a) He promised to return.
- (b) He promised to visit her again.

For thought presentation, the modes remain the same, but the norm of presentation shifts to a different mode: indirect thought is the norm for thought presentation, whereas direct speech is the norm for speech. The numerous classifications made by Western scholars differ in various aspects, but as far as the distinction between (free) direct and (free) indirect modes are concerned, the criteria of differentiation invariably include tense, personal pronoun, and subordination, among others.

Chinese narrative fiction employs not only all the modes appearing in Western narrative fiction but also various additional modes that lie between or outside Western classifications. A most notable feature of Chinese is its lack of tense markers; grammatical time is thus not easily discernible. In this language, that is, there is no “backshift” in tense when the mode shifts from a direct to an indirect one, nor does one use the subordinating conjunction *that* or capitalization. So except for the personal pronoun, which is sometimes left out in Chinese—a language characterized by frequent subject and determiner omission—there can be no perceivable linguistic difference between (free) direct discourse and (free) indirect discourse or even narratorial statement.² Such a peculiar mode of speech or thought presentation, one that is open to two

or more interpretations and that lies outside Western classifications, requires a new name; I call it “blend” (see Shen, “On Transference” 397).

It should be noted that blend occurs in English, too, where it seems to be limited to two particular cases. One is that of a moodless clause (or a clause with a tenseless modal verb) interpretable as either free indirect discourse or free direct discourse (especially when immediately preceded by free indirect discourse). The other case involves the ambiguity between narratorial statement and free indirect discourse; when the tense and the pronoun selection are appropriate to either, both interpretations become possible (see Rimmon-Kenan 115; Leech and Short 338–340). These two kinds of English blend have counterparts in Chinese, but Chinese includes much more common “finite” blends that, because they are free from verbal tense indicators, frequently give rise to a mode with a two- or three-way ambiguity. Of course, the ambiguity arises only when other formal discriminating features are absent—particularly, when the pronoun is omitted. For example:

Ta youyule yi xia. Ta dui ziji suo kanlai gao cuole.

He hesitated for a moment. He said to himself (I/he) seem/seemed to be wrong.

This can be regarded as a blend of indirect speech and free direct speech (type a, which differs from direct speech only in terms of being free from quotation marks). In Chinese, blend occurs both frequently and in richly diverse forms, principally as indirect speech/free direct speech, free indirect speech/free direct speech, free indirect thought/free direct thought, and narrative report/free indirect thought/free direct thought.

The peculiarities of Chinese finite blends can be clearly seen in the process of translation. When Chinese narrative fiction employs such finite blends, reported speech is integrated into the narration while being free from positive features of the narrator’s interference (i.e., it can be quoted), since it can be taken to be in either the direct or the indirect mode. The Chinese blends, that is, have the advantage of taking on immediacy without hindering the smooth narrative flow. In translating into English, however, the absent tense indicators have to be supplied by the translator, who is often placed in a dilemma. On the one hand, to preserve the immediacy of a character’s discourse by translating a blend into the present tense is to raise it out of the narrative plane, which is normally translated into the past tense. On the other, to keep a blend on

the narrative plane by using the past tense is to lose vividness and immediacy. Things are sometimes made more awkward because the omitted grammatical subjects, objects, or determiners must be spelled out in English as being either in the first or second person (hence away from the narrator's reporting voice) or in the third person (possibly away from the character's voice).³ That is, while the original potentially contains both voices by virtue of their being indistinguishable through formal linguistic criteria, the English version must favor one voice at the expense of the other. Now let's look at some specific cases of translation.⁴

The Transference of the Blend of Indirect Speech and Free Direct Speech (without Quotation Marks)

Lu Xun's short story "The True Story of Ah Q" contains twenty-three instances of this kind of blend, which are dealt with in different ways in its two translations.⁵

	<i>IS</i>	<i>FIS</i>	<i>DS</i>
Version A:	14	2	7
Version B:	18	4	1

Table 2.1

What strikes one here is the absence of free direct speech (free from quotation marks), though it is one of the two modes potentially contained in the original. Clearly this is not because the translators always found the alternative indirect speech more satisfactory; rather, when they found indirect speech unsatisfactory, they chose direct speech or free indirect speech instead. Such treatment commonly occurs in translating from Chinese into English, in part because this kind of blend forms a norm of presentation in Chinese narratives, while the type of free direct speech in question, which differs from direct speech only in terms of the omission of quotation marks, rarely appears in English narratives. Thus, in terms of norm for norm, it is not surprising that these translators preferred the more normal direct speech or free indirect speech. Equally important, in the interest of smooth narrative flow, translators usually will not choose a direct form unless immediacy and vividness are seen to deserve priority. And if such priority arises, direct speech, with quo-

tation marks serving as invitations to an auditory experience, certainly offers more emphasis and impact than does the type of free direct speech concerned.

Although indirect speech was frequently chosen in both translations, version A differs from version B in that if there is more than one reported clause, A tends to omit the subordinator *that* (especially after the first clause), thus letting the mode slip from indirect speech into free indirect speech. Version A's treatment is, in effect, more in line with the original mode, which starts in the blend indirect speech/free direct speech and then—because Chinese lacks any subordinator to indicate parallel subordination—slips into a blend of free indirect speech/free direct speech, a mode that carries even less potential interference from the narrator. The omission of *that* seems to point to a larger issue in dealing with the Chinese blends—namely, when an indirect form is chosen, how one should keep the narrator's interference to the minimum. This issue arises because in all Chinese blends, as far as the reported speech is concerned, narrator interference is only *potential* (no *that*, no visible backshift in tense or remote-shift in person), which normally does not affect the vividness and immediacy typical of the direct mode. Thus, if the translation can take on the virtues of the indirect as well as, to some extent, the direct form, it can offer a better representation of the original.

The Transference of the Blend of Free Indirect and Free Direct Speech or Thought

The blend of free indirect/free direct is more frequently found in thought presentation in Chinese narratives. In translation, one of the potentially contained modes, the free indirect one, is consistently given priority over the other. For instance, Mao Dun's novella *The Shop of the Lin Family* includes fourteen cases of this kind of blend, which Sidney Shapiro invariably translated into the free indirect mode. This preference may arise in part from the virtues of the free indirect mode, which “offers the novelist the opportunity to combine some of the separate advantages of both the direct and the indirect form” (page 36; see also McHale, “Free Indirect”), and in part from the consequences of raising the speech or thought out of the narrative plane, an act that, apart from breaking the narrative flow, may, by clearly marking off the character's voice from that of the narrator's, involve a loss of subtlety. The following is a case of this kind of blend in Mao's story:

[MAO]: Lin xiansheng xinli yi tiao, zanshi huida bu chulai.
Mr. Lin's heart gave a leap, for the moment he couldn't answer.

Suiran shi qiba nian de lao huoji,
Although Shousheng **has/had** been **my/his** salesman for seven or eight
years

yixiang meiyou chuguo chazi, dan shui neng bao daodi ne!
and **has/had** never made a slip, still, there **is/was** no absolute
guarantee!

Both the free indirect and the free direct mode can be derived from the original with equal justification. The choice facing the translator is clearly one between subtlety (free indirect) and immediacy (free direct). In the former case, the absence of manifest features of thought presentation⁶ enables the narrator to slip inconspicuously from narrative statement to interior portrayal, while in the latter case, the reader is given direct access to the character's consciousness. But this implies the narrator's complete detachment from the character's thought, which may not be desirable in this particular context, where the narrator deeply empathizes with the character. In choosing the free indirect form over the free direct, through remote-shift in person and backshift in tense, Shapiro perceptibly shortens the distance between the narrator and the character. "The tinting of the narrator's speech with the character's language" also promotes "an empathetic identification on the part of the reader" (Rimmon-Kenan 114). The choice results in a notably heightened suspense, for the worried party is not only the character (the self-centered "my") but also the interpreting narrator and, probably, the reader.

Although the free indirect mode presents notable advantages, in certain contexts the free direct mode seems to be a more suitable choice. This is especially so when the narrator uses a calm or detached style but the character's speech or thought, typically containing exclamations or rhetorical questions, is emotively charged and when the pronoun or deictic selection is appropriate to both modes (and where, therefore, the immediacy of the free direct form can be gained with less cumbersome "gear-shifting"). Under such circumstances, whichever mode is chosen, the impulsive voice of the character is marked off from that of the narrator, eliminating the subtlety that comes from the merging of the two voices involved, but the immediacy of the free direct form may be more desirable.

The Transference of the Blend: Narrative Report/ Free Indirect Thought/Free Direct Thought

Its three-way ambiguity makes this blend take on the combined characteristics of the free indirect thought/free direct thought blend and that of narrative report/free indirect thought. Here, as with the blend of narrative report/free indirect thought, whether the mode is made up of the narrator's statement or a character's inner thoughts remains an open question. With regard to the latter, furthermore, there is no way of telling whether it consists of words actually spoken or words reported by the narrator. The overall effect is one of indeterminacy and subtlety. If the translator selects a tense (past), pronoun (third person), and style appropriate both to narrative report and free indirect thought, the mode will preserve the two-way ambiguity, its virtue lying in its preservation of the subtle merging of the two voices, providing access to the character's mind without breaking the narrative flow. Given the same tense and pronoun selection, a relatively neutral or formal reporting style may incline the reader to take the mode as the narrator's statement instead of the blend narrative report/free indirect thought, an interpretation that may involve some loss of subtlety (see version A in the following case). The subtlety will be totally lost if the mode chosen is free direct thought (though that mode produces a gain in immediacy) or if the translator attributes the blend to the character concerned by means of a reporting clause, as version B does in translating the following passage taken from Cao Xueqin's famous classical novel *Honglou Meng* (*A Dream of Red Mansions*, also called *Shitou Ji* [*The Story of the Stone*]):

[Cao]: Zhengzai tingshang xuanzhuan, zen de ge ren
(1) He was pacing helplessly around the hall, (2) how to get

wang litou shao xin,
someone to take a message to the inner apartments, (3) (but)

pianpiande mei ge ren lai, lian Pei-ming
it has to happen that nobody comes just now, (4) even Pei-ming
it had to happen that nobody came just then, even Pei-ming
it so happened that nobody came just then, even Pei-ming

ye buzhi zai nali. (Chapter 33)
is nowhere to be found.

was nowhere to be found.
was nowhere to be found.

[Translation A]: [1]—and as he stood where his father had left him, he twisted and turned himself about, [2] anxiously looking for some passer-by who could take a message through to the womenfolk inside. [3] But no one came. [4]. Even the omnipresent Tealeaf was on this occasion nowhere to be seen. (Cao, *Story*, trans. Hawkes, 2:147)

[Translation B]: [1] There he still stood in the pavilion, [2] revolving in his mind how he could get some one to speed inside and deliver a message for him. [3] But, as it happened, not a soul appeared. [4] He was quite at a loss to know where even Pei Ming could be. (Cao, *Hung*, trans. Joly, 2:136)

In Cao's clause 2, the "wh-" question, whose implication is clearly on the lines of "he was wondering how to get," leads one to infer that the narrator-focalizer has now penetrated into the mind of the character. When it comes to clauses 3 and 4, two possibilities emerge: on the one hand, the narrator-focalizer seems still within the consciousness of the focalized (free direct thought/free indirect thought); on the other hand, 3 and 4 seem to form an outer description (narrative report) perceived from a perspective shared by the empathetic narrator and the character. The latter mode would mean that the narrator's spatial focalization is for the moment changed from a bird's-eye view to that of a limited observer, which goes no further than the character's perception. The effect is twofold. The limited internal focalization makes the narrator directly involved, which is reflected in the fretful tone underlying "it so happened" and "even." Simultaneously, the narrator's limitation momentarily destroys the reader's conventional security—the belief that the narrator is in the know (given, of course, the overall omniscient mode of narration)—adding a good deal to the effect of suspense.

In translation A the narrator's voice dominates the scene, which becomes notable in clause 2, where Cao's free indirect thought ("how to get") is rendered through the mode of narratorial statement ("looking for some passer-by"). The reader is consequently taken out of the direct experience of the character's thought and is shown instead the state of the character's mind. This change somehow limits 3 and 4 to the single mode of narrative report (as opposed to Cao's blend), a mode confirmed by the fairly formal style ("omnipresent," "on this occasion"). Transla-

tion B uses indirect thought in rendering 4, thus ascribing the restricted perspective, which is shared by narrator and character in Cao's original and version A, explicitly and exclusively to the character ("he was quite at a loss to know where"). This leads one to infer that the narrator's focalization is still external, that is, that the narrator is in the know. Such an inference may condition one's interpretation of the preceding clause, failing to destroy the reader's conventional security in both places and resulting in the partial loss of suspense.

These peculiar Chinese modes present problems not just for translators but also for narrative theorists. Some Chinese scholars remain dissatisfied with my definition of the peculiar Chinese modes as "blends" and similar attempts to account for other peculiar Chinese narrative phenomena. These scholars reject such attempts because they are based on Western models ostensibly not sufficiently applicable to Chinese narrative phenomena, thus forcing Chinese narrative phenomena onto a Procrustean bed of a mismatched Western framework. Instead, they advocate, we need to establish a truly Chinese narrative poetics, one rooted in Chinese culture and the Chinese narrative tradition. In a pioneering essay entitled "Chinese Narratology," Yang Yi observes that Chinese narrative literature has its own distinct mechanisms, models, and standards of evaluation that, despite some overlap with their Western counterparts, constitute a system both separate from and complementary to that developed in the West (see also Yang's book *Chinese Narratology*). According to Yang, Chinese narratives are based first and foremost on Chinese people's deep-level ways of "circular reasoning." The determining forces of the circular structure, how it functions, and how it weaves and unweaves a narrative hark back to the time-honored concepts of *yin* and *yang*, the two opposing principles in nature, one feminine, the other masculine. Yang's dualistically "circular" model of classical Chinese narratives helps illuminate the factors underlying many choices of plot structure and method of narration made by authors of classical Chinese narratives. That the examples chosen as the basis for Yang's research are almost exclusively classical Chinese narratives is explained by the fact that modern and contemporary Chinese narratives are in many respects already Westernized and no longer fit the mold (see Shen and Zhou). If Yang's publications have led to a recent upsurge of interest in constructing a specifically Chinese narrative poetics, one that both draws on yet remains independent from Western narrative poetics, other scholars are equally quick to recognize the need to creatively transform both contemporary Western and traditional Chinese narrative theories to better

account for modern as well as classical Chinese narrative structures (see Shi's summary account).

In my view, it is often but not always helpful to view peculiar Chinese narrative modes in relation to Western modes. Treating the peculiar modes of speech and thought previously discussed as blends of existing modes in Western narratives enables us to see quite clearly the characteristics of these Chinese modes. But sometimes we do need to see Chinese modes more in their own right.

Language Peculiarities and Rhetorical Devices

Parallelism in various forms constitutes one of Chinese narrative fiction's most frequently found rhetorical devices. What underlies this frequency is, at the basic level, Chinese as a language, for its monosyllabic structure and its tonal system cooperate to provide ideal soil for such symmetrical structures. While parallelism appears in English poetry, it occupies a much more prominent place in Chinese poetry, where it often forms a semiprosodic feature, required or expected in certain poetic forms, such as *lushi*. The early development of Chinese prose was dominated for long periods by *pianwen*, which literally means "parallel-composition." Tradition as such can, however, be overly or misleadingly stressed. In fact, Chinese prose fiction is usually written in *santi*, a prose style that does not require parallelism. What should be stressed, though, is that in Chinese narrative fiction, by virtue of the language combined with the tradition, parallelism is more natural and more frequently employed than it is in English.

Cao's *Honglou Meng* was written in the eighteenth century, when "parallel-composition," though waning, was still an influential prose style. And Cao adopted it for, among other things, the description of the appearance of some characters. This style, marked by consistent rhythmical parallel structure and ornate figures of speech, is somewhat out of place in English fiction. Translation A therefore finds it necessary to render the description into poetic form:

As to his person, he had:
 a face like the moon of Mid-Autumn,
 a complexion like flowers at dawn,
 a hairline straight as a knife-cut,
 eyebrows that might have been painted by an artist's brush,
 a shapely nose, and

eyes clear as limpid pools,
 that even in anger seemed to smile,
 and, as they glared, beamed tenderness the while. (Cao, *Story*, trans.
 Hawkes, 1:100–101)

Compare this to translation C:

His face was as radiant as the mid-autumn moon, his complexion fresh as spring flowers at dawn. The hair above his temples was as sharply outlined as if cut with a knife. His eyebrows were as black as if painted with ink, his cheeks as red as peach-blossom, his eyes bright as autumn ripples. Even when angry he seemed to smile, and there was warmth in his glance even when he frowned. (Cao, *Dream*, trans. Yang and Yang 1:46)

The layout of version A forms a visual signal of poetry, toward which readers have a certain set of expectations and in which Cao's ornate parallel figurative description finds congenial accommodation. It may be worth noting that version A's change in genre form constitutes part of a larger strategy to "naturalize" Cao, involving, among other things, the replacement of "Buddha" by "God," while no such effort was made in version C, whose aim is rather to introduce the differences in culture as well as in narrative conventions. Each approach has its own justifications. Adaptation of form may nevertheless sometimes lead to a regrettable loss of content, as is shown by the following case:

[Translation C]: (When they saw the pure translucent Stone which had shrunk to the size of a fan-pendant, the monk took it up on the palm of his hand and said to it with a smile: "You look like a precious object, but you still lack real value. I must engrave some characters on you so that people can see at a glance that you're something special.) Then we can take you to some civilized and prosperous *realm*, to a cultured *family* of official status, a *place* where flowers and willows flourish, the *home* of pleasure and luxury where you can settle down in comfort." (Cao, *Dream*, trans. Yang and Yang, 1:2; my emphasis)

Compare this to translation A:

(. . .) After that I shall take you to a certain
 brilliant
 successful
 poetical

cultivated
 aristocratic
 elegant
 delectable
 luxurious
 opulent

locality on a little trip.” (Cau, *Story*, trans. Hawkes, 1:48)

First, some contextual information needs to be given. The origin of Cao’s novel is attributed to a magic stone that a monk and a Taoist bring into the human world and whose account of its experience there constitutes the rudimentary version of the novel. The present passage (see C) depicts the monk’s and Taoist’s discovery of the magic stone and the monk’s promise to take it to the human world. In this context, translation C’s “realm,” “family,” “place,” and “home,” which are closely translated from Cao, combine to refer to the major scene of the novel. As the first mention of the scene, which is gradually unfolded only some pages later, the passage confers on the four nominal groups (which are, in the original, strictly parallel to one another) psychological prominence and contextual importance and, further, arouses in the reader a measure of suspense.

In version A, however, Cao’s four parallel nominal groups are rendered into a single one by means of the superordinate term *locality*. In adopting the deviant layout to render the Chinese parallel structure, A resorts to perhaps not only conventional expectations associated with poetry but also those associated with such a register as advertisement, in which we frequently find the enumeration of attributes vertically set out. A’s adaptation not only makes natural what would appear odd in English but also gives the monk’s utterance some supernatural flavor, adding to this certain “locality” some mystical color. However, the adaptation does lead to regrettable losses. According to an authoritative commentary (see the version of the novel with a preface by Qi, p. 4), Cao’s four nominal groups refer to four different yet closely associated scenes: *bang* (“realm”)—the capital city; *zu* (“family”)—the Rong Mansion; *di* (“place”)—the Grand View Garden; and *xiang* (“home”)—the Orchid Studio, with the latter three scenes situated in the first. Each nominal group—or at least the latter three—is in a sense used synecdochically, and each therefore takes on a general reference superimposed on the specific. Because of the parallelism obtaining between the nominal groups (a feature more notable in Cao than in C), the general reference receives emphasis even as the specific reference persists. Thus the reader

is on the one hand given the impression that the four parallel nominal groups refer to (different aspects of) the same general locality while, on the other, made aware that each may refer to a different specific locality. The ambiguity or the interplay of the general and the specific, coupled with the interaction between the parallel general or specific references, arouses in the reader great interest and suspense in a unique way. Such effects are inevitably lost in translation A's adaptation of form.

Another distinctive rhetorical device that I would like to note is the "covert change of the subject," which frequently appears in Chinese narratives. Compared to English and other Western languages, Chinese is a more "contextualized" language, where a great deal of information depends on contextual inference without being explicitly spelled out. In chapter 4 of Cao's *Dream of Red Mansions*, for example, the narrator uses a covert change of the subject to quicken the psychological pace at which one event follows another:

[Cao]: Jiemeimen yizhao xianjian, beixi jiaoji, zi bubi shuo;

(1) The two sisters were now reunited, needless to say, joy and sorrow mingled together;

xule yifan qikuo,

(2) () talked for a while about the years of separation,

you yinzhe baijian Jia mu,

(3) and () took (them) in to pay respects to the Lady Dowager,

jiang renqing tuwu gezhong chouxianle

(4) () presented the various kinds of gifts of Nanking produce,

hejia ju sijianguo;

(5) the whole family were introduced to one another,

you zhixi jiefeng.

(6) and () spread a feast of welcome for the guests. (Chapter 4; the empty parentheses indicate the omission of the subject)

[Translation A]: [1] The sudden reunion of the two sisters was, it goes without saying, an affecting one in which joy and sorrow mingled.

[2] *After* an exchange of information about the years of separation,

[3] *and after* they had been taken to see Grandmother Jia and made

their reverence to her, [4] *and after* the gifts of Nanking produce had

been produced [5] and everyone had been introduced to everyone else, [6] there was a family party to welcome the new arrivals. (Cao, *Story*, trans. Hawkes 1:121; my emphasis)

[Translation B]: [1] The two sisters were now reunited, at an advanced period of their lives, so that mixed feelings of sorrow and joy thronged together, but on these it is, of course, needless to dilate. [2] After conversing for a time on what had occurred, subsequent to their separation, [3] Madame Wang took them to pay their obeisance to dowager lady Chia. [4] They then handed over the various kinds of presents and indigenous articles, [5] and after the whole family had been introduced, [6] a banquet was also spread to greet the guests. (Cao, *Hung*, trans. Joly, 1:87)

In the presentational mode of narrative summary, and with the synopses kept to a minimum, pace in Cao's text is accelerated by means of a covert change of the subject. The sentence begins with the subject "the two sisters" (Lady Wang and Aunt Xue), a subject that the following clause implicitly retains. By clause 3, however, the omitted subject is understood to be shifted to Lady Wang alone, which is covertly and immediately changed in clause 4 to the other of the two sisters, Aunt Xue (and possibly her children). After the explicit subject "the whole family" in clause 5, the subject is again in the following clause implicitly shifted to a different entity, "the hostesses (and the hosts)." The frequent use of the covert change of the subject notably hastens the pace of the events: ". . . talked for a while about the years of separation, and took them in to pay respects to the Lady Dowager, presented the various kinds of gifts of Nanking produce, the whole family were introduced to one another, and spread a feast of welcome for the guests." This psychological hastening of pace through a frequent covert change of the subject bears thematic significance. The description of the Xues' arrival (at the central scene of the fiction), synthesized into a single sentence, forms a stark contrast to the arrival of Lin Daiyu, which is depicted in elaborate detail, going on for pages. Now one of the Xues—Xue Baochai (Aunt Xue's daughter)—and Lin Daiyu, being the two female protagonists in the novel, represent two contending forces: antifeudalist versus feudal-ist. Their symbolic contention for the love of the hero forms one of the major themes of the novel. With an antifeudalist tendency, the implied author takes a stand for Lin Daiyu, the one with democratic ideas. Never once, though, is this stand explicitly stated; it is to be detected, among other things, in the subtle rhetorical choices. The radical difference in

attention accorded to their respective arrivals at the central scene serves to bring out the author's partiality for Lin Daiyu over Xue Baochai, the latter being, significantly, kept obscure in the already inconspicuous description. The author's indifference towards Xue Baochai (indicated by the scant description of her arrival) is underlined by the psychological hastening of pace, which generates a rapid continuity that adds a good deal to the tone of customariness or predictability underlying the bald summary (which serves merely as a necessary connective framework). This goes toward reducing the psychological prominence or, more to the point, the significance of the affair.

Cao's psychological hastening of pace is well captured by translation A, where the corresponding means chosen for Cao's constant covert changing of the subject (unavailable in English) takes the form of the consistent "after . . . and after . . . and after." The continuous downward shifts in rank in the clauses concerned (from a main clause to a prepositional phrase at 2 or to a subordinate clause at 3, 4, and 5) operate to lump the events involved to make a circumstantial whole as a background to "a family party." Because the reader expects the main clause to follow the first "after," the appearance of "and after" generates an element of suspense, pressing the mind forward to find the main clause, an expectation only to be defeated by the subsequent "and after," thus further pressing the mind forward. The resulting effect is that the "circumstantial whole" is seen to progress with speedy continuity, perceptibly accelerating the pace of the processes involved. We may note that the three subsidiary instances of "after," being considerably parallel in situation and function and with a strong undertone of monotony and predictability, interact to render one another obscure, helping to quicken the processing speed and, related to that, to hasten the psychological pace. As if to strengthen the effect, specification of the omitted subjects, which is often called for in Chinese-to-English translation, is avoided by means of either nominalization ("an exchange of information," at 2), passivatization (at 3 and 4), or an existential clause (at 6). All this makes version A "run on" at a fairly quick speed, with the events, marked by psychological obscurity, closely following one another, which nicely matches the effect of the original.

By contrast, Cao's psychological hastening of pace is not at all reflected in version B. Although two of Cao's main clauses (2 and 5) are subordinated in B, it goes no further than what is normally expected in coping with the much less syntactically detailed Chinese. While no effort is made to correspond to the unexpectedly frequent covert change of the subject, Cao's quickly "run-on" narrative flow (2–6) is broken into

three somewhat separate units (2–3, 4, and 5–6), with the consequence that the pace is notably slowed down. Although translation A captures the original’s rhetorical effect, that rhetorical device remains peculiarly Chinese, not found in English or directly transferable into English.

Narratives from different cultures share many similarities, ranging from deep-level plot structures to surface rhetorical devices. But narratives from different cultures also have various unique features that defy accommodation to a universal narrative poetics. The demand on narrative theorists is therefore twofold: both to build up universal narrative poetics to account for shared structures and to pay attention to multicultural particulars. The multicultural particulars may have to do, among other things, with deep-rooted ways of cultural thinking or with language peculiarities. The relation between language peculiarities and unique narrative modes, which tends to figure most prominently in the translation process, has not received sufficient attention. This essay has thus investigated this relation by examining Chinese-English translation, with the aim of shedding interesting light on the Chinese narrative tradition that demonstrates striking differences from Western narrative traditions.

Notes

1. See, e.g., Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 169–185; McHale, “Free Indirect”; Rimmon-Kenan 107–117; Bal 43–52; Prince, *Narratology* 47–48; Chatman; Page; Leech and Short 318–351. As I discuss in “What Narratology and Stylistics Can Do for Each Other,” narratology and stylistics focus on different aspects of narrative presentation, but both pay attention to speech presentation, among other things.

2. Idiolectal or tonal features can also function as differentiating criteria, but many reported discourse acts do not display those features (see Shen, “On Transference” 396–397).

3. In addition to forgoing grammatical subjects and determiners, Chinese narratives often also simplify the pronouns “myself,” “yourself,” and “himself” as “self” (*ziji*), thus losing the function of distinguishing between direct and indirect discourse.

4. For a fuller and more detailed discussion, see Shen, “On Transference.”

5. (A): Lu Hsun (Lu Xun), trans. Yang and Yang, 76–135; (B): Lusin (Lu Xun), trans. Wang, 77–129.

6. The narrator seems to be emotionally involved in this story, where the exclamation mark is sometimes used on the narrative plane and therefore loses some of its value in determining the presumed origin of speech and thought.

CHAPTER 3

Reading Narratologically: Azouz Begag's *Le Gone du Chaâba*

GERALD PRINCE

Narratology characterizes and articulates narratively relevant features such as the orders in which narrated situations and events can be arranged, the points of view in terms of which they can be depicted, or the different speeds at which they can be related in order to account for the ways all and only narratives are configured and make sense. It thus offers narratological criticism a number of descriptive tools with which to capture the distinctiveness of sets of particular narratives and to found or support interpretive conclusions about them (Prince, “On Narratology”; Kindt and Müller; Nünning). In what follows, I will consider Azouz Begag’s *Le Gone du Chaâba* (*Shantytown Kid*) in a narratological light.¹ I will then briefly discuss some of the implications of such a treatment for the study of multicultural and other narratives, as well as for narratology itself.

First published in a series devoted to young readers—the Collection Point Virgule—but widely read, studied, and appreciated by adults, *Le Gone du Chaâba* is generically designated as a novel (“roman”) though it bears many autobiographical marks: the autodiegetic narrator, for example, has the same name as the author and, like him, grew up during the 1960s in a shantytown near Lyon. It recounts the life of a young boy of Algerian origin on his way to assimilation into French society. It and Mehdi Charef’s *Le Thé au harem d’Archi Ahmed* (*Tea in the Harem*) constitute the two best-known texts of the so-called *beur* literature—that is, material written in French by the children of North African immigrants to France.² Often regarded as a multicultural, postcolonial “Francophone” work, it also belongs to “French” literature. The author—an economist, sociologist, researcher at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, and prolific writer—was France’s minister for

equal opportunities in Dominique de Villepin's government from 2005 to 2007 and the first French cabinet member of North African descent.

One area of particular interest for narratological criticism of post-colonial or multicultural works concerns the nature and functioning of the languages used by the narrator, the narratee, and the characters (Gymnich; Prince, "On a Postcolonial"). The very title of Begag's novel—which is not immediately understandable for a reader of standard French—more than suggests the importance of this linguistic dimension. Its two function words (*le* and *du*, or "the" and "from the") belong to standard French, the language of the ruling order and dominant culture in the text, but the first content word is Lyonnais slang for "kid," and the second, which means "wasteland" or "hovel" in Algerian Arabic while evoking the more standard Arabic term for "people" or "popular," is used by the shantytown's inhabitants to refer to the shantytown. Not only does the mixture indicate the autodiegetic narrator's distinct composite identity and his text's emancipation from traditional, "Franco-French" literary expression, but it also calls to mind possible tensions or negotiations between worlds with little in common, and it points to the processes and problems of revelation and concealment ("chaâba" betrays foreignness at the same time that it hides "shantytown"), separation and integration, publicity and privacy, attachment to the old but attraction to the new.

Like the title, the body of the text mixes standard French with slang from the Lyon region and words from Algerian Arabic. It also frequently features the "Arabized," strongly accented French of the narrator's parents (48, 119, 146; 37, 99, 123), and it draws on different linguistic registers, from the formal and literary to the colloquial and even vulgar (50, 103, 191; 38, 86, 163). Most characteristically, perhaps, it multiplies direct as well as indirect metalinguistic explanations (e.g., 7, 128, 141, 167; 1, 107–108, 119, 142). In addition, the novel provides a small glossary of Arabic words spoken by natives of Sétif in Algeria (where the narrator's parents come from), a small glossary of slang words spoken by natives of Lyon, and a guide to the "Bouzidian" (after Bouzid, the narrator's father) pronunciation or "phraseology" of French (233–238; 201–207). While representing the (bridgeable) distance between Algerian Arabic or Lyonnais slang and standard French, past and present, child protagonist and adult teller, and narratee and narrator, and while constituting, maybe, a sign of the latter's enduring solidarity with his (former) community, this insistent metalinguistic component foregrounds what he is and the extent to which he has changed but also and even more so his desire to be heard and understood.

More generally, linguistic concerns permeate the narrative as a whole. The protagonist, who is illiterate in Arabic (206; 176), strives for excellence in French; Bouzid's imperfect assimilation is signaled by his problems with that language; and a teacher's kindness is accompanied by knowledge of spoken and written Arabic (204–206; 175–177). Similarly, the will to be heard shapes many elements of the narrative. The narrative's designation as fiction rather than autobiography, for instance, may well make its more critical passages easier to consider and accept (Smith and Watson). In addition, the choice of the young and naïve protagonist as main focalizer allows for a good-natured view of circumstances that could seem unfairly difficult to an adult. The adoption of an engagingly humorous and self-deprecating tone—like the characterization of the narratee as unfamiliar with Arabic, Lyonnais slang, or shantytowns but as capable of learning and understanding—further emphasizes Begag's goodwill. Significantly, Islamic belief and practices are mentioned sparingly and often in a lighthearted manner (208, 217, 218; 179, 186, 187). References to the French colonization of Algeria or to the Algerian War of Independence, which ended two or three years before the beginning of the protagonist's story, prove even more infrequent and more indirect (174, 202–203, 207; 149, 173–174, 177). Several other possibly controversial topics—e.g. the Six-Day War—are hardly discussed. They are also treated comically (182; 155). Though not uncommon among the Franco-French characters in the novel, racism never turns violent, and it is found in little Azouz's family, too (166, 182; 141, 155). Indeed, rather than stress the uniqueness of his experiences, the narrator prefers to suggest the universality of many of them, from yielding to peer pressure or engaging in sexual play to facing a choice between tradition and modernity.

Language, tone, and communicative drive thus characterize the autodiegetic narrator, but so do the spaces he inhabits or frequents. His evolution is signified by his movement from the Chaâba to a working-class area in Lyon as much as by his progressive mastery of first oral and then written French. In the opening pages of the novel, the Chaâba is strongly associated with unhealthy physical conditions, corporality, or even excrementality (13–16; 6–9). Adjacent to a rubbish dump and separated from Lyon by natural and cultural borders (e.g., the Rhône River and an expressway), it constitutes a heterotopia of deviation, occupied by individuals who are different from the “normal” population. Though it can function as an oasis (10; 4) and a home away from home for immigrants or exiles such as Bouzid and his wife, Messaouda, it also represents the world that Azouz has managed to leave behind (but at a price [157, 171; 133, 145]). In contrast, school—which, as the protagonist grows

up, is located farther and farther away from the Chaâba—stands for the assimilative space par excellence (60; 48), one marked by discourses on cleanliness, hygiene, and good breeding (58, 63, 96; 46, 51, 79). Likewise, the Lyon neighborhood where Azouz and his family move after leaving the Chaâba provides the space in which the protagonist, for better or for worse, becomes a real “gone” (180; 154). As for the narrator, the place he occupies remains unspecified, as if to intimate that writing has turned out to be his privileged location.

Along with the movement through space, there is movement through time. The action takes place in the 1960s. It appears to start around 1964, with the lack of a more exact date underlining how far the narrator has traveled. It ends in the summer of 1968 as the protagonist and his family are forced to move to the La Duchère housing project, in the Lyon outer ring, and this inconclusiveness no doubt implies that Azouz’s future is full of possibilities (an implication borne out by *Le Gone du Chaâba* itself, as well as the author’s many other achievements). In general, few dates are mentioned or alluded to. Chronometry matters less for memory than for history, and the absence of dates emphasizes the representativeness rather than singularity of the events recounted, their collective (universal) rather than individual dimension. Still, chronological order dominates, which underscores Azouz’s steady “progress” toward assimilation. Two events stand out all the more because of their exceptional analeptic position: the protagonist’s circumcision (103ff.; 86ff.) and his humiliation in class when unjustly accused of plagiarism (211ff.; 181ff.). Both relate to his ethnicity, and together they sum up the inclusions and exclusions it can entail.

At least one other temporal feature is worthy of comment. Like many contemporary French literary narratives, *Le Gone du Chaâba* favors the present tense and the *passé composé* over the more traditional *passé simple* (preterit), perhaps to signify the narrator’s straightforwardness. Perhaps also, since the present and the *passé composé*, contrary to the *passé simple*, are “discourse tenses” relating the past to the situation of enunciation, the deictic system of I-here-now, they connect the events narrated with the narrator and align the text with the memorial and personal instead of the historical (Weinrich; Benveniste).³ However far Azouz Begag has traveled and however much time has gone by, his childhood experiences are still with him. He cannot or will not leave them behind. In fact, his past so inhabits the present that, at several points, his posterior narration looks like an intercalated one (29, 70, 136; 19, 70, 114) and thus signals that he still is the “shantytown kid.” At times, the *passé simple* does get

used, for example when some of Azouz's peers reject him for being a good student (92, 103; 76, 85) but especially when Bouzid begins to lose control over the Chaâba or when he realizes that he will not soon go back to his native Algeria (125–127, 230–231; 105–106, 198–199). Some situations are irremediable.

The preceding narratological questions raised about *Le Gone du Chaâba* have allowed for a partial description and interpretation of the novel. Clearly, they could yield richer results. One might point out, for instance, that the word *chaâba* is never explicitly translated in Azouz Begag's narration or in the glossaries; maybe it has too much meaning and carries too many connotations or associations to be rendered, even approximately, in a different language. Conversely, some terms—e.g., *chkoun*, “who is it”—are explicitly translated both in Begag's narration and in the glossary of Arabic words (167, 235; 143, 205). One might also point out that this glossary is about three and a half times longer than the glossary of Lyonnais slang and that fewer than a third of its entries pertain to the religious or supernatural realm. Or again, one might study the reasons governing direct as opposed to indirect metalinguistic comments. Similarly, with respect to characterization, one might remark that, contrary to social attributes, psychological traits play hardly any part. Along with linguistic practices or spatial situations, gender roles in the Chaâba prove particularly important (e.g., 9, 13, 15, 23; 3, 6, 8, 15). Food—whether prohibited or permitted (pork, *chorba*, couscous with mutton, dates and buttermilk)—also distinguishes Azouz and his community. Names, not surprisingly, reveal origins, and those of the Franco-French often have a symbolic dimension. For example, the best student in the class is “Laville” (“the city”); a respected teacher is called “Grand”; and another teacher, who acts as a kind of mentor to the protagonist, is “Loubon” (“tha' good one”). In the same way, the visible social body—complexion and hair quality, gold teeth and tattoos, the women's *binouars* (dresses) and their corpulence (168, 170, 183, 196; 143, 145, 156, 168)—constitutes a powerful marker of ethnicity while underlining the identity problems Azouz faces (183–186; 156–159).

Of course, other narratological questions could be raised, ones about narrative speed, for instance, or about the homodiegetic nature of the narrator. The text, as mentioned above, covers approximately four years in the narrator's life. But his account of the first two years, before the move to an apartment in Lyon, is twice as long as that of the second, probably because the time of the Chaâba is the more important and determinative one. In addition, the first-person narration not only results

in a lesser distance between narrator and protagonist but also allows Azouz Begag to say “we” (e.g., 24, 36, 41; 16, 27, 30), points to his narrative capacities in French as well as to his communicative energies, and indicates his public embrace of his origins and ethnicity (182, 183–186, 200–202; 155–156, 156–159, 171–173).

Note that all the questions raised—about the narrator’s and characters’ linguistic or metalinguistic behavior, the traits they exhibit, the space they occupy, narrative time, order, speed, person—are standard narratological questions and could be raised (more or less profitably) with regard to any narrative. Note too that they lay adequate ground for a discussion of the more distinctly narrative features of Begag’s text. There are no narrative eccentricities or anomalies in *Le Gone du Chaâba*—no puzzling transgression of ontological boundaries, no oddly disframed narrator, and no focalizing quaintness, regressive or looping temporality, erratic chronology, or contradictory characterization that might resist, perplex, or confound the categories and tools of even the most classical narratology. Begag’s novel confirms that formal experimentation, technical innovation, and narrative daring are neither characteristic of nor integral to multicultural (or postcolonial) texts. In fact, the narrator’s desire to be understood, as well as his determination to show that he is very much like his readers, might well militate against any such pyrotechnics.

Now, suppose *Le Gone du Chaâba*—or some other set of multicultural texts—involved narrative features that the tool kit supplied by classical narratology (or a richer and more powerful postclassical narratology) did not envisage and was unable to handle: a bizarre type of point of view, say, a peculiar kind of temporal order, or an extravagant sort of framing.⁴ The kit should be modified so as to accommodate these features without losing coherence, systematicity, and the ability or ambition to describe what all and only narratives have in common, as well as what enables them to differ from one another. In recent years, there has been a multiplication of narratologies using new instruments, incorporating sensitivity to specific concerns, and wearing different lenses to look at certain sets of narrative texts: feminist narratology, cognitive narratology, postmodern narratology, or even postcolonial narratology but also narratologies of English lyric poetry and of Ishmael Reed (Lanser, “Toward a Feminist”; Gibson; Ludwig; Herman, *Narrative Theory*; Hühn and Kiefer; Prince, “On a Postcolonial”). Whatever their immediate goals may be, these specially inflected narratologies should be integrable into a comprehensive narratology accounting for all and only narratives. They should be mindful of the general and the particular, the

universal and the singular, the global and the local, grammar and style. In other words, any narratological consideration of Begag's text, any "narratology of *Le Gone du Chaâba*," should capture what makes it different from other narratives without forgetting what makes it similar to them (see McHale, "Ghosts").

Finally, note that, however many fruitful questions an expansive narratology helps to raise about texts and, more particularly, about novels such as Begag's, numerous other interesting questions regarding such texts are simply not narratologically driven or derived. How did France's economic situation in the 1970s and 1980s affect Begag's vision, for example? What about his university experiences? What comic techniques does the novel's narrator use? What is their effect on female readers? Again, in recent years, narratology has increasingly been viewed "in a way that makes it more or less interchangeable with narrative studies. . . . No longer designating just a subfield of structuralist literary theory, narratology can now be used to refer to any principled approach to the study of narratively organized discourse, literary, historiographical, conversational, filmic, or other" (Herman, "Introduction" 27). In an attempt to capture the specificity of narrative, classical narratology set certain questions aside as irrelevant to its concerns. On the contrary, postclassical narratology yields perhaps too easily to the temptation of asking them all. At times, it even seems that no question, nothing in narrative texts or in their many contexts, is alien to it. Though it has thus succeeded in augmenting the dynamism and vigor of narrative exploration, it has risked falling prey to adhocity. It has also risked losing sight of its own specificity and forgetting its ultimate goal, which is to characterize the system underlying narrative. Whether classical or postclassical, narratology is not equivalent to textual, literary, or cultural theory, and narratological criticism is not equivalent to other kinds of criticism. In other words, a narratological consideration of *Le Gone du Chaâba*—or any set of texts, multicultural or otherwise—should not aspire to say everything we would want to know about the texts and their infinitely many contexts; rather, it should more modestly and systematically try to characterize (the functioning of) their narrativity.

Notes

1. Parenthetical page references will provide page numbers first—in italics—for the French edition (Begag, *Le Gone*) and then for the English translation (Begag, *Shantytown*).
2. Coined in the 1970s by this second generation, the word *beur* was prob-

ably formed through the inversion and truncation of the word *Arabe*. On *beur* literature, see both Laronde and Hargreaves. On *Le Gone du Chaâba*, see both Mehrez and Emery.

3. The fine English-language translation uses the preterit to render the French present, *passé composé*, and *passé simple*. Consequently, it does not capture some of the effects of the original.

4. On such “unnatural” features, see Fludernik, “Towards a ‘Natural’”; Margolin; and Richardson, *Unnatural*. On classical and postclassical narratology, see Herman, “Scripts” and “Introduction”; Nünning and Nünning; and Fludernik, “Histories.”

CHAPTER 4

***Jasmine* Reconsidered: Narrative Structure and Multicultural Subjectivity**

ROBYN WARHOL

Among feminist and postcolonialist readers, practically everybody hates *Jasmine*. When Bharati Mukherjee published her first American novel in 1989, *Jasmine*—the story of a young Indian woman’s move from her birthplace to the United States—sold well and drew the attention of many critics interested in multicultural literature. For the moment, the heroine of *Jasmine* stood out in popular fiction as a one-woman figure for the South Asian diaspora, and the novel’s thematic focus on Jasmine’s shifting sense of herself offered up the text to the preoccupation with identity politics that dominated literary criticism during the 1990s. But critics who looked at the text—especially from a postcolonial perspective—were often disgusted with what they saw. *Jasmine*, written by an upper-middle-class woman who emigrated from India to the United States, got a reputation as a novel that Orientalizes and stereotypes the experience of rural Indian women, solidifying Western prejudices and, by contrast, glorifying the position of women in the United States.

In one of the most trenchant critiques of *Jasmine*, Anu Aneja writes,

If Orientalism is “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” . . . , as Edward Said describes it, then the text’s desire to give shape to the orient through its own backward gaze seems to be in complicity with that imperialistic position. The authority of perspective which allows the narrator to construct a caricature of oppressed Indian womanhood, and use this caricature as the starting point of a series of changes which involve a “betterment,” an entry into a more complex and sophisticated world, neglects to take into account the complexity and specificity of the situation of third world women. (79)

Aneja's point is that the "backward gaze," the time frame of Mukherjee's novel that places the heroine's Indian experiences in the past and her Iowan life in the present, implies a telos of improvement. Sangeeta Ray sketches a caricature of India that inhabits the novel's past as "a textual re-presentation of an India by now familiar to the west—a regressive world stricken by poverty, communal violence, and oppressive social practices where dead dogs float in water that people use for household chores; where women are ritually beaten by their husbands for expressing their opinion; and where young widows pour kerosene over their bodies and set fire to themselves" ("Nation" 227–228). Ray, like Aneja, considers Mukherjee to have represented India as "stagnant" in opposition to "the myth of the American metropolis as a place of tremendous possibilities" (228–229).¹

Kristen Carter-Sanborn agrees with Aneja's and Ray's assessment of *Jasmine's* identity politics, placing the novel in the context of Gayatri Spivak's famous postcolonial critique of *Jane Eyre*. Carter-Sanborn claims, "Just as we must consider whether *Jane Eyre*, in her search for a new female domestic identity, is implicated in the violent repression of colonial subjectivity as figured by Bertha Mason, we also need to ask whether [Jasmine's] 'discovery' of an American selfhood covers up a similar complicity in the elision of the 'third world' woman Mukherjee's narrator purportedly speaks as and for" (574–575). On a second reading of these essays—and of *Jasmine* itself—I note the cautionary quotation marks that Aneja and Carter-Sanborn place around *betterment* and *discovery*. Neither is a term that the heroine-narrator uses in reference to her American experience; both express the critics' own ironic readings of the novel's trajectory.

Both Aneja and Carter-Sanborn—along with many other critics of *Jasmine*—read the novel as if it were a bourgeois female bildungsroman, just like Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Limiting their commentary to what narrative theorists would call the "story," they have persuasively excluded *Jasmine* from the canon of twentieth-century feminist novels. However, a closer look at the narrative discourse of *Jasmine* suggests the novel is a critique of the bildungsroman tradition, an experiment in a new, more open-ended form of feminocentric fiction.² Previous critiques of *Jasmine* have, for the most part, overlooked its narratorial experimentation with changes in tense and disruptions of chronology, as well as its somewhat startling refusal to achieve closure.³ In addition to incorporating these formal departures from the bildungsroman, *Jasmine* experimentally represents a narrator who embodies a multicultural subjectivity quite different from the heroines of the realist tradition. Whereas Jane

Eyre and heroines who follow her example ultimately discover a stable identity, the heroine of *Jasmine* never does. Carter-Sanborn worries that *Jasmine* “may more than anything demonstrate the very impossibility of an integrated subjecthood in the framework of Western notions of independence and individual accomplishment” (583). To be sure, the novel does demonstrate the impossibility of an integrated subjecthood for the narrator-heroine, precisely because she does not, like Jane Eyre, participate in Western notions of independence and individual accomplishment. While there can be no apology for the stereotyping of Indian women’s experiences reflected in the representation of the heroine’s early experiences, these critics are nevertheless attributing to the text a teleology that the novel’s multicultural approach to subjectivity and its refusal of narrative closure actually combine to repudiate.

The Subjectivity Effect

Identity, as Judith Butler’s interventions in the debate over identity politics have made clear, is not a fixed category but a process that produces an effect. Just as gender and sexual identities are performative—constituted by individuals’ continually repeated enactment of sets of gestures, styles, habits, phrases, and looks—so are cultural, racial, and national identities performative rather than foundational or fixed. Equally performative is the “subject.” Responding to those who worry that women and people of color must use a foundational sense of self to effect a politics of change, Butler has recently explained:

In the United States, there were and are several different ways of questioning the foundational status of the category of the subject. To question the foundationalism of that category is not the same as doing away with the category altogether. Moreover, it is not to deny its usefulness, or even its necessity. To question the subject is to put at risk what we know, and to do it not for the thrill of the risk, but because we have already been put into question as subjects. We have already, as women, been severely doubted: do our words carry meaning? Are we capable of consent? Is our reasoning functioning like that of men? Are we part of the universal community of humankind? (*Undoing Gender* 227)

To the extent that female characters, or women, for that matter, can perform the effects of subjectivity—by communicating meaning through words, by asserting the capacity to consent and to reason, by claiming a

place in the community of humankind—they will also achieve not only the identity effect but also what I will term “the subjectivity effect.”

Butler has explained that calling identity an effect “means that it is neither fatally determined nor fully artificial and arbitrary” (*Gender Trouble* 147). Instead, identity forms around an individual’s experiences of social, familial, and historical contexts, as well as the individual’s responses to those experiences. Feminist theorists after Butler have worked on articulating the structures through which the processes of identity production are constructed. Ambitiously mapping out what she calls a “geographics of identity,” Susan Stanford Friedman has identified six “related . . . but distinct discourses of identity” operating at the end of the twentieth century, including “the discourses of multiple oppression; multiple subject positions; contradictory subject positions; relationality; situationality; and hybridity” (16). Placing individual subjects in social and geographic contexts, all these models of identity formation complicate second-wave feminisms’ characteristic privileging of gender, and all of them acknowledge that any given subject’s identity is always dynamic, never static. As Butler has pointed out, any attempt to create a subject position outside constructed identities can result only in “an epistemological model that would disavow its own cultural location and, hence, promote itself as a global subject, a position that deploys precisely the imperialist strategies that feminism ought to criticize” (*Gender Trouble* 147). No one but the imperialist can pretend to operate outside any cultural location, and the imperialist can do it only through violence. Subjectivity is always situated. The situation of the subject is closely linked to the identity effect, whether we are talking about gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, or nationality—the many elements constituting what comes to mind when I hear someone say “multiculturalism.”

As a factor in the geographics of identity, multiculturalism depends on a model of subjectivity that acknowledges difference while repudiating otherness. Reactionary attitudes toward cultural difference—be it gender, sexual, racial, or national—follow the conventional reasoning that pits inside against outside, civilization against savagery, and self against other. Poststructuralist feminism’s most productive intervention in this mode of thinking not only resists these oppositions but refuses even to fall into what might have been a comfortable opposition between “otherness” and “difference.” As Trinh Min-ha explains, “Difference is not otherness. And while otherness has its laws and interdictions, difference always implies the interdependency of these two-sided feminist gestures: that of affirming ‘I am like you’ while pointing insistently

to the difference; and that of reminding ‘I am different’ while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at” (152). While affirming likeness, the poststructuralist feminist points to difference; while reminding of difference, the feminist unsettles otherness, refusing to allow difference to reify into a fixed identity category of “other,” the opposite of “self.” Taking this flexible approach is one way to recognize oneself as a situated subject, resisting the imperialist temptation to place oneself in an imaginary global subject position outside culturally constructed identity while at the same time refusing to settle into being only like or only unlike another person or group of persons.

Just as identity is an effect, so is fictitious subjectivity. Monika Fludernik has rightly observed that “all narratives manifest subjecthood and subjectivity, and these interrelate with the construction of identity” (“Identity/Alterity” 271). But Trinh’s insight about difference and otherness complicates Fludernik’s summary of the relation that identity and alterity bear to narrative. Fludernik claims that “identity becomes notable only where set into relief against one or more others, others that can be non-human (landscape, nature, the city, society) or human subjects (the mother or father, one’s partner, one’s friend, one’s master, one’s son or daughter, a stranger” and so forth)” (271). Fludernik overlooks the fact that in some texts—as Friedman’s geographics of identity suggest—difference is located within the subject herself, and the “laws and interdictions” of otherness (to borrow Trinh’s phrasing) are put aside. I am interested in discovering what we can learn about the identity effect by looking more closely at what I call the “subjectivity effect” in novels that place difference at the center of their thematic concerns. Identifying the ways narratives produce interiority for characters has been one of the main tasks of narrative theory. My project here is to investigate what happens when that interiority is defined by competing concepts of a single character’s cultural identity. What kind of subjectivity effect emerges when a first-person narrator is simultaneously saying to her audience “I am like you,” “I am different from you,” and even “I am different from myself”?

Multicultural Subjectivity and Cosmopolitan Identity

As a case study in the construction of a subjectivity effect, *Jasmine* presents an example sufficiently interesting to explain my wish to move beyond the embarrassment its critical reputation inspires. The heroine

of the novel embodies a multicultural subjectivity. Jyoti—later called Jasmine, Jazzy, Jase, Jane, and then again Jase—tells her own story in a chronological narrative reminiscent of her narratorial forebear Jane Eyre. In Brontë's novel the autodiegetic heroine recounts both the impressions of her experiencing self and retrospective reflections of her narrating self.⁴ Mukherjee's story-present functions differently from Brontë's, however. The heroine of *Jasmine* relates the experiences of story-time in the present tense, making the protagonist's perspective on the events she records more immediate than Jane Eyre's. The "experiencing self" of Jane Eyre is divided by many years from her "narrating self," while Jasmine experiences and relates each present moment without the benefit of hindsight. Still, like Jane Eyre's, Jasmine's story encompasses the years from childhood (Jane Eyre is ten and Jasmine seven at their novels' beginnings) through her midtwenties. Each ends with the heroine's long-desired union to the man she wants. Layered onto this familiar narrative territory, however, is the multicultural content of Jasmine's life story. The chronological account of the novel's story-time, told in the present tense by the heroine during a period she spends in Elsa County, Iowa, is constantly interrupted by the narrator's reversions to the experiences in India, Florida, and New York City that led to her present life. Jasmine is, in effect, saying to Jane Eyre, "I am like you" and "I am different from you."

Despite structural differences between the two novels, *Jasmine* invites formal comparison to *Jane Eyre* not only because "Jane" is the name Mukherjee's heroine takes on in Iowa but also because the narrator alludes directly to Brontë's novel two separate times. In one reminiscence the narrator names *Jane Eyre* among British novels she found too difficult to read as a child learning English in India (35); later, she compares herself and her much older, crippled, landowning Iowan lover to Jane and Rochester. If *Jane Eyre* is the canonical novel of feminine identity formation in the English literary tradition, *Jasmine* positions itself as that novel's multicultural counterpart; if Jane Eyre (the character) achieves something like a coherent interiority and authentic "self" through the course of living and telling her story, Jyoti/Jasmine/Jane presents a challenge to the possibility of such coherence in a story told from outside the dominant culture's mainstream and addressed to an audience that does not and cannot comprehend the combined experiences the narrator relates. *Jane Eyre* shows us what the identity effect looks like when the heroine's subjectivity is monocultural, her reader—the narratee to whom she is speaking—perfectly aligned with the narrator's and

narratee's values and teleology. In Mukherjee's novel, Jyoti/Jasmine/Jane's difference from the characters among whom she finds herself in Iowa is often noted in her narration, but her differences from herself and from her middle-class North American narratee are what mark her narrative most clearly as multicultural.

Like Mukherjee's more recent novels *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*, *Jasmine* is explicitly addressed to an implied reader who knows little or nothing about Indian history or culture. Each Indian custom, attitude, gesture, and expression is explicated for the benefit of an ignorant narratee, presumably an inhabitant of the world the heroine enters when she leaves the land where she was born. For instance, she gives no specifics about the housework she is continually doing in Baden, Iowa, but she fills in details about the chores she says she liked doing in her childhood home: "At dawn I pushed our Mazbi maid aside and boiled the milk myself—four times—because the maid had no clue to cleanliness and pasteurization. Just before dusk, the best hour for marketing, since vegetable vendors discounted what they hadn't sold and what they couldn't keep overnight, I'd go with neighborhood women and get my mother the best bargains" (40). Similarly, she explains the neighborhood women's custom of going out together to use the fields as a latrine but says nothing about restroom practices in rural Iowa; she rationalizes the pressure on young girls to marry and on widows to end their own lives instead of leaving the supposed justifications for these practices unspoken, as she might for an Indian audience; and she analyzes the social aftereffects of the partition on the ethnic groups in Hasnapur, where her Punjabi family has been relocated to an impoverished farm from a comfortable middle-class home in Lahore. Interrupting as they do the present-tense narrative of the heroine's Iowa life, these continual explanations map her difference from the implied audience to whom she speaks, even as they underline the multivalence of the identity effect her story seeks to construct. Her self-difference emerges in her series of names, each one designating not a national identity but a relationship to a nationality, first Indian and then American.

In the present-tense storyworld of her home in rural Iowa, the twenty-five-year-old narrator uses the name Jane because the man with whom she lives has stuck with a joke that amuses him even though she does not at first understand it: "Me Bud, you Jane." "He kids," she explains. "Calamity Jane. Jane as in Jane Russell, not Jane as in Plain Jane. But Plain Jane is all I want to be. Plain Jane is a role, like any other. My genuine foreignness frightens him. I don't hold that against him.

It frightens me, too. In Baden, I am Jane. Almost” (22). In the story’s present, the heroine takes care of Bud, her wheelchair-bound lover, a middle-aged banker who has recently been shot by an angry farmer facing foreclosure. Though pregnant with his child, she is not married to Bud, but the people in Baden, Iowa, call her “Mrs. Ripplemeyer.” Bud’s adopted teenaged Vietnamese son, Du—only recently transported to the United States from the refugee camps—calls her “Mom.” Her Iowa names establish a relationship to Americanness that appears to be both stable and conventional. Almost.

In the flashbacks to her childhood that begin on the novel’s first page, the narrator is Jyoti, the “fifth daughter, the seventh of nine children” born to an impoverished farming family in Hasnapur. As the first of the heroine’s names, “Jyoti” signifies a dutiful daughter with a star-shaped scar on her forehead she calls her “third eye.” She received it when an astrologer who foretold her widowhood and exile pushed her to the ground, injuring her in his indifference to her fate. Jyoti’s relationship to her Indian nationality is slightly troubled, for she refuses from the beginning to believe the astrologer’s prediction. Her demonstrations of duty toward her parents and her hopes for love and marriage, however, establish Jyoti as the novel’s representation of a traditional Indian daughter. Jyoti’s family is not in a position to arrange a financially auspicious marriage for her, but when she is fourteen years old, she falls in love with and marries an iconoclastic young friend of her brothers’ named Prakash Vijn in a “no dowry, no guests Registry Office wedding” (68). Despite the unorthodox beginning to their union, Joyti strives to act as a traditional wife, but her husband encourages her to acquire more English, learn the technical skills he is studying, and prepare for his planned move from India to Germany or the United States. He imagines a new economic future for them as an entity he calls “Vijn & Wife.” Against tradition and her own inclination, he insists that she call him by his first name. He calls Hasnapur, where “wives used only pronouns to refer to their husbands,” a “feudal” society. She says of Prakash, “He wanted to break down the Jyoti I’d been in Hasnapur and make me a new kind of city woman. To break off the past, he gave me a new name, Jasmine. . . . Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttled between identities” (70). The identity of Jasmine is still that of an Indian woman, but her relationship to her nationality is less complacent than Jyoti’s, as she tries to emulate her husband in looking to the West for their future.

After Prakash is killed by a Sikh terrorist, fulfilling the prophecy that the heroine will become a widow, Jyoti/Jasmine resolves to realize her

husband's plans for a trip to a technical college in Tampa, Florida. Romantically, she imagines she will ritually burn his clothes under a tree on the campus and immolate herself on the fire. She leaves India as Jasmine, the thoroughly Indian woman determined to go to America who still envisions herself behaving there as she imagines a traditional Indian woman might. The heroine's voyage to the United States as an illegal alien is harrowing; it ends with her being raped in a deserted Florida motel and fatally stabbing her attacker, the captain of the boat that brought her to the coast. The series of episodes making up her voyage are told in the present tense, the only departure from the time scheme established throughout the rest of the novel, where Iowa is the present and everywhere else is the past. The shift from past to present tense here, in Chapter 15, lifts the trip to America out of the heroine's individual history and into a more immediate moment, suggesting that such trips are not over once this particular heroine gets from India to the United States. Her immigration is not singular, individualist; similar experiences continue to happen to countless people all the time. During her passage from India the narrator has no name at all, losing her specifically Indian identity and becoming part of a first-person plural that includes people in transit from everywhere in the world:

We are refugees and mercenaries and guest workers; you see us sleeping in airport lounges, you watch us unwrapping the last of our native foods, unrolling our prayer rugs, reading our holy books, taking out for the hundredth time an aerogram promising a job or space to sleep, a newspaper in our language, a photo of happier times, a passport, a visa, a laissez-passer. We are the outcasts and deportees, strange pilgrims visiting outlandish shrines, landing at the end of tarmacs, ferried in old army trucks where we are roughly handled and taken to roped-off corners of waiting rooms where surly, barely wakened customs guards await their bribe. We are dressed in shreds of national costumes, out of season. The wilted plumage of intercontinental vagabondage. We ask only one thing: to be allowed to land; to pass through; to continue. (91)

The "we" of this passage is an entirely multicultural entity, rolling out prayer rugs and reading holy books that the heroine, who has been raised Hindu, not Muslim, would not use, taking out aerograms that she is not carrying. The narrator reclaims the first-person singular to tell briefly (and abstractly) of a journey with stops in the Middle East, in Sudan, and in Hamburg, but when she gets to the trawler that will take her out

of Europe and across the Atlantic, the narrative subject shifts back to a “we” that includes a Jamaican, a Belizian, and a woman from Mauritius. The narrator does not return to “I” until the sequence in which she must turn to the boat’s captain for ground transportation, ending in the violent scenes of rape and murder and the heroine’s temporary assumption of the identity of the Hindu goddess Kali. While traveling unnamed as one of many who shared her alien condition, the heroine shed her national identity altogether; the relative safety her anonymity provided deserts her when Jasmine, once again definitively the young Indian woman, has to face America alone. At first considering suicide, she makes a pyre of her own and her husband’s clothes behind the motel, killing only the persona of the obedient wife she had been.

Even when she has become Iowan “Jane,” however, the heroine does not shed her identification with other immigrants to the United States. Du, her fellow immigrant, her “silent ally against the bright lights, the rounded, genial landscape of Iowa” (197), works harder than his “Mom” does to assimilate, but the two share a subject position unique to them within their Iowa community. That subject position harks back to the “we” of the heroine’s immigration journey and expresses itself in their joint moments of solidarity with other illegal “aliens.” She recalls watching with Du a television report about twenty INS agents apprehending two miserable Mexicans in a shed where they have been “squatting on the floor webbing lawn furniture at some insane wage”; “I know,” she comments, “I’ve been there” (22). Though she notes that Du is “very careful” not to show any “sign of caring, one way or the other” (22), she also remarks on her awareness of the parallels: “Du and me, we’re the ones who didn’t get caught” (23). From this subject position, the heroine experiences an imagined solidarity with the two Mexicans, with Du, and with “illegals” she can’t see but can picture: “I wonder if Bud even sees the America I do. We pass half-built, half-deserted cinder-block structures at the edge of town, with mud-spattered deserted cars parked in an uncleared lot, and I wonder, ‘Who’s inside? What are they doing? Who’s hiding?’ Empty swimming pools and plywood panels in the window frames grip my guts” (97). When such moments recur throughout the novel, they implicitly invoke the “we” of her horrific voyage.

Even as her subject position settles back into “I,” the heroine’s name continues changing. The Quaker woman who rescues her in Florida and sends her to New York City with the phone number that will lead to her eventual employment as a nanny calls her “Jazzy,” bestowing on her the first of the American identities she will adopt. “Jazzy” suggests a jauntily casual Americanness (what could be more American than jazz?), but

this does not last long. In spite of herself, the heroine reverts to Jasmine while she lives with middle-class Indian immigrants who cling to their originary identities, but she is eager to shed the ties to her past that the name implies. Taylor, the father of the adopted girl she is eventually hired to tend, calls her “Jase.” Living in New York with Taylor, his wife, Wylie, and their daughter, Duff, the heroine juggles her identities in her own mind: “I should have saved; a cash stash is the only safety net. . . . Jyoti would have saved. But Jyoti was now a *sati*-goddess; she had burned herself in a trash-can–funeral pyre behind a boarded-up motel in Florida. Jasmine lived for the future, for Vijh & Wife. Jase went to movies and lived for today” (176). Jase is the middle-class American material girl, enjoying for the time being a comparatively uncomplicated relationship to Americanness in her own self-image, though she still expresses herself as Indian in culturally inflected debates with her employers. Partly because she enjoys arguing with him, Jase falls in love with Taylor and is poised to become his new wife when Wylie leaves him for another man, but a chance encounter with the terrorist who had killed her husband sends her fleeing to Iowa, where Duff had been born. There she meets Bud and becomes Jane, Mrs. Ripplemeyer, Mom, the figure who appears to embody the ultimate American identity. In the novel’s last moments, however, Taylor and Duff show up in Iowa on their way to a new life in California. Addressing “Jane” as “Jase,” Taylor offers to bring her along, and she quickly agrees to leave Bud behind. “It isn’t guilt that I feel, it’s relief,” she comments. “I realize I have already stopped thinking of myself as Jane” (214). The heroine experiences identity as a construction, an effect that results from the exercise of her own agency. The text achieves that effect by assigning her the shifting referents for the pronouns “I” and “we.”

On first glance, the names Jyoti, Jasmine, Jase, and Jane seem to map a progression of identities that men and older, powerful women impose on the narrator in the interest of keeping her fixed in place within the name-givers’ own senses of nationality. Indeed, she comes close to acknowledging this, saying, “I have had a husband for each of the women I have been. Prakash for Jasmine, Taylor for Jase, Bud for Jane” (175). The acquisition of each of her names occurs in the retrospective portions of the narrative, beginning with her childhood in India. Jyoti is her father’s daughter, a Bengali traditionalist whose early widowhood is supposed to mean the end of her own existence. She is named Jyoti, which means “Light,” by her paternal grandmother, a fanatical adherent to the subordination of women. To accept her husband’s renaming her Jasmine, however, she must adjust her relationship to Indian tradition,

modernizing and globalizing her expectations to live up to his vision of Vijh and Wife, that mythical corporation that was to take the couple out of India and into the Western world. Even after her husband has died, she refers to herself in terms of Vijh and Wife, particularly during the period when she is learning to adjust to life in America while living with the Indian immigrants in New York. Once Taylor has renamed her “Jase,” she begins to entertain the possibility of an American identity, which seems to have solidified once she becomes settled, pregnant, Midwestern plain Jane. Of course, there is nothing plain about her in the rural Iowa setting. Bud compares her looks to those of a maharani; Du’s friends and Bud’s neighbors are enchanted by the curries she cooks: “They get disappointed if there is not something Indian on the table” (7). Jane is certainly no longer simply Indian, but she is not not-Indian, either; she is like the other women in her Iowa community and she is different from them. The specificity of her national difference does not matter to her Iowa neighbors. “To them . . . I’m a ‘dark-haired girl’ in a naturally blond county. I have a ‘darkish complexion’ (in India, I’m ‘wheatish’), as though I might be Greek from one grandparent. I’m from a generic place, ‘over there,’ which might be Ireland, France, or Italy. I’m not a Lutheran, which isn’t to say I might not be Presbyterian” (29). The neighbors acknowledge a difference, but they are not interested in what it might mean about who “Jane” is. Even Taylor’s sophisticated friends in New York, who know enough to narrow their guesses at her nationality to Iranian, Pakistani, Afghan, or Punjabi, think she might be able to “help them with Sanskrit or Arabic, Devanagari or Gurumukhi script” (29). “I can read Urdu, not Arabic. I can’t read Sanskrit,” she tells the narratee (29), but these distinctions hardly matter once she has become Jane.

That the heroine can in the end so lightly shed the “Jane” identity in favor of a return to “Jase” suggests the text’s awareness that just as there are many more ways than one for a woman to be Indian (prosperous in Lahore or poor in Hasnapur; Hindu, Sikh, or Muslim; Jyoti, Jasmine, or the “Wife” of Vijh and Wife), there are also limitless ways for an Indian woman to be American (Jazzy, Jasmine, Jase, Jane, Mrs. Ripplemeyer, Mom, and Jase again). Ethnic and national identity are, like gender identity, an effect, constituted by repeated actions. Jyoti/Jasmine/Jane is consistent in her willingness to have identities lent to her by the men or older women in her life, but it is her own agency that keeps her identities fluid. By the novel’s end she may appear to have been assimilated into American womanhood, but “Jase”—the identity on which she ends her story—is different from “Jane” in that it is still

a variant of “Jasmine,” the name Prakash gave her in India in anticipation of her becoming a woman of the world. Jasmine is neither Indian nor American, both Indian and American; she enacts a cosmopolitan identity.⁵ Again in contrast to *Jane Eyre*, *Jasmine* ends not in serene retrospective contemplation of the fruits of a long-settled denouement but in breathless midaction as she scrambles down the frozen, rutted driveway to Taylor’s waiting, California-bound car. The novel’s end gives no suggestion that “Jase” is an ultimate identity or that this heroine will not go on shifting her relation to nationality—if not to gender and sexuality—indefinitely.

If identity is always an effect, Mukherjee’s novel draws attention to the extent to which that effect can be like a kaleidoscope.⁶ Shift the instrument a fraction of an inch and the pattern is different, though still recognizable; shift the heroine across nations and some thousands of miles, put her in a new relationship with another man, and her identity will be in some ways the same (all her given names do begin with the letter *J*) and in many ways different. More than once the narrator invokes a Hindu proverb about the way sameness and difference can be interchangeable: “The villagers say when a clay pitcher breaks, you see that the air inside it is the same as outside” (36). Inside and outside, normally understood as oppositions just as sameness and difference or self and other are understood, collapse into each other when the shell of the pitcher is broken. She uses the saying first to explain why the suicide of a twenty-two-year-old bride following her husband’s death of typhoid is “not a sad story in Hasnapur.” The bride, she explains, had “broken her pitcher” and seen that the air is the same on both sides of the shell. Later, she mentions the saying again with reference to her father’s grief at his loss of class status and homeland in the move from Lahore to Hasnapur: “Fact is, there was a difference. My father was right to notice it and to let it set a standard. But that pitcher is broken. It is the same air this side as that. He’ll never see Lahore again and I never have. Only a fool would let it rule his life” (37). Thematically speaking, Jyoti/Jasmine/Jane/Jase’s differences from herself and from her narrative audience are unimportant in the end. She does not see herself as the fool who would let nostalgic grief over differences rule her destiny.

The Anti-Individualist Heroine as an Answer to *Jane Eyre*

Structurally speaking, the narrator’s refusal to settle into a single identity strikes me as a potential answer to the call Gayatri Spivak put out in

her classic 1985 essay “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism.” Spivak’s essay changed forever the way feminists read *Jane Eyre*, showing how the selfing of Jane requires the othering of the “native” woman, Bertha.⁷ (This is the reading to which Carter-Sanborn alludes in the argument I quoted previously.) The construction of Jane as an individual subject depends not just on the opposition the novel establishes between what Spivak calls her “soul” and the “animal” nature of Bertha but also on the consistency and clarity with which Brontë achieves the subjectivity effect through her heroine’s narration, a skill for which Spivak readily gives the novelist credit. Spivak’s target is not the particular author but rather the “basically isolationist admiration for the literature of the female subject in Europe and Anglo-America,” which she says “establishes the high feminist norm” (896). Implicitly, in her discussion of the “worlding” of locations of imperial conquest, Spivak warns against the second-wave feminist superimposition of “soul-making” on the Indian woman, explaining that the kind of subjectivity *Jane Eyre* embodies is grounded in a Western individualism that can exist only through imperialism’s “othering” of the non-Western woman. Granting the pull of “the psychobiography of the militant female subject” in such texts as *Jane Eyre*, Spivak demonstrates how to make “the effort . . . to wrench oneself away from the mesmerizing focus of the ‘subject-constitution’ of the female individualist” (897).

Spivak is modeling a postcolonial feminist reading practice, but her analysis also suggests the possibility of a postcolonial feminist writing practice that manages to detach itself from the “‘subject-constitution’ of the female individualist.” The question, then, is whether Mukherjee manages to avoid “selfing” her heroine by granting her the fluidity of identities that her multicultural subject position creates. As the novel’s many detractors have shown, *Jasmine* can be read as another example of the Western “worlding” of the so-called Third World; indeed, my own analysis might suggest such a reading, as the narrator’s address to the narratee so clearly delineates the differences (which might be read as a reified otherness) between India and Iowa. I cannot claim that *Jasmine* fully embodies the practice for which Spivak has called. While I don’t agree with Sangeeta Ray that “*Jasmine* acquires agency by participating in the objectification of the ‘other’ that is the hallmark of the epistemology of individualism,” I accept her argument that “[in *Jasmine*] an assertion of the triumph of the postcolonial individual is not only dependent on a negation of collective action, but the very survival of both the nation and the immigrant rests on a violent othering of herself

as an East-Indian woman” (“Nation” 233). Granted that Jasmine’s final “family” (consisting of herself, her lover, the little girl he has adopted, and—Jasmine hopes—the Vietnamese teenaged boy her former lover has adopted) departs fairly drastically from the nuclear-family “norm” of the individualist tradition, for Jasmine fully to repudiate the Western individualist bildungsroman, the novel would have to end in some kind of collective alternative to the family. If Jasmine “violently” others herself as an East Indian woman, I hope I have shown that she others herself as an American as well. The text is intent on keeping Jasmine’s multicultural subjectivity unfixed and unindividuated. As the narrator puts it in one of her many reveries on the multiplicity of her identities: “Jyoti of Hasnapur was not Jasmine, Duff’s day mummy and Taylor and Wylie’s au pair in Manhattan; that Jasmine isn’t this Jane Ripplemeyer having lunch . . . at the University Club today. And which of us is the undetected murderer of a half-faced monster, which of us has held a dying husband, which of us was raped and raped and raped in boats and cars and motel rooms?” (114). Jasmine’s rape by the man she calls “Half-Face” is a singular event, presented as the first and only “defilement” that is part of her own individual story. The question, “Which of us was raped and raped and raped in boats and cars,” as well as in motel rooms, where her own rape occurred, opens out the identity of “us” once again: this is the multicultural subject speaking, the “we” that includes illegal immigrant women from everywhere. The multicultural subject is other from herself in that it includes others besides herself.

At the same time, Jasmine’s thematic undermining of otherness (accomplished through the repeated image of the air inside and outside the broken pitcher) works to undo the “laws and interdictions” Trinh Min-ha attributes to otherness. While the postcolonialist, post-second-wave feminist might be disappointed by the novel’s caricature of rural Indian women’s lives, its obliviousness to the possibility of collective action, and its heroine’s dependence on heterosexual romance to be the catalyst for her shifts in identity, Mukherjee’s strategies for constructing the multicultural heroine do point the way toward a fictional subjectivity effect that breaks free from the Western individualist “self.”

Feminist narrative theory sees a novel’s ideology as being equally inherent in its story and its discourse. If previous critics have read *Jasmine* as pure story, finding many objectionable elements in the storyworld the novel represents, a reconsideration that takes narrative discourse into account can change our assessment of the cultural work that Mukherjee’s novel is doing. *Jasmine*’s disruptions of chronology, its slippages of nar-

rative “person” from first to third and back, its movements between past and present tense, its unwillingness to come to closure, and its construction of an anti-individualist multicultural subject position all justify a re-reading in the full realization that form is content and that every aspect of a text participates in politics. Mukherjee’s novel reminds us that there are many more ways than one to occupy a postcolonial subject position.

Notes

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1. Gurleen Grewal concurs with Aneja’s and Ray’s characterization of Jasmine’s relocation as an unexamined pseudo-progress from India, “locked into the inertia of stasis, the land of Yama/Death” to America, “equated with freedom from fate, poverty, and a repressive gender identity” (186).

2. Brian Richardson defends *Jasmine* on similar grounds against complaints that it fails as a “realistic” novel: “I would suggest that the work is rather a particularly ingenious postmodern text, a pseudorealist one that interrogates and attacks naturalistic canons of probability as well as supernatural teleologies of destiny. Its causal dynamics invert the standard progression of conventional narratives” (*Unlikely Stories* 173). Richardson sees Mukherjee’s experimentation as a specifically feminist gesture.

3. Narrative theory is not the only language-centered possibility for a reassessment of *Jasmine*’s cultural politics, as Jennifer Drake has shown by focusing on the novel’s figurative rhetoric: “Reading Jasmine too literally, or reading her only as an individual human being, ignores the work of metaphor” (63).

4. I have analyzed at length the disjunctures between the narrating and experiencing selves in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* in my book *Gendered Interventions*.

5. For a useful problematizing of this concept with reference to Jasmine and Jamaica Kincaid’s *Lucy*, see Bruce Robbins.

6. Victoria Carchidi has applied the image of the kaleidoscope to the multicultural America represented in Mukherjee’s fiction, a “constantly changing, vibrant, and dynamic” combination of ethnic and national identities (91).

7. This is the reading to which Carter-Sanborn alludes in the argument I quoted above. Also see Robbins for an insightful Marxist juxtaposition of *Jasmine* and *Lucy*, which he calls “au pair” novels, with Spivak’s argument about *Jane Eyre*, the definitive governess novel.

CHAPTER 5

Voice, Politics, and Judgments in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*: The Initiation, the Launch, and the Debate about the Narration

JAMES PHELAN

Voice, understood as both a formal and a political concept—who speaks to whom under what conditions and with how much authority?—has been an important issue in the scholarly conversation about African American literature in general and Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in particular. Indeed, in Hurston’s case, voice stands at the center of an ongoing debate about the nature, power, and limits of the novel’s formal achievement and its politics. While most critics follow Henry Louis Gates, Jr.’s lead in finding much to admire about Hurston’s handling of voice, many, including Mary Helen Washington and Robert Stepto, find fault both with some of Hurston’s choices and with the overall role of voice in the novel.¹ Did Hurston mar or enhance the narrative when she shifted from presenting Janie Crawford as an autodiegetic narrator telling her story to Pheoby Watson to subsuming Janie’s voice within that of a heterodiegetic narrator’s? What does the choice suggest about the relation between Pheoby and Hurston’s readers as the appropriate audience for Janie’s tale? Why does Hurston not represent Janie’s testimony during her trial for the murder of Tea Cake? In this essay, I will use a rhetorical theory of narrative to argue that Hurston’s beginning, despite its brilliance, sets up competing demands for her narration that prompt much of the critical debate about the novel. I will focus primarily on two aspects of the novel’s beginning: the initiation—that is, the initial rhetorical exchanges among author, narrator, and audience; and the launch—the stage in the narrative when it has taken off on a clear path. I will then use the results of the analysis to comment briefly on Hurston’s decision not to represent Janie’s speech in the courtroom. I focus on the beginning not only because it is where Hurston shifts from Janie’s voice to the narrator’s but also because this

stretch reveals most clearly what is at stake in Hurston's choices, both formally and politically.

Progression in a Rhetorical Theory of Narrative

Within the rhetorical approach to narrative I have been developing, I define progression as the synthesis of a textual dynamics governing a narrative's movement from beginning through middle to end and a readerly dynamics consisting of the authorial audience's trajectory of responses to that movement. The synthesis itself is governed by the implied author's purpose(s) in constructing the progression. Textual dynamics are generated by the introduction, complication, and resolution (often only partial) of two sets of unstable relations: (1) those between, among, or within characters, which I call *instabilities*, and (2) those among implied authors, narrators, and audiences, which I call *tensions*. The most common kinds of tensions involve disparities of knowledge, of belief, and of values. Narratives with unreliable narrators, for example, generate at least some of their progressions via a tension. Readerly dynamics are generated by the audience's developing responses to the textual dynamics. Narratives with surprise endings point to the mutual interaction of textual and readerly dynamics: the textual dynamics are influenced by the goal of surprising the authorial audience just as that readerly surprise comes in response to those textual dynamics.

Narrative judgments form the bridge between textual dynamics and readerly dynamics because they are encoded into narrative texts but generate the reader responses that in turn influence authorial choices about the textual dynamics. Three types of readerly judgment are central to the rhetorical experience of narrative:

1. interpretive judgments about the nature of events and other elements of the narrative,
2. ethical judgments about the moral value of characters and actions, and
3. aesthetic judgments about the artistic quality of the narrative and of its parts.

Thus, rhetorical theory seeks to identify the judgments that readers are guided to make, the consequences of those judgments for the ongoing interaction of the textual and readerly dynamics, and the way those

judgments and their interactions point toward the larger purpose of the narrative.

All these considerations lead to the following model for narrative progression, one that divides progression into the usual beginning, middle, and end and then subdivides each of those into four aspects, with the fourth attempting to capture the ongoing synthesis of textual and readerly dynamics (see Table 5.1). For my purposes here, the most important rows are the ones with launch and initiation. Launch is the moment in the textual dynamics when the global instability or tension gets introduced; the voyage typically involves the complication of that instability or tension; and the arrival involves its resolution, in whole or, more commonly, in part. Initiation refers to the initial rhetorical transactions among implied author and narrator, on one side of the communicative exchange, and authorial and actual audiences, on the other. Initiation thus can—and often does—occur simultaneously with exposition or even with launch. The interaction, then, refers to either the continuity or the variation in the initial rhetorical transactions after the launch, and the farewell refers to the concluding set of transactions. Voice is a crucial component of initiation, interaction, and farewell, and I define it not just as most narrative theorists do (i.e., as the answer to the question, “Who speaks?”) but also as the synthesis of style (including diction and syntax), tone, and values (both ethical and ideological) in the speaker’s speech. This conception of voice allows us to discuss its formal, political, and ethical dimensions.

<i>Beginning</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Ending</i>
Exposition	Exposition	Exposition/Closure
Launch	Voyage	Arrival
Initiation	Interaction	Farewell
Entrance	Intermediate Configuration	Completion

Table 5.1

The Initiation of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Phase 1: The Narrator’s Voice

Ships at a distance have every man’s wish on board. For some they come in with the tide. For others they sail forever on the horizon, never out of sight, never landing until the Watcher turns his eyes away in resignation, his dreams mocked to death by Time. That is the life of men.

Now, women forget all those things they don't want to remember, and remember everything they don't want to forget. The dream is the truth. Then they act and do things accordingly.

So the beginning of this was a woman and she had come back from burying the dead. Not the dead of sick and ailing with friends at the pillow and the feet. She had come back from the sodden and the bloated; the sudden dead, their eyes flung wide open in judgment. (1)²

Hurston's first two paragraphs constitute initiation by means of general rather than specific exposition. They provide a larger frame of thought that helps define the nature of this storyworld before the narrative tells us the specifics of who, what, when, and where. These two paragraphs also exemplify what Susan S. Lanser would call a public voice making extrarepresentational statements (*Fictions*). That is, we have a narrator addressing a narratee external to the storyworld with general truths that apply not just to the storyworld but also to the world beyond the story. These statements, in turn, set up a thematic framework for the narrative that will follow, providing claims about the interrelationships of dreams, truths, acts, and gender through which to understand the specific characters, events, and strivings that the narrative will represent. As Lanser notes, this kind of narration implicitly claims a substantial amount of authority. Furthermore, because an African American woman in 1937 makes it, this claim is a political one, for many would not readily grant her such authority (*Fictions*). To put this point another way, Hurston's adoption of this authoritative voice uttering extrarepresentational truths is simultaneously bold and risky, since the voice's implicit claim to authority could be rejected simply on the basis that someone in her position does not have such authority. Indeed, we can read Richard Wright's notorious dismissal of the novel for carrying "no theme, no message, no thought" ("Between" 25) as an instance of such a rejection. Surely, this reading suggests, Wright could recognize the explicit messages of the novel's opening. He just refuses to grant Hurston the authority to deliver those messages.

The authority of the narrator's voice is reflected in the confidence of its tone as well as in its movement from the indirection of the first paragraph's extended metaphor to the more direct, literal statements of the second paragraph. Those statements are also noteworthy because of their emphasis on women as agents who "act and do" rather than, say, voices who speak. These elements of Hurston's narration lead to an interrelated set of interpretive, ethical, and aesthetic judgments. The

interpretive judgments involve, first, our decisions about such matters as how to read the extended metaphor of the first paragraph and whether we find the sharp binary opposition between men and women to be reductive and invidious or productive and insightful. Furthermore, as this language suggests, this judgment about the binary carries an ethical dimension, too. There is an additional ethical dimension to Hurston's way of telling, that is, to the kind of relationship Hurston invites us to enter with her authoritative narrator. In addition, our judgment about the ethics of the telling depends to some extent on our aesthetic judgments about the skill with which Hurston does the telling.

For my part, I am willing, at least initially, to make a series of positive judgments. I am given pause by the sharpness of the binary and the implication that men have so little agency in the fulfillment or failure of their dreams, but I am also taken with the authority of the narrator and the promise of her insight into the lives of women. My aesthetic judgment is the least tentative: I find myself in the presence of an author and a narrator who know how to develop an extended metaphor, how to build efficiently from a mininarrative to a general conclusion succinctly expressed ("That is the life of men"), how to juxtapose the metaphorical and the literal to great effect. In short, the initiation in these paragraphs is rewarding in itself and promises continued rewards as the narrative progresses.

The third paragraph offers a variation in the narrator's voice; it remains confident and knowing, but it shifts from the sententiousness of the first two paragraphs to a more informal and companionable tone as it turns to the narration of events. "So the beginning of this was a woman and she had come back from burying the dead." The first clause begins the shift from general to specific exposition, as the narrator's voice moves from extrarepresentational statements in the present tense to narrative statements in the past tense. Rachel Blau DuPlessis hears an echo of the Bible in the first clause, but to my ear the voice's informality and different syntax (the Gospel of John's "In the beginning was the Word" vs. "So the beginning of this was") makes that echo rather faint. Nevertheless, DuPlessis's observation does point to the way the narrator remains distant from the woman, reporting on her from the outside and inviting us to observe her from a relatively distant vantage point.

The initial "so" claims the relevance of the extrarepresentational statements of paragraph 2 for the "this" whose beginning is announced, and it carries over the authority of those statements to the narration of this beginning. The first clause, however, leaves paragraph 2's relevance

to this beginning completely unspecified. Indeed, the lack of specificity constitutes the most noticeable feature of the first clause. Although the sentence moves from general to specific exposition, it does not locate the woman in time or in space. In addition, there is no noun following “this” and no characterization of the woman. These choices lead us to interpret this beginning as an exemplary rather than a unique case. In addition, our interpretive judgments lead us to find both the characterization and the relevance implied by “so” in the previous paragraph: this woman is someone for whom the dream is the truth and who acts and does accordingly. Furthermore, we fill out “the beginning of this” in different ways. “This” must refer to both the telling and the told, and thus “beginning” must as well. That is, the sentence announces the beginning of a sequence of events and the beginning of the telling about this sequence of events.

In effect, then, the second clause narrates two events. The first event is the woman’s return, and the narration establishes the time of her return to this still unspecified place at this still unspecified time as the present time of the narrative (the narrative now). In addition, the clause identifies the woman’s return as the initial instability, that which begins “this.” But this instability is not the launch, because the narrative has not provided enough exposition for us to recognize the woman’s return as establishing the major orbit for the voyage. The second event narrated by this clause, burying the dead, hints at the backstory behind the narrative now. Our interpretive judgment registers burying the dead as a tellable event, and the rest of the paragraph, with its elaboration on the past event in the form of “not this but that,” increases both its tellability and its apparent significance: “Not the dead of sick and ailing with friends at the pillow and at the feet. She had come back from the sodden and the bloated: the sudden dead, their eyes flung wide open in judgment.”

These sentences begin to introduce some specificity into the narration even as they leave much unspecified. Hurston’s use of what Gerald Prince calls *disnarration*—telling about the kind of dead the woman did not bury—highlights specific features of the woman’s experience and implies others. One implication is that she has not been burying the bodies of her friends. Another concerns the temporality of her experience. “Sodden and bloated” bodies have not been buried right away, but these bodies still retain the mark of their being suddenly overtaken by death, for their eyes remain “wide open in judgment.” Together, the two sentences guide Hurston’s audience to positive ethical judgments of

the woman, both in their contrast and in the way they link her actions to the extrarepresentational statement of the second paragraph. To bury the dead is to acknowledge the dignity of the body—an act regarded in the Catholic faith as a corporal work of mercy—and to do so even when their bodies have been transformed and when their eyes seem to pass judgment on the living is to make that acknowledgment more powerfully. This is a woman who has faced an unpleasant truth and who has acted according to this truth.

In addition, the third paragraph's combination of some greater specificity with much that remains unexplained introduces the first significant tension in the story. The authoritative narrator presumably knows a lot more about the events that led up to this act of burying the dead than she tells us here, and given the tellability of those events, we read on with both the expectation and the desire that we will come to know more. More generally, Hurston's handling of temporality in this first paragraph devoted to events introduces us to a double time track for her narrative: one track that involves the narrative now and the initial instability of the woman's return and the other track for the unspecified prior sequence of events that presumably involved the woman's departure and extends to her return. Furthermore, our interpretive judgments lead us to expect the textual dynamics to involve some interaction between these two temporal tracks. I will return to this point later.

In brief, then, the initiation provided by these first three paragraphs introduces us to a highly skilled author and an authoritative, knowing narrator with a range of modes (she can be sententious, metaphorical, allusive, and informal; she can employ disnarration and direct reporting) who is an appealing, if occasionally less than fully forthcoming, guide to the storyworld. The skill of the author and her politically charged claim of authority combine with the range and dexterity of the narrator's voice to construct an appealing initiation, one that generates a significant amount of richly rewarded activity on the part of the audience and that leads us to desire more such interactions.

The Initiation, Phase 2: The Dialogue

As the initiation switches to the rhetorical transactions accompanying the presentation of dialogue, the readerly activity changes too, but it is no less rewarded, as we can see by comparing the initial dialogue of the porch sitters and the longer dialogue between Janie and Pheoby at

the end of Chapter 1. Once we get to the dialogue between Janie and Pheoby, moreover, the initiation also sets up an implicit comparison between the narrator's voice and Janie's, a comparison that will be crucial to judgments about Hurston's decision to filter Janie's telling to Pheoby through the narrator's voice.

The narrator frames the dialogue of the porch with this commentary: "These sitters had been tongueless, earless, eyeless conveniences all day long. Mules and other brutes had occupied their skins. But now, the sun and the bossman were gone, so the skins felt powerful and human. They became lords of sounds and lesser things. They passed nations through their mouths. They sat in judgment" (1). The commentary continues the authoritative tone and skill with metaphor evident in the opening paragraphs, and it uses both to underline the narrator's affective and ethical distance from her subject. In these sentences, the narrator coolly explains the psychology motivating the sitters: powerless and barely human "conveniences" during the day, they exercise their power and their regained humanity at night in the way most ready to hand (and ready to tongue), that is, by voicing judgment on the whole world. The commentary soon turns to explicit and stern ethical judgment—the narrator's authority extends to her judging the judges. Given an alignment with the narrator after the opening paragraphs, we readily accept her judgment: "They made burning statements with questions, and killing tools out of laughs. It was mass cruelty" (2).

Hurston then switches to the speech of the sitters as they turn their cruel judgments on the woman:

"What she doin' coming back here in dem overhalls? Can't she find no dress to put on?—Where's dat blue satin dress she left here in?—Where all dat money her husband took and died and left her?—What dat ole forty year 'oman doin' wid her hair swingin' down her back lak some young gal?—Where she left dat young lad of a boy she went off here wid?—Thought she was going to marry?—Where he left *her*? What he done wid all her money?—Betcha he off wid some gal so young she ain't even got no hairs—why she don't stay in her class?—" (2)

One of the striking features of this dialogue is that it is not dialogic in a Bakhtinian sense. That is, although the dashes indicate that the different sentences have different speakers, those speakers neither respond to one another nor introduce and discuss different opinions, values, or beliefs. Instead, this stretch of direct speech functions as a single block

of monologic discourse from a collective voice that combines curiosity, superiority, suspicion, jealousy, and judgment, a voice that the woman, whose name we soon learn to be Janie, aptly dubs “Mouth Almighty.” This designation nicely captures the unearned capacity for godlike judgment by these all-too-human gossipers. Both the framing commentary and the monologic discourse itself are designed to guide us to strongly negative ethical judgments of the speakers.

Hurston also uses this dialogue to complicate the textual dynamics in two ways: (1) it complicates the instability in the narrative now, for this community is at odds with the woman who has returned, and (2) it adds elements to the exposition that also increase the tension about the backstory. The dialogue gives us more fragments of information about those events (e.g., “Where she left dat young lad of a boy she went off here wid?”) but not enough to connect the fragments into a clear story.

The rhetorical transactions resulting from this dialogue contrast sharply to those accompanying the subsequent dialogue between Janie and Pheoby. Although Pheoby is initially among the porch sitters, Hurston differentiates her voice from those of the others by showing her taking exception to their instantaneous and uninformed judgments about Janie. Pheoby and Janie then reconnect by exchanging their shared negative judgments about “Mouth Almighty,” and Janie strengthens the connection by expressing her confidence in Pheoby’s ability to understand and speak for her: “Ah don’t mean to bother wid tellin’ ’em nothin’, Pheoby. ’Tain’t worth the trouble. You can tell ’em what I says if you wants to. Dat’s just the same as me ’cause mah tongue is in my friend’s mouf” (6). As Kaplan and other critics have noted, not only does Janie’s figure of speech express her trust and confidence in Pheoby’s voice, but its image of lesbian sexuality is a bold statement by both Janie and Hurston. Above all, it highlights Janie and Pheoby’s narrator-narratee relationship as highly erotic.

The juxtaposition of this metaphor with Janie’s designation of the porch sitters as Mouth Almighty invites us to note the contrast between the two discourse situations. As we have seen in the nondialogic dialogue of the porch sitters, their different tongues, as Janie’s metaphor suggests, get reduced to one undifferentiated and unerotic organ. “Mah tongue is in mah friend’s mouf” suggests that Janie’s tongue remains her own even as it (metaphorically) enters Pheoby’s mouth, and thus both women can feel the erotic thrill of that entrance. This contrast and the positive erotic charge of Janie’s metaphor underline the sharp difference between readers’ negative ethical judgments of the porch sit-

ters and their positive ethical—and aesthetic—judgments of Janie. In this way, the dialogue continues the work of the narrator’s discourse in ensuring the audience’s affective alignment with Janie.

Now consider the stretch of dialogue and the final narratorial comment that close Chapter 1. After Janie and Pheoby remain silent for a while, Janie speaks:

“They don’t need to worry about me and my overhalls long as Ah still got nine hundred dollars in de bank. Tea Cake got me into wearin’ ’em—following behind him. Tea Cake ain’t wasted up no money of mine, and he ain’t left me for no young gal, neither. He give me every consolation in de world. He’d tell ’em so too, if he was here. If he wasn’t gone.”

Pheoby dilated all over with eagerness, “Tea Cake gone?”

“Yeah, Pheoby, Tea Cake is gone. And dat’s de only reason you see me back here—cause Ah ain’t got nothing to make me happy no more where Ah was at. Down in the Everglades there, down on the muck.”

“It’s hard for me to understand what you mean, de way you tell it. And then again Ah’m hard of understandin’ at times.”

“Naw, ’tain’t nothin’ lak you might think. So ’tain’t no use in me tellin’ you somethin’ unless Ah give you de understandin’ to go ’long wid it. Unless you see de fur, a mink skin ain’t no different from a coon hide. Looka heah, Pheoby, is Sam waitin’ on you for his supper?”

“It’s all ready and waitin’. If he ain’t got sense enough to eat it, dat’s his hard luck.”

“Well then, we can set right where we is and talk. Ah got the house all opened up to let dis breeze get a little catchin’.

“Pheoby, we been kissin’-friends for twenty years, so Ah depend on you for a good thought. And Ah’m talking to you from dat standpoint.”

Time makes everything old so the kissing, young darkness became a monstropoulos old thing while Janie talked. (7)

This dialogue complicates the progression in several significant ways. First, it adds to the sense that Janie is not much concerned with the opinions of the rest of the community, and in that way the dialogue reduces rather than complicates the initial instability between her and them. Second, it begins to resolve some of the tensions generated in the block dialogue even as it introduces some new ones. Janie reveals that she still has “nine hundred dollars in de bank” and that Tea Cake, the young lad with whom she left, has neither taken her money nor run off

with another woman, but when Janie adds that Tea Cake is “gone,” a new tension develops. Third, even as the dialogue continues to contrast with that of Mouth Almighty, it adds another dimension to the initiation because its depiction of the telling situation between Janie and Pheoby applies equally well to the one between Hurston and her audience. The dialogue between Janie and Pheoby is based on mutual trust and on a concern for the other. Janie asks whether Pheoby has other obligations, and Pheoby’s negative answer also conveys her commitment to hearing Janie’s story. As our surrogate in the storyworld, Pheoby speaks for us both in making the commitment and in expressing concern about being “hard of understandin’”; we need to ask ourselves whether we have similar tendencies and what we might do to overcome them. As a sympathetic storyteller, Janie is Hurston’s surrogate, and thus we can recognize that Hurston also takes on the responsibility to give us sufficient texture in her story so that we can differentiate between a mink skin and a coon hide. As I hope my analysis so far has shown, she is already well along in fulfilling that responsibility.

Finally, the dialogue indicates that the progression of the narrative now, that is, the progression along the first time track, will be constituted by Janie’s telling her story to Pheoby. Thus, the passage completes the framing of the double time track of the progression. Janie will tell her story about the past, but that very telling will be the final event in that story. The telling will not merely bring Pheoby up to date but also complete the plot of her life to this point. The narrator’s final comment shows a significant shift in her voice that also bears on the relation between Janie and Pheoby, on the one side, and that between Hurston and her audience, on the other. The comment picks up on the language of Janie’s dialogue as “kissin’-friends” becomes “kissing darkness.” The shared language, which again underlines the shared gift for metaphor, also points to a shift in the narrator’s voice even when it moves away from Janie’s and Pheoby’s perspective. The distant voice of the opening paragraphs is now not only ethically aligned with Janie but also psychologically and affectively close to her. At the same time, the narrator’s voice conveys perceptions that go beyond Janie’s perspective. Here the narrator traces not just the movement of time’s arrow but also the remarkable duration of Janie’s telling, one that transforms the darkness from young and friendly to old and threatening. Within this setting Janie relies on Pheoby for a “good thought,” and Hurston implicitly relies on us for such thoughts toward Janie, the narrator, and herself.

Having now considered both phases of the initiation, we can rec-

ognize the similarities and differences between the rhetorical exchanges offered by the narrator's communication to the narratee and Janie's communication to Pheoby. Both the narrator and Janie have an impressive facility with metaphor that engages us in their discourse, a sign that Hurston has decided to share her authorial facility with both speakers. The two speakers are also aligned on the ethical axis, both in their judgments of Mouth Almighty and in their careful respect for their audiences. But the narrator's exchanges are both more wide ranging and more authoritative than Janie's, differences that Hurston underlines in part by the difference between Janie's vernacular speech and the narrator's Standard English. These differences by themselves do not mean that Hurston should make the narrator's voice dominant, since sometimes the very limitations on a vernacular character narrator's voice can be turned to authorial and readerly advantage. And indeed, the initiation into Janie's voice encourages us to want more exchanges with it. Consequently, we need to examine the launch before we can adequately assess Hurston's choice to have the narrator be the dominant voice in the telling of Janie's story.

The Launch

Although the dialogue between Janie and Pheoby at the end of Chapter 1 indicates that the progression in the narrative now will consist of Janie's storytelling, this moment does not constitute the launch, because it does not provide any clear link between the two time tracks. Instead, the launch occurs in Chapter 2 with the account of Janie's first experience of deep desire under the pear tree. It is this moment that sets the narrative on its overall trajectory, because, as most critics note, Janie's experience activates her lifelong quest to satisfy her newly awakened desire both sexually and socially. This moment further constitutes the launch because it is also the first major move in Janie's narration of her life to Pheoby, and it thereby heightens the tension about the way Janie's telling is itself related to her quest.

Chapter 2 begins with a remarkable framing comment: "Janie saw her life like a great tree in leaf with the things suffered, things enjoyed, things done and undone. Dawn and doom was in the branches" (8). In addition to its striking content, with its mixture of pleasures and pains, the comment is noteworthy for the way it handles vision and voice. These two sentences are clearly drawn from Janie's vision, and they blend the narrator's and Janie's voices. We know from the initiation that either

speaker could be the source of the metaphors, and though the first sentence's diction and syntax are more formal than Janie's and thus more plausibly assigned to the narrator's voice, the second sentence, with its use of "was" for "were," is more plausibly assigned to Janie's. Other readers might make other interpretive judgments of voice here, but my point is that Hurston is building on the affinity between the narrator and Janie in her treatment of vision and voice in this passage.

After this framing comment, Hurston allows Janie's voice to take over, as Janie tells Pheoby about her early years in west Florida with the Washburns and her surprising discovery at age six that she was not white, as they were. But when Hurston comes to the moment of Janie's experience under the pear tree, she shifts back to the narrator. As Hurston makes the transition, she calls attention to the telling situation and then employs a short stretch of internal focalization: "Pheoby's hungry listening helped Janie to tell her story. So she went on thinking back to her young years and to explaining them to her friend in soft, easy phrases while all around the house, the night time put on flesh and blackness" (10). This technique provides a smooth rather than abrupt movement from Janie's voice to the narrator's.

After this sentence, however, Hurston employs the narrator's vision and voice in a sentence that has the conventional marks of an initial exposition. "It was a spring afternoon in West Florida" (10). That Hurston puts this exposition in its own sentence not only emphasizes time (spring, with all its associations of rebirth) and place (Janie the teller has traveled, but not far from the place where her story began) but also subtly underlines the narrator's return to the dominant role. Hurston then reinforces that return in the next sentences, which expand on the exposition: "Janie had spent most of the day under the blossoming pear tree in the back-yard. She had been spending every minute that she could steal from her chores under that tree for the last three days. That is to say, since the first tiny bloom had opened" (10). The reinforcement works by means of the shifting temporality—from that day to the iterative report of the last three days—and the explicit attention to the telling voice in "That is to say."

But the shift to the narrator does not mean that Hurston has abandoned Janie's voice or vision, as we can see in the famous paragraph describing Janie's experience under the tree:

She was stretched on her back beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of the visiting bees, the gold of the sun and the panting breath of the breeze when the inaudible voice of it all came to her. She saw a

dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight. So this was a marriage! She had been summoned to behold a revelation. Then Janie felt a pain remorseless sweet that left her limp and languid. (11)

From “soaking in,” the passage is presented entirely from Janie’s vision, though with the exception of “So this was a marriage!” it is rendered in the narrator’s voice, with its capacity to coin such phrases as “alto chant,” “sanctum of a bloom,” “thousand sister-calyxes,” and “a pain remorseless sweet.” As many have noted, the passage brilliantly conveys Janie’s own bodily ecstatic shiver through its description of what she sees when bee enters bloom. The narrator’s voice captures the sublimity of the movement from arousal to climax to aftermath all the more forcefully because of the play between the explicit description of the activity in the tree and the implicit message about the activity in Janie’s body. The jump to Janie’s voice in “So this was a marriage!” also guides us to question the teenage Janie’s interpretive judgment. Hurston relies on us to recognize the huge gap between what has happened in the tree and what has happened in Janie’s body and what happens in marriage.

For my purposes, almost equally important is the metacommunication of the passage, Hurston’s signaling that to do justice to the texture of Janie’s experience, she needs to take advantage of all the resources of the narrator’s voice.

It is the narrator’s voice that will best enable Hurston to convey to the audience the difference between a mink skin and a coon hide and, indeed, to combat any tendency in them to be hard of understanding. At the same time, the choice to revert to a public voice is a strong political statement about Hurston’s own authority to tell this woman’s story. Furthermore, this choice is not one that will silence Janie, since it allows both for internal focalization in conjunction with Janie’s voice and for the presentation of ample swaths of Janie’s direct discourse. Such an analysis of the initiation and the launch indicates that Hurston made a sound aesthetic and political choice in making the narrator’s the dominant voice for Janie’s story.³

Nevertheless, the analysis also indicates why it is not surprising that some critics disagree with this conclusion—and, indeed, why the conclusion needs to be qualified. Hurston’s beginning calls attention to the importance of Janie’s voice as well as the teller’s both in her relation to

Pheoby and in relation to forging the link between the two tracks of the textual dynamics. If the telling is to be the significant final event of the narrative, the one that closes the gap between the two time tracks, then it is all but imperative for Hurston to represent Janie's voice as Pheoby hears it. In other words, Hurston's beginning has set up competing demands, with one set calling for the use of the narrator's voice and the other for the use of Janie's. Chapter 2 can be seen as Hurston's initial effort to negotiate these competing demands, for she begins with Janie's telling in her own voice and makes it clear that the narrator's account is a kind of close translation of Janie's telling to Pheoby. Hurston's negotiation is successful in one way and unsuccessful in another. The effort is successful because it provides a mechanism to follow through on the promise to have Janie's telling to Pheoby be both the main action in the narrative now and the last event in the story of Janie's life. The effort is unsuccessful because the initiation tends to arouse a readerly desire to hear Janie's voice as she tells her story to Pheoby, and Hurston does not—indeed, cannot—satisfy that desire, given her well-motivated choice to tell the story in the narrator's voice.

Extending the Analysis: The Absence of Janie's Voice in the Trial Scene

This logic about the readerly desire for Janie's voice is relevant to the issue of Hurston's choice not to represent Janie's speech at her trial, and it suggests that Hurston's decision is flawed. Indeed, Plato's complaint about artistic mimesis—namely, that it is a copy of a copy and thus two removes from the ideal—seems to apply to Hurston's choice. She gives us neither Janie directly telling Pheoby about the courtroom nor the narrator framing Janie's direct discourse. Instead, we have the narrator's summary of what Janie tried to make the white men see.

She tried to make them see how terrible it was that things were fixed so that Tea Cake couldn't come back to himself until he had got rid of that mad dog that was in him and he couldn't get rid of the dog and live. He had to die to get rid of the dog. But she hadn't wanted to kill him. A man is up against a hard game when he must die to beat it. She made them see how she couldn't ever want to be rid of him. She didn't plead to anybody. She just sat there and told and when she was through she hushed. (187)

Although we have Janie's vision and blends of her voice with the narrator's (e.g., "He had to die to get rid of the dog"), the summary nature of the passage emphasizes the narrator's dominance and thus the absence of Janie's voice itself. Since the trial is enormously consequential for Janie and for the progression—her life, and thus her entire act of telling to Pheoby, is at stake—that absence presents an aesthetic problem. While we can still take satisfaction in Janie's successful defense, experiencing Janie's direct speech to the white men would significantly increase that satisfaction. Furthermore, the situation here is not one in which Hurston faces competing demands of the kind that she does at the moment of launch. Instead, she faces the choice of scene versus summary. Although Hurston would face a difficult task in writing a speech that both the white men in the courtroom and her audience would find consistent with Janie's character and persuasive, she has shown herself capable of such skill with voice. For all these reasons, my aesthetic judgment is that here Hurston opted for the less effective technique.

This judgment, however, does not detract much from my larger aesthetic judgment of Hurston's achievement. As I hope to have shown, the novel's beginning brilliantly engages and aligns us with Janie, Pheoby, and the telling situation even as it launches our interest in knowing how Janie came to be at this point of feeling "the oldest human longing—self-revelation." More generally, I hope to have shown that the debate about Hurston's use of the narrator's voice arises from the sound choices she makes about the initiation and launch, even though those sound choices forced her to deal with competing demands on her narrative.

Notes

1. Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s chapter "Zora Neale Hurston and the Speakerly Text" celebrates Hurston's achievement in the novel, with her handling of both free indirect discourse and Janie's direct dialogue. Gates labels the novel a speakerly text because he sees in it many devices by which Hurston draws on and even emulates the African American tradition of oral narrative. Gates also argues that the novel traces the steps by which Janie acquires her voice. Barbara Johnson, Susan Lanser (*Fictions*), and Houston Baker each offer other arguments about the centrality of Janie's acquisition of voice. Carla Kaplan, in a perceptive analysis, disagrees with this dominant reading, arguing that Janie, a born orator, always already has a voice. Janie's quest is instead for an appreciative audience, and Kaplan provocatively argues that, though Janie finds such an audience in Pheoby, Hurston is less certain that she will find such an audience for her telling—and that her choice not to represent Janie's telling directly is a reminder of our distance from Pheoby. Robert Stepto makes the case that Hurston's decision

not to represent Janie's telling undercuts any sense that she has achieved her voice. Mary Helen Washington agrees with Stepto and sees many other problems with Hurston's handling of voice, including her failure to represent Janie's speech during her trial. More recent discussions of the novel have focused on other issues: Stuart Burrows shifts attention to the importance of "vision" in the novel. Todd McGowan focuses on Janie's shooting of Tea Cake, arguing that it is not simply the tragic end to their relationship but a necessary move in her journey toward liberation.

2. See Gates ("Zora" 171–172) for a discussion of the first paragraph as a re-writing of Frederick Douglass's apostrophe to ships in his *Autobiography*.

3. I find this reading of Hurston's choice more compelling than Kaplan's argument that the choice expresses Hurston's skepticism about her audience's ability to match Pheoby's sympathetic appreciation. More generally, I believe that the rhetorical exchanges of both phases of the initiation point to Hurston's faith in her imagined audience.

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CHAPTER 6

Narrating Multiculturalism in British Media: Voice and Cultural Identity in Television Documentary and Comedy

HILARY P. DANNENBERG

The slow rise to visibility of ethnic minorities in British culture has been well documented, both in secondary texts (Bourne; Daniels and Gerson; Gillespie; Malik; Pines) and in fictional autobiographical narratives such as Meera Syal's *Anita and Me*. In one key passage of Syal's text, Meena, the protagonist, describes the virtual absence of Asian and black faces in British media, as well as their distortion as a result of Orientalist stereotyping, during the 1960s:

According to the newspapers and television, we simply did not exist. If a brown or black face ever did appear on TV, it stopped us all in our tracks [. . .] and we would crowd round and coo over the walk-on in some detective series, some long-suffering actor [. . .] with a goodness-gracious-me accent. [. . .] But these occasional minor celebrities never struck us as real; they were someone else's version of Indian, far too exaggerated and exotic to be believable. (165)

Although the British media were slow to reflect Britain's true multiethnic nature during the second half of the twentieth century, programming designed to produce images of multiethnic, multicultural British society has increased markedly over the past decade. Whether by chance or design, this change occurred subsequent to a landmark in the historical development of multicultural Britain: the Stephen Lawrence murder in 1993 and the resultant Macpherson Report, which indicted the British police with institutional racism.¹ This trend has been noticeably stronger in programming by the BBC and Channel Four, media institutions whose public-service remit obliges them to program for the whole community rather than operate on an exclusively commercial basis; here the multicultural programming goes across the generic board, including a

variety of entertainment genres as well as the documentary format. On all channels, however, Britain's changing multicultural climate can be gauged in the field of news programming through the increase in the number of black and Asian anchors and journalists.

British television is therefore a key public arena in which images and narratives of British multiculturalism are constructed. Yet this increasing media presence is only one facet of the more complex constellation of narratives and identities that make up contemporary Britain. The realities in the world and on television are parts of a more complex equation: they both complement and contradict each other. Writing at the turn of the millennium, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown summed up this ambivalence in her comments on the gradual emergence of black and Asian political representation in tandem with a paradox surrounding Trevor McDonald, the longstanding anchorman of Independent Television News (ITN):

The number of black and Asian MPs in parliament has increased to nine, slow but real change. The House of Lords has had an impressive injection of black and Asian peers since Labour won the election in 1997 and we have, for the first time ever, a Muslim Baroness, Pola Uddin, who has spent most of her life on housing estates in the East End of London. [. . .] The nation's favourite newsreader is Trevor McDonald, but in recent times there have been up to 250,000 racially motivated incidents every year in this country on black people, many of whom look just like him. (3)

The ambivalent nature of Britain's multicultural society is thus reflected in the differing realities in the media and on Britain's streets, but it can also be gauged through a critical investigation of media texts. In analyzing a selection of texts that either focus on or were made by black and Asian Britons, I will show how these texts tell stories of British multiculturalism from different positions and perspectives and with differing voices. These texts show the absence of any single version or narrative of British multiculturalism, for each reflects a different constellation of the complex relations of identity and power in contemporary Britain.

In investigating the question, "Who needs 'Identity,?'" Stuart Hall emphasizes the fact that "identities are constructed through, not outside, difference":

Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical

and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity—an “identity” in its traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation). (4)

As representations of multicultural Britain, the media texts I consider in this essay are particularly significant examples of media discourse that can be analyzed for their enunciation of difference, and also sometimes exclusion, in their configuration of identities. Each text constructs its own version of British multicultural relations in terms of “we” and “they” groups. Different constellations of collective identity—that is, of “we” groups—are created by erecting cultural borders that act to other, “they” groups. In addition, some texts feature a specific “I” as a key subject who locates him- or herself in relation to larger identity constellations. These constellations of difference are articulated in both overt and covert ways. They can be constructed directly by a narrative voice—for example, by a narrator in a documentary text—through the use of explicit grammatical constructions. They can also, however, be constructed more indirectly by verbal utterances and visual images.

For the purpose of my analysis, I have organized the texts into two groups according to their constellations of voice and character. The first group contains two predominantly autobiographical narratives by black British media figures with Afro-Caribbean backgrounds: Benjamin Zephaniah’s *This OBE Is Not For Me* (BBC, 2004) uses the documentary format, while Lenny Henry’s *This Is My Life* (BBC, 2002) is a performance text in the genre of stand-up comedy. In both texts the central narrative voice is that of the autobiographical subject, and the narrative has an autodiegetic frame insofar as key sections center on the narrator’s life story. However, each text presents its narrative in terms of the larger framework of Afro-Caribbean identities in contemporary and past Britain. I have called the second group of texts “polyphonic narratives” because, while some of them have a third-person narrator, this voice is not, as in the autobiographical form, the focus of the story but a coordinator of other embedded voices and images in the text. Three of these four texts are documentaries: *Sikh Street* (Channel Four, 2001), *The Race Age* (BBC, 2004), and *The Great British Black Invasion* (Channel Four, 2006); the fourth comes from the field of popular entertainment: the

BBC's highly successful show *The Kumars at No 42* (2001–2006), which uses the polyphony of dialogue within the space of the television studio in a comic appropriation of the chat-show genre.²

Here the term *polyphony* is not only applicable as a formal description but also relevant in terms of the texts' subject matter. Mikhail Bakhtin uses the term to describe a new style of narrative voice in the novels of Dostoevsky, in which the narrator relinquishes his dominant authorial style and gives up his hegemony over the text, allowing the characters to become autonomous entities with their own voices. This abdication of narratorial domination, in which no voice or opinion exerts hegemony, produces "a *plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world*" (Bakhtin, *Problems* 6). In the documentary texts the spirit of polyphony can be seen as a direct result of the multicultural agenda: the narratives are designed to reflect the would-be egalitarian spirit of contemporary multicultural Britain encompassing a plurality of voices that are not subordinated to one central narrator representing an institutional authorial voice—that is, the voice of the white British establishment as successor to the white imperial colonial center.

In the passage just cited, Hall states that identities are constructed in "specific historical and institutional sites" and that "they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power." In this respect, British colonial history and its cultural memory constitute a decisive factor in the definition of identities in contemporary British multiethnic society. Britain's ethnic minorities may find themselves in a theoretically multicultural society, but they are also located in a country full of the cultural memories of colonialism. They must negotiate their contemporary British identity in a postimperial cultural zone. Constructions of "we" or "they" (depending on the perspective) in relation to white British postimperial identity are present in each of the texts, but the issue is absolutely at the forefront of Benjamin Zephaniah's *This OBE Is Not For Me*. The fact that the word *empire* still appears in the name of the most prestigious British award for public service may be a lamentable anachronism (the acronym stands for "Officer of the Order of the British Empire"), but it is at least clear confirmation for anyone who might otherwise have been in doubt that colonialism and the empire still maintain a key cultural presence in contemporary Britain. Whether it is seen negatively or positively, the cultural memory of empire is a key parameter in white British collective identity, and the presence of the past thus poses a significant barrier to the identification of all contemporary British citizens with a larger British multicultural "we." If a substantial part of the collective British

“we” is constructed around the memory of being the agents of a colonial empire, then more recent British migrants must complete a complex act of identification or differentiation from the cultural consciousness of empire to define their contemporary British identity. Since, particularly for the current multiethnic generation, a full identification with the white postimperial “we” requires a superlative act of doublethink, other “we” constellations must be enunciated as counternarratives to displace or augment the white British postimperial “we” with a multicultural British “we.”

Autobiographical Television Narratives as Counternarratives to the Establishment Voice

The departing point of *This OBE Is Not For Me* is Benjamin Zephaniah’s account of his refusal of the OBE. The opening sections of the documentary narrate Zephaniah’s life story before constructing a larger narrative of empire in which Zephaniah visits key historical sites and conducts interviews that reflect the controversy and complexity of positions surrounding the history of empire and its role in contemporary British culture. Zephaniah’s documentary shows various possibilities for this process of negotiation with the British colonial past that center on the identification and differentiation of “we” and “they” identities in connection with empire.

An initial expository section reconstructs Zephaniah’s receipt of the letter offering him an OBE:³

Benjamin Zephaniah [*voice-over*]: No one was more surprised than me when a letter from No. 10 Downing Street arrived inviting me to accept an OBE. [*camera shot of a letter being posted through Zephaniah’s mailbox; close-up of Zephaniah opening the letter and reading it; additional musical narrative of Elgar’s “Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1” (also known as “Land of Hope and Glory”) as a man’s voice reads the text of the letter*]:

“Dear Sir,

The Prime Minister has asked me to inform you in strict confidence that he has it in mind on the occasion of the forthcoming list of New Year Honours to submit your name to the Queen with a recommendation that Her Majesty may be graciously pleased to approve you to be appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire.”

Zephaniah [*voice-over*]: It angered me because I've made it plain in my writing before that I don't want an OBE. You know, I'm a militant vegan, and if I tell you that I'm a vegan, don't give me a steak.

[*film of Zephaniah reading the first two stanzas of his poem "Bought and Sold"*]:

[. . .]

The ancestors would turn in graves
Those poor black folk that once were slaves would wonder
How our souls were sold
And check our strategies,
The empire strikes back and waves
Tamed warriors bow on parades
When they have done what they've been told
They get their OBEs.

Zephaniah is here constructed as the center of the narrative—both as the narrative authority through the medium of the voice-over and repeatedly, in multiple roles, as an agent on screen. By contrast, the embedded text of the letter from the prime minister's office—the British political and institutional center—is marginalized and ridiculed, both through the reduction of the office to a small piece of paper on screen and through the incongruously ironic musical quotation of “Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1” in a situation in which there is palpably little pomp or circumstance, only the visual effect of Zephaniah reading the letter in the front room of his house. The power constellation of the honors system—British establishment graciously honors individual British “subject” (Zephaniah)—is inverted and subverted.

Following this exposition, two further sections discuss British multicultural identity and empire:

Zephaniah [*voice-over*]: I want to make it absolutely clear that although I turned down the OBE, I am not anti-British. I love Britain: it's cool. For over twenty years now I've lived here in the borough of Newham in East London. [*camera shots of Newham streets and people, interspersed with shots of Zephaniah walking on streets of Newham*]

Zephaniah [*filmed speaking as he walks in Newham*]: This must be one of the most multicultural places on earth as far as I'm concerned. There are people from all over the world here. It's easy to see one of the legacies of empire here because most of the people that have immigrated here have

come from countries that were ex-colonies. This is where I'm at home now, and my closest friends are here. But not all of them agreed with my decision to refuse the OBE.

The emphasis on the colonial backgrounds of Newham's multicultural inhabitants suggests important questions about British cultural memory and empire. Zephaniah uses it to displace the white cultural memory of empire as colonial agency and overlay it with a multicultural memory of the colonies as a constituent part of empire. Implicitly, he works to displace the cultural memory of Britishness-as-empire with a multicultural memory of Britishness-as-ex-colony. Zephaniah establishes Newham as a multicultural space that exists parallel to empire and the memory of empire rather than subordinate to it.

The debate surrounding the OBE and British identity is taken up in a subsequent section in which Zephaniah visits a group of West Indian former servicemen “who are proud to have been honored by the Queen” (a picture of Elizabeth II hangs on the wall as the exchange of ideas takes place). All the servicemen criticize Zephaniah for rejecting the OBE; one states, “It has nothing really to do with empire[; . . .] they just failed to change the name,” and another says, “I'm not in agreement with you refusing an honor as a blessing of her Majesty's government.” Zephaniah's response to the group is as follows:

This is the crux of something very important. You in your world [. . .] know what you fought for. But I think where the generation gap happens is that young people nowadays feel very uncomfortable with the romanticization of empire. [*The film fades out of the ex-serviceman's club and cuts to colorfully attractive images of colonial ships in a cultural heritage site.*] For me the OBE represents the glorification of colonialism, which I find offensive because in building up its empire Britain enslaved millions of black people.

The film here makes a key point concerning the role of empire for identity formation in different generations of black Britons. The words “you know what you fought for” evoke the memory of a mid-twentieth-century collective imperial identity that embraced and unified the colonized and colonizer in the overriding priority of defeating fascism. Zephaniah here clearly reveals the layers of identity—in terms of *identification*—within his own larger cultural “we” group of Afro-Caribbean Britons: the older generation (“You in your world”) has a positive cultural mem-

ory of being an agent of empire, whereas Zephaniah's generation cannot participate in the mid-twentieth-century memory that enables black British identification with empire. Rather, this later generation sees a larger historical perspective in which the history of slavery outweighs the memory of World War II.

Features found in Zephaniah's documentary—the dialogue with the past and the ironic impersonation of the British institutional center—also occur in overt comic form in Lenny Henry's *This Is My Life*. In this one-hour stand-up autobiographical narrative (performed before a live audience in honor of his mother, who had recently died), Henry narrates a comically enhanced version of his and his family's history, starting with the story of his parents' migration from Jamaica to the northern British town of Dudley in the 1950s. The genre of stand-up comedy combined with embedded film quotations gives Henry full narratorial control. This is particularly evident at the beginning, when he mimics a white British colonial voice in a bogus voice-over to authentic images of immigrants arriving from Jamaica in 1948:

Lenny Henry [*on stage*]: So this is my life; it's also my mum's life, and the way I see it, it always begins with black-and-white moving images and a man's voice talking like this. [*Henry's voice modulates into the received pronunciation of mid-twentieth-century British newsreel commentators. The screen shows authentic Pathé film footage of the arrival of Caribbean immigrants in Britain.*] Well here we are at the dockside at Tilbury, London, on this historic day, the twenty-second of June, 1948, and we're watching the SS *Empire Windrush* making its way dramatically into port. And look at these happy smiling little fellows. What's going on? It's our Caribbean chums from across the sea who've come to help rebuild Britain after our little scuffle with Herr Hitler. [. . .] Most of these people are in fact descendants of slaves, so they should be well used to the working conditions they're going to find over here.

Henry takes up a range of multiple identities and positions in this short excerpt. He moves from his own genuine Midlands English accent to imitate the voice of a white colonial British commentator; in doing so, he parodies British understatement (“little scuffle with Herr Hitler”) while also, more significantly, satirizing the white colonial othering of the Caribbean colonized, particularly their stereotyping as diminutive and obliging children (“happy smiling little fellows”). The phrases “Caribbean chums” and “come to help rebuild Britain” lampoon British

colonial hypocrisy, which euphemizes the true hierarchical and exploitative relations between colonized and colonizer, falsely suggesting that the relationship is one of equality and voluntary help among friends and equals. Finally, in pointing out that the Jamaican immigrants are the descendants of slaves, Henry falls out of his assumed role and addresses the larger historical context more directly than any genuine commentary of the period would have done.

When at the outset Henry says that it “always begins with black-and-white moving images and a man’s voice talking like this,” he is addressing the role of the official film narratives of the period in contrast to the less well known personal history of his own family. The satirical voice-over thus offers a counternarration that displaces the official narrative not by appropriating the images but by providing a new narrator who blends the authenticity of personal historical knowledge with the satirical edge of comedy. Henry thus takes material produced by the colonial center but overlays and reconstitutes it to satirize the attitudes behind the white British colonial “we.”

Differing Identity Constellations in Polyphonic Television Narratives of Multicultural Britain

Sikh Street (Colman) exemplifies a basic form of polyphonic documentary narrative against which more individual cases can be contrasted. The film traces the history of Sikh immigrants to the town of Gravesend. The documentary has a narrator, but his voice is relatively covert; information is provided through a montage of interviews with members of the Gravesend community.⁴ These voices represent the prejudices and racism of the white Britons who originally lived in Gravesend but largely focus on the life stories of individual members of the Sikh community there.

Male narrator [*voice-over to images of a street of terraced houses*]: This looks like a typical English street in a typical English town. But it’s not. Fifty years ago Asians from the Punjab began to move into Pier Road. [*close-up of a group of Sikh women in Gravesend, which cuts to interviews with local inhabitants recalling the arrival of the first immigrants*]

White woman: I saw them in what appeared like fancy dress to me. And they looked so odd.

White man: The people of Gravesend that were born and bred there

found the curry smell offensive. They found the spitting on the pavement offensive. They found it fairly alien to walk down a whole street of Asian houses.

Sikh man: First of all I live in 77, then I move in 24, then 48, then after that, 86.

[. . .]

Narrator [*voice-over to images of Gravesend, cutting to a faded photograph of a Sikh man and his wife*]: Gravesend in Kent. A Victorian town on the Thames which was once a thriving port. In the past fifty years it's changed beyond recognition. Today it's home to one of the largest Sikh communities in Britain. The first Sikh to ever live in Gravesend was this man. Bhagat Singh came from a small rural village in the Punjab, northern India. In 1932 he left his family and traveled to Britain to make his fortune peddling Indian cloth.

Jasbinder Kaur Aujla [*in interview*]: When my father came over, he started wearing his shirt and tie, and he always used to have his Trilby hat on—he was always well known for his Trilby hat.

Sikh Street is an attempt to present a balanced narrative of multicultural Britain through the means of polyphonic narrative. The unseen narrator's voice provides the larger historical narrative, while multiple interviews provide complementary oral narratives of the period that establish a variety of perspectives and construct a tapestry of individual life stories during the course of the fifty-minute documentary.

The Race Age (Duly), a documentary that evokes migrants' lives in Britain during the 1960s, has a more complicated structure. The program attempts to be polyphonic in part by forgoing a narratorial voice. The story is told completely through a montage of film footage, comprising interviews with black British immigrants and their families; contemporary news reports, including representations of British racism in the period; and television programs. At the very beginning, the documentary abruptly plunges the viewer into a representation of 1960s Britain by showing an excerpt from a film made with the intention of adjusting newly arrived immigrants—one that is as naive as it is condescending in its style:

White man behind desk: I am very pleased to have the opportunity of introducing this series of programs. I hope you will find them entertaining. I hope also that you will find them useful. For it is part of their purpose to help you to an understanding of life in this country so that you

can settle happily among us. [*Cuts to the beginning of a film identified as Make Yourself at Home (1969).*]

White male presenter: Hello. [*Points to switch on wall.*] This is a switch on the wall. A switch. [*Points to a light.*] This is a light. A light. If I press the switch on the wall, the light will come on. [*Presses switch.*] [*Cuts to multiple images of black immigrants with a background reggae music track with the lyric "Something is holding me back, is it because I'm black?"*] [. . .]

Black male immigrant in interview: Coming here, we have always looked forward at this. It was the mother country, you see. And then we will be all welcome. We were taught that in this country the people were more hospitable, warm-hearted—that's what we were taught, and it was driven in us, you see. So of course it was a dream coming here. [*Cuts to a scene from the BBC sitcom Till Death Do Us Part from 1968 with a racist text spoken by the main character, Alf Garnett.*]

The compilation of voices and texts in *The Race Age* is therefore much more eclectic than *Sikh Street*'s montage of oral narratives, and the final jump from the authentic black immigrant to the racist words of a fictional television character indicates the program's complicated agenda. The repeated use of film clips from BBC television programs during the documentary suggests, in fact, that despite its ostensible subject, *The Race Age* is also telling another story: the story of the BBC's own contribution to the filmic construction and development of multicultural Britain. In addition to quotations from *Till Death Us Do Part* (Garnett was a controversial figure created by the writer Johnny Speight to expose and ridicule racist attitudes), further excerpts include two key 1960s satire programs, *That Was The Week That Was* and *Not So Much a Programme, More a Way of Life*, which both lampooned racism, and *Z-Cars*, a gritty Liverpool police series that represented racist attitudes among the police. These film quotations provide the impression that, rather than being a truly egalitarian polyphony, the BBC is orchestrating its own voice, self-reflexively drawing attention to its own role in the creation of multicultural Britain through its antiracist 1960s programming policy.

The Race Age therefore constructs an implicit "we" of the BBC as a cultural author of British multiculturalism. Another documentary, Channel Four's *Great British Black Invasion* (Hughes), even more strikingly exemplifies how, despite an ostensible desire to create a multicultural spirit through polyphonic montage, the use of a narrator can

create divisive identities. *The Great British Black Invasion* comprises ninety minutes of intense images and text, celebrating black migration to Britain, incorporating the stories of many black Britons, and underlining the diversity of black British cultures and their diasporic origins. At the outset, the film contrasts contemporary multicultural Britain with its past by juxtaposing earlier stereotypes of blacks from old film footage with contemporary reality. The film revisits familiar icons of British multicultural history that appear in some of the previously discussed media texts, including the arrival of the SS *Empire Windrush* and *Till Death Us Do Part*. The narrative then goes on to deconstruct the stereotypical idea that the first British blacks arrived on the *Windrush* by narrating the history of the earlier migration of black fighter pilots and entertainers.

Female narrator [*voice-over against constantly changing film footage and sound*]: Most people now wince at the idea that the thoughts of Alf Garnett were the stuff of popular humor. But that wasn't the only thing about black people that was once good for a laugh. Remember when they all came from the jungle, worked on the buses? [. . .] It's all changed now. Who wouldn't like a slice of Thierry Henry's panache? But even if black is the new black, the people who you think of as black are not the same people at all. They're all quite different. From different countries, even different continents. And most of our ideas about them are wrong. You think it all started with the *Windrush*? No. The first to come were Spitfire pilots, and entertainers.

While the text is keen to make a clear differentiation between contemporary British attitudes and mid-twentieth-century stereotyping and ignorance, the narrator's construction of her audience betrays a different and equally significant hierarchy that undermines the text's ostensible spirit of multiculturalism. The text is not addressed equally to all British viewers. When the narrator says "The people *you* think of as black are not the same people at all" and "most of *our* ideas about *them* are wrong," the intended addressees of the program become clear: the "you" addressed here is the unenlightened white British viewer—and possibly also members of other ethnic groups—but not the black Britons who are, paradoxically, the subjects of the program but defined as a "they" group by the narrator on the level of the discourse mediation. Phrases such as "Remember when they all came from the jungle?" construct a further temporal as well as rhetorical distance between black Britons and the program's audience, because the narrator addresses the (implicitly white) viewer, evoking a mutual past of ignorance as part of cultural memory.

While its intentions may be good—to enlighten the average (white) Briton about the history and cultural diversity of black Britons—the rhetorical structure of the narrator’s text actually reinforces ethnic divisions by constructing a “we” group that excludes black Britons, who are, in the program’s strange rhetoric, implied not to constitute part of the contemporary British television audience embraced by the narrator.

The Kumars at No 42 (Bhaskar) constitutes a different example of polyphony: not that of the multiple embedded voices of the documentary format but that of the television chat show. *The Kumars*, however, is a hybrid text with real-world and fictional levels. The Kumars are a fictional Asian family who (as a satire on Asian upward mobility) have built their own television studio in their backyard to launch the media career of their son, Sanjeev. Each half-hour episode includes short sections with the Kumar family at home preparing to welcome their chat-show guests; the main sections consist of the chat show itself, in which Sanjeev, supported by his mother, father, and grandmother sitting on the sofa, interviews British celebrities in front of a live television audience.

The format of *The Kumars* extends and orchestrates the dialogicity of the chat-show format, first through the plurality of interviewers (Sanjeev is the official host but his mother, father, and grandmother all ask questions from the sofa) and second through the multicultural climate that is more or less automatically generated by the program’s scenario of a mainstream (usually white) celebrity entering the home of an Asian family. As a result of this multivoiced and overtly multicultural blend of fictional and authentic levels, *The Kumars* creates a complex and changing dialogue of voices in which group identities and “we”/“they” relations are dynamic and fluid. The following three examples illustrate some of the ways in which this occurs.

In the first episode of the *The Kumars* (2001), the first celebrity guest is the film actor Richard E. Grant. As the initial dialogue emphasizes, Grant grew up in colonial Swaziland, where his family was part of the ruling elite. However, instead of consolidating the potential “us” and “them” positions of difference between colonized and colonizer, the dialogue comically transforms it when Mr. Kumar addresses Grant as a fellow immigrant to Britain:

Mr. Kumar: Mr. Grant, you know what I’ve just realized? You were an immigrant into this country.

Richard E. Grant: Yes.

Mr. Kumar: I was an immigrant into this country. [*Grant gets up and shakes his hand; the audience applauds.*] [. . .] I feel, you know, we immi-

grants have worked hard, and we've put a lot of money into the coffers of this country.

Grant: Definitely.

Mr. Kumar: Both of us.

Grant: Yes.

Mr. Kumar: But to the ordinary idiot in the pub, we're just a couple of freeloading black people.

Grant: Exactly. [*The audience laughs.*]

The dialogue playfully ignores Grant's postimperial whiteness and his superior social and celebrity status within British society and, through the use of comedy, constructs a utopian third space that denies the levels of "us" and "them" and embraces Grant as a fellow black. The audience's applause, moreover, seems to imply a sincere wish for Britain to be an egalitarian, postimperial, multiethnic society.

The second guest in the first episode of *The Kumars* is the doyen of British chat-show hosts, Michael Parkinson. Parkinson's presence provokes different responses in members of the Kumar family, and these are already foregrounded in the private family scenes before his arrival. Grandmother Kumar idolizes Parkinson and on his arrival flings her arms around him. In doing so, she hyperbolically enacts the reverence for the British establishment inculcated by British cultural imperialism in colonial India. By contrast, when Sanjeev introduces Parkinson by saying, "My next guest is more than an inspiration; he's an equal," he subverts the hierarchical, hero-worshiping position enacted by the grandmother and stresses his and Parkinson's social equality, thereby transforming the us and them of hierarchical relations to that of competing equals. Moreover, when welcoming Parkinson, Sanjeev says, "Michael, great having you on *my* show"—thus instating *The Kumars* as the cultural center and marginalizing Parkinson, the representative of the British media establishment, as the visiting other. The scene therefore enacts the different identity positions of two different Asian generations in the specific dynamics of British postimperial society in a similar way to Zephaniah's previously noted more sober observations on the differences between West Indian generations: the contemporary multiethnic generation is not constrained by the cultural memory of empire and thus seeks recognition on its own terms.

Another interview that offers many insights into the program's multi-cultural dynamics occurs in the second series, an episode in which the main guest is the actor Patrick Stewart. Talking about the gradual loss of his Yorkshire accent as a result of his career in acting, Stewart refers apol-

ogetically to the old language and class hierarchy of “BBC English.” To this grandmother Kumar declares, in a clear Indian English accent: “This is BBC English now,” comically displacing the “we” of “BBC English.” The resulting audience laughter and applause is an open celebration of the fact that *The Kumars* has successfully appropriated the medium of television and taken over a primetime slot in the BBC’s broadcasting output. Subsequently, when grandmother Kumar asks Stewart, “Is there much difference between playing Shakespeare and the captain of the *Enterprise*?” he replies that he became so annoyed by the insinuation that “choosing to do a syndicated science-fiction television show was somehow slumming” that one day he said “on camera”: “Listen: All those years of sitting in different thrones of England acting Shakespeare [. . .] was *only* a preparation for sitting in the captain’s chair of the *Enterprise*.” The resulting applause from both the Kumars and the audience reveals that the identity constellation has changed again. The playful rehearsal of postcolonial animosities is forgotten, and the Kumars and Stewart are united in their celebration of non-British popular culture (the *Star Trek* series) in contrast to the temporarily ostracized British establishment culture of Shakespearean drama.

The Kumars is therefore notable for the fluidity of its multicultural polyphonics, in which the various contexts allow the group assembled on screen and in the studio—the Kumar family, their guests, and the live audience, whose applause offers additional rhetorical potential for implicit “we” identification in the program’s identity constellation—to create a highly dynamic cultural third space in which they can coalesce into a variety of “us” and “they” positions that reflect the complex dynamics of identity in postimperial and multicultural Britain.

The extreme maneuverability of positions in *The Kumars* is achieved through its comic genre and its complex blend of real-world and fictional roles. Because it centrally locates the Asian family, the program might also be designated a form of “we” narrative; its positions, however, are so flexible that at points (as seen in the final example) the “we” extends far beyond the confines of Asian identity to embrace larger groups, and this is precisely what makes it a strongly multicultural text and explains its popularity. As a form of “we” narrative, however, *The Kumars* has an agenda similar to the first-person narratives of Benjamin Zephaniah and Lenny Henry, in that the black or Asian presenter assumes the dominant voice, a position that lets the speaker take ironic or subversive positions toward the British establishment or the cultural legacy of colonialism. The three documentaries in the polyphonic format, by contrast, follow a different agenda in their attempts to provide information within an

ostensibly objective format. However, while *Sikh Street* succeeds in its polyphonic structure in creating “a *plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world*” (Bakhtin, *Problems* 6), both *The Race Age* and *The Great Black British Invasion*, despite signs of a spirit of contemporary multiculturalism, bear the cultural or rhetorical marks of a narrative authored and coordinated by the “we” of the white British establishment.

Notes

1. A key text here in the development of British Asian media empowerment and representation from the late 1990s is the comedy sketch show *Goodness Gracious Me* (Bhaskar; broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and subsequently BBC Television). The program turned a truly multicultural satirical eye on Asian and British cultural interaction by satirizing the multiple religions and cultures of Asian Britons and their desire to assimilate and conform to upwardly mobile middle-class British dreams, but it also included biting critiques of white British racism and Orientalist Asian stereotypes (Gillespie provides a detailed account).

2. The genre mix of documentary and comedy texts, and the scope of this essay, do not allow me to take up genre-specific theories of media rhetoric and representation in the analysis. Nichols (111) observes, in contrasting the documentary with narrative fiction, “At the heart of documentary is less a *story* and its imaginary world than an *argument* about the historical world”; it might also be claimed, however, that in the polyphonic tendency noted in the documentaries analyzed here, individual life stories are balanced with an explicit argument. In the genre of comedy, storytelling is a central strategy, and comic stories are often departures of the imagination, for comic narratives must deviate from audience expectations to create comic surprise (see Neale and Krutnik 86; Dannenberg, “Marketing”). Nevertheless, in the comic texts dealt with here, storytelling always has a clear relation to the historical world; Lenny Henry’s text is an autobiographical narrative about migration, for example, while *The Kumars’* chat-show format takes it much closer to the historical world than do many other comic genres. All the documentary films discussed here, with the exception of *The Race Age*—notwithstanding their different identity constellations—use a type of narratorial voice that Carl Plantinga calls “formal,” i.e., one that “takes a position of epistemic authority toward the film’s projected world” (110); *The Race Age* uses what Plantinga calls an “open voice,” i.e., one that “observes or explores rather than explains” (108).

3. All quotations from the television texts provided in this essay are my own transcriptions together with my descriptions of other aural and visual effects.

4. Judging from his voice alone, the narrator might be a representative of the white British male establishment, but the credits reveal that he is Sanjeev Bhaskar, a British Asian media personality familiar to television audiences from *Goodness Gracious Me* and *The Kumars at No 42*.

PART II

EMOTION

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CHAPTER 7

Anger, Temporality, and the Politics of Reading *The Woman Warrior*

SUE J. KIM

When I teach *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and *The Woman Warrior* in my American literature survey course, students invariably tend to do two things: they evince surprise that *Malcolm X* is so much *less* angry than they had expected, and they want to read *The Woman Warrior* as being about the cultural differences between China and the United States. These tendencies—the readerly expectations that are disrupted by the text of *Malcolm X* and the expectations that fail to be disrupted in their reading of *Woman Warrior*—are intimately connected. Both relate to readers’ desires to equate the complex literary productions of Alex Haley and Maxine Hong Kingston not only with the experiences of Malcolm X and Kingston but also with the entire group they are seen to represent within a liberal multicultural framework. The students’ racialized and gendered ideological expectations are channeled into the desire for a static iconographic image that can serve as a convenient handle: the fist-raised Malcolm or poor little Maxine struggling against (Chinese) patriarchy.

These readerly tendencies, a product of simplistic and regressive forms of multiculturalism, run counter to the increasing theoretical sophistication and antiessentialism in literary criticism of marginal texts.¹ Yet debates about representation and aesthetic form continue. Take, for example, the critical debates about anger and aggression in *Woman Warrior*. Critics do read the text as angry, and many feminist and Asian American literary critics celebrate the angry figure of the title, the mythical Fa Mu Lan transfigured into an Asian American feminist warrior. Others argue that the text, in its valorization of the woman warrior figure and myth, actually reinforces patriarchy and Orientalism.² But many such readings, while compelling in details, are still based on the assump-

tion that the texts must be evaluated in terms of literary and political representation. The notion of representation may be couched in more complex terms—for example, the notion that contradictory ideological and economic structural pressures on a community give rise to counterhegemonic cultural productions that must then be interpreted differently or that the nontraditional memoir form of Kingston's *Woman Warrior* captures a uniquely feminine or minority experience.³

The representation of collective experience clearly constitutes a complex issue. On the one hand, it is unquestionably important to fill in the blank spots of human experience—and the ideological structures that create and are supported by such lacunae—and to write of new human experiences. On the other, both the simplistic multicultural approach *and* the more complex representational approaches risk, among other things, not only suppressing the actual heterogeneities of experience but also underreading particular marginal aesthetic texts.⁴ As Sau-ling Wong wrote over twenty years ago:

We have, then, two apparently contradictory claims on the ethnic writer: one, a fundamental human need to affirm the specificities of one's personal experience, however "atypical," especially when the redemption of a painful past is at stake; and the other, a no less compelling imperative to express solidarity with those whose sufferings take similar forms from similar causes, such that one's gift of writing becomes more than a tool for individual therapy or gratification. (5)

But even given the exigencies of the marginal writer, Wong eloquently defends the right of marginal artists to be free from narrow identity politics that limit human possibilities: "To demand orthodoxy in the treatment of ethnic experiences is to subscribe to a narrowly utilitarian theory of literature, and the price one pays for this simplification is . . . a reduction in the fullness of life, a shrinking of the self to meaner if more manageable proportions" (24). Yet even Wong's moving argument is couched in terms of the ethnic *experience*. That is, while arguing that literature should not be judged in terms of a narrow notion of communal representation, she still ties it to aesthetic representation of experience.

Although an apparently simplistic statement, in the case of marginal writers, it bears repeating: *literary* productions—including the genres considered creative nonfiction—are conscious (and subconscious) artistic productions that can and do draw on aesthetic tools from any and all cultures in often unexpected ways. In other words, as both Freder-

ick Luis Aldama (*User's Guide*) and David Treuer have pointed out, an identity politics notion of literature as a verifiable representation of a group's—or even an individual's—experience relies on the conflation of literary creation with ethnography and ontology. Moreover, I argue that critics' conflation of ontology and history with literary productions provides for society at large the intellectual justification to conflate them; students repeatedly evince the understanding that this reading mode is expected of them.

An alternative way to approach ethnic texts might be to see what they can teach us not only about the communities with which they are associated but also about various other issues of content, form, and context. For instance, *Woman Warrior* and its reception raise intriguing questions for us to consider in theorizing emotion in general and anger in particular. Why does the text strike critics but not many other readers as angry? What can the case of *Woman Warrior* show us about the ways anger unfolds in particular historical circumstances and in particular literary texts? What can “mainstream” intellectual fields other than post-structuralist theory contribute to ethnic and women's studies? By the same token, why might it be important to consider marginal texts as central to the project of cognitive science and narratology? To begin addressing such questions, I will briefly survey current discussions of emotions, particularly anger, connecting some of the issues raised by recent work on cognition and emotions to work on political anger and genres of subject-development, primarily bildungsroman and autobiography. Then I will turn to an examination of *Woman Warrior* and its reception. I argue that the text demonstrates—both in itself and in its history of reception—that who thinks and feels what becomes an important indicator of not only social structures but also readerly ethics and human possibilities.

Cognition, Politics, and Temporality

Anger is still little understood and often feared. Two separate and rarely intersecting arenas of inquiry have dealt most substantively with anger. The first includes the fields of cognitive psychology, philosophy, sociology, and others that generally approach emotion as something to be studied as a more or less universal human phenomenon. The other tradition, primarily in women's studies, ethnic studies, and postcolonial studies, deals with anger as explicitly political, if not always simple or desir-

able. The discourses of these two arenas seldom come into contact not only because they happen in different academic spheres but also because they make different and often mutually hostile fundamental assumptions about universality, reason, and objectivity. I will briefly survey some discussions in these arenas and discuss why it might be useful and important to bring them into conversation.

As Sarah Ahmed points out, the entire question of emotion has been a thorny “sticking point” for psychologists, philosophers, sociologists, and anyone and everyone studying the mind and body (4). Many cognitive psychologists accept that all human beings are hardwired for certain emotions, and some claim that anger is one of this handful of emotions. Central debates focus on the extent to which emotions are culturally specific, the relationship between reason and emotion, and the origin of emotions.⁵ While some schools of philosophy have seen emotions as antithetical to reason, Martha Nussbaum argues that because emotions are “intelligent responses to perceptions of value” with “propositional content,” emotions are crucial in understanding cognition, reason, aesthetics, ethics, and politics (1, 5). Many scholars focus on individual evaluations as the basis for emotions, but Teresa Brennan has argued that cognition does not necessarily *precede* emotion and that emotions and thoughts emanate not from discrete individuals but rather from groups and situations.

Narrative theorists have engaged with these fields, particularly cognitive psychology, in challenging and potentially productive ways for literary critics. David Herman outlines how, while the initial midcentury cognitive turn in psychology may have theorized a computerlike mind preexisting actions and words, the “second cognitive revolution” sees the development of minds as not prior to but immanent in discourse (“Storytelling” 312–313). From this perspective, understanding “emotionology,” or “the collective emotional standards of a culture as opposed to the experience of emotion itself,” is key to understanding any particular instance of emotion (Herman 322). The concept of emotionology, then, requires the kinds of cultural analysis in which literary critics specialize. Similarly, in her work on “theory of mind” (ToM—i.e., the ability to attribute mental states to others), Lisa Zunshine challenges literary scholars to use their skills in historicizing the universalist assumptions sometimes made by researchers studying the mind. As she points out, “Cognitive *literary* analysis . . . continues beyond the line drawn by cognitive scientists—with the reintroduction of something else, a ‘noise,’ if you will, that is usually carefully controlled for and excised,

whenever possible, from the laboratory settings” (*Why We Read* 39). She calls attention to matters outside the laboratory because cognition and emotions do not happen in a vacuum. Zunshine writes, “There is no such thing as a cognitive ability, such as ToM, free-floating ‘out there’ in isolation from its human embodiment and its historically and culturally concrete expression” (37).

This emphasis on historical and cultural context provides a meeting point for discussions of feminist anger, for example, or “black rage.” Feminist critics such as Naomi Scheman and Elizabeth Spelman have pointed out that while anger is evaluative and political, so too is the ability to identify the emotion as anger. Such critics point out the political and epistemological validity of emotions, anger in particular. As Brenda Silver notes, anger—such as feminist anger—can be pathologized and thereby dismissed.⁶ But the flip side of dismissal can be uncritical reverence, because the problem with anger, as with any emotion or other evaluation, is the possibility for error and bad faith. That is, if emotions are in part based on some kind of evaluation or proposition, there exists the possibility that those evaluations and propositions may be wrong or that evaluations may be in conflict with one another, even within one person.⁷ Different propositions or evaluations may be partial, self-contradictory, and undergoing transformation. Anger and other emotions can be used strategically to manipulate a complex affective and political landscape. Moreover, explicit judgments do not necessarily provide a sufficient account for all emotions. The unconscious, the processes of the physical body, various discourses, “emotionologies”—these all play a part in shaping emotion. To help explicate the dynamics of these things, the insights of cognitive psychology, philosophy, and narratology can be helpful. By the same token, the committed social critique and ethical element of overtly political accounts of anger can be an important remedy to the assumptions of scientific fields.

In many of these discussions, across various fields, emotion is closely related to temporality and narrative form. Essentially, emotions are inseparable from narratives, and the narratives in question are usually linear.⁸ In *The Rationality of Emotion*, the philosopher Ronald de Sousa discusses the relationship between emotions and narratives, or originary situations that he calls “paradigm scenarios.” According to de Sousa, “We are made familiar with the vocabulary of emotion by association with *paradigm scenarios*, [which] . . . are drawn first from our daily life as small children and later reinforced by the stories, art, and culture to which we are exposed” (182). The temporal progressions in such nar-

ratives are key to emotions in both the stories themselves and in their repetition over time. Furthermore, the rationality of emotions also involves attitudes toward, relationships to, and ideas about the past and the present, inculcated in us by those paradigm scenarios and other cultural narratives.⁹

In terms of modern literary genres, the bildungsroman and traditional autobiographies have been responsible for most of the popularizing and normalizing of certain “paradigm scenarios,” not only in content, but also through form. Although distinct genres, bildungsroman and autobiography have shared a linear pattern in which early life events shape later ones. For example, Franco Moretti notes how the genre he calls the “classical *bildungsroman*” shapes modern subjectivity through a renegotiation of age progression. Moretti, focusing specifically on the urban, secular Western European bildungsroman—beginning with Goethe and Austen and ending with Eliot and Flaubert—argues that modernization and modernity rendered youth problematic. By redefining youth, the classical bildungsroman “symbolically legitim[izes]” modernity by bringing together the boundlessness of possibility while imposing limits on that same fearsome boundlessness. That is, while youth represents “boundless dynamism,” the bildungsroman portrays youth as bounded by its very nature: “youth ‘does not last forever’” (6). In this way, Moretti sees narrative collaborating with historiography to suggest “that reality’s meaning is now to be grasped solely in its historico-diachronic dimension” (6). In other words, life events gain meaning only by finding a place in a linear historical development. In this sense, we can think of Moretti’s classical bildungsroman as participating in the development of “paradigm scenarios,” and perhaps an overall framework for a number of such scenarios via “a life,” molding subjectivity as cognition and emotion in both characters and readers.

In contrast to the classical bildungsroman or autobiography, *Woman Warrior* exemplifies what has sometimes been referred to as postmodern autobiography or antibildungsroman, which is neither linear nor individual (see Yalom; Feng). In such a text, both time and space become new problematics. Rather than give meaning to events by placing them within a linear chronological progression, *Woman Warrior* again renegotiates the relationships among past, present, and future as well as among the protagonist-narrator, other characters, and even the author. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, in writing about postcolonial novels that draw on autobiographical elements, note that by rejecting individualistic subjectivity, “marginal” texts complicate the subject formation of the

classical bildungsroman. They write that postcolonial novels “employ the strategies and complex relationship of narrated and narrating ‘I’s to embed the individual subject in a collective identity overwritten by the process and legacies of colonization” (363).¹⁰ Such “collective identities” also often include an immanent temporality in which notions of past, present, and future may exist but are not separated and ordered in a particular way. In general, *Woman Warrior* certainly presents such a communal identity and temporal immanence. As Marilyn Yalom writes, “Kingston has to be found obliquely, in the interstices, *in relation* to the female figures that people her work” (III). While it is important not to ontologize the text (in other words, we should treat the literary text as a product of a particular author in a historical moment, not as the direct transcription of experience or identity), elements of a collective experience and various formal strategies can complicate a wholly individualistic reading.¹¹

But beyond this general notion of collectivity and immanence, how is a moment of anger produced in the text, and how is it read in such a text? If not limited by linearity or individuality, then how is a life portrayed, and how do such representations relate to the subject’s states of mind and emotions? I explore such questions by now turning to *Woman Warrior*.

“I’m Going to Make You Talk, You Sissy-Girl”

While most criticism on aggression and violence in *Woman Warrior* focuses on the Fa Mu Lan figure, I would like to examine a different key “angry” scene that occurs toward the end of the book, in which the sixth-grade narrator confronts another Chinese American girl in a school lavatory. This confrontation scene from *Woman Warrior* captures some of the possible dynamics of literary representations of anger, including such issues as the dangers of erroneous judgments as the bases for emotions (e.g., judgments made by the sixth-grade narrator); the sources of and reasons for internalization of social norms as evaluations; and the *histories* and *structures* that produce emotions, beyond a single person’s subjectivity, not only in characters but also in readers.

This particular scene follows a long passage in which the narrator, after complaining about the loud voices of Chinese immigrant women, tells us, “We American-Chinese girls had to whisper to make ourselves American-feminine. Apparently we whispered even more softly than the

Americans” (172). The narrator focuses her rage on this other girl because they are similar—they are both picked last for sports teams and too quiet in their American school—and because the girl is silent. The narrator corners the girl in the school bathroom and verbally and physically attacks her, saying, “You’re going to talk. . . . I am going to make you talk, you sissy-girl!” (175). The narrator tells us, “I looked into her face so I could hate it close-up” (175), “I hated fragility” (176), “I hated her weak neck,” and even “I hated her clothes . . . I hated pastels” (176–177). The narrator begins to hurt the girl, pinching her cheeks and pulling her hair. When the other girl maintains a stubborn, if teary, silence, the narrator’s abuse turns to exhortations, couched in terms of the girl’s own interest. She says,

“Say, ‘Ow’ . . . Just ‘Ow.’ Say, ‘Let go.’ Go ahead. Say it. I’ll honk you again if you don’t say, ‘Let me alone.’ Say, ‘Leave me alone,’ and I’ll let you go.” (178)

“I don’t like you. I don’t like the weak little toots you make on your flute. Wheeze. Wheeze. I don’t like the way you’re the last one chosen. I don’t like the way you can’t make a fist for tetherball. Why don’t you make a fist? Come on. Get tough. Come on. Throw fists.” (179)

Obviously, the narrator’s real rage is directed toward the injunction of silence imposed on her as a woman and an Asian American. The text demonstrates these complex emotions by folding together several moments in time. She tells us, “That year I was arrogant with talk, not knowing there were going to be high school dances and college seminars to set me back” (173–174). Her future of stumbling to speak is distinct from the present, yet at the same time, the narrator’s sixth-grade rage is inseparable from those secondary and postsecondary school trials. So the present, the future, and the past (particularly when we consider the various women’s stories necessary to the narrator’s subjectivity and narrative) are distinguishable but not necessarily separate in linear chronology. During the encounter itself, the narrator loses track of time, feeling as though she and her victim have “been in this lavatory forever” (179), and she tells us, “It seemed as if I had spent my life in that basement, doing the worst thing I had yet done to another person” (181). Different moments in time combine to produce the effects of this particular moment, and in this literary text, their mutual relationship informs the emotion produced at any given moment.

The narrator's anger at the other girl's silence, which mirrors her own silence, is based on an implicit understanding of their interchangeability in gendered and racialized social formations (e.g., as Chinese American girls or an Asian American panethnicity) and a desire *not* to be identified with the silent girl. We can explore the implications of this identification and disidentification by examining the various narrative levels of the text. If we focus on the experiencing I, the narrator as young girl, the narrator's anger toward the other girl can be seen as a reflection of her internalization of the patriarchal correlation of silence with weakness, stupidity, and lack of initiative or aggression. As King-Kok Cheung points out, the narrator's anger indicates "her indoctrination [that] silence equals a zero IQ" (88). At the same time, the sixth-grade narrator is angry not only at the other girl but also with herself, even at that moment, while she does not fully understand her own motivations. Her projection onto the other Chinese girl displays her sense of frustration with her own situation, inculcated in her by dominant cultural narratives. Her anger and scorn reflect in part her successful integration into a particular dominant culture and her intuitive sense of the ways in which the system she perpetrates traps her as well. At this level, we can see that the narrator's anger reflects both her implicit adoption of patriarchal and racist ideologies and her inchoate frustration with it.

On another level, if we read this passage in terms of the narrating I, the person telling this story in hindsight (usually associated with the author), the emotional landscape becomes more complicated. What becomes clear at this level is an explicit anger about the situation and what Cheung refers to as the narrator's "intense desire to explode the stock image of the quiet Oriental damsel" (88). At the same time, the narrating I expresses not only anger but also sadness that anger-producing situations exist. This sadness resonates in the statement immediately following the confrontation scene: "The world is sometimes just, and I spent the next eighteen months sick in bed with a mysterious illness" (181–182). The narrator describes the illness as "just" because her younger self's treatment of the other girl is "the worst thing [she] had yet done to another person."

Moreover, the narrating I conveys a sense throughout the confrontation that the silent girl is stubbornly defying her attacker; the silent girl's silence is, as Cheung has pointed out, "articulate." Her silence angers the narrator not only because it defies her immediate wishes but also because it defies two distinct narratives of power. From the vantage point of the sixth-grade narrator, the girl's silence disobeys direct and repeated

orders; she offers direct resistance to power. Furthermore, the silent girl complicates notions that resistance itself must be violent and aggressive, that it must follow hegemonic notions of aggression and anger. In this way, she offers an alternative to dominant models of resistance. We receive this impression from the hindsight of the more mature narrator; in contrast, as Yuan Shu points out, the sixth-grade narrator tries to resist power by wielding it over another person, thereby reinforcing that power. A good deal of her anger and frustration stems from this impossible and fruitless contradiction.

In fact, we learn that to a certain extent, the silent girl ends up having been justified. We are told that eighteen months later, when the young experiencing I narrator returns to school, the silent girl “had not changed”: “She wore the same clothes, hair cut, and manner as when we were in elementary school, no make-up on the pink and white face, while the other Asian girls were starting to tape their eyelids. She continued to be able to read aloud” (182). While the young narrator embraces dominant notions of aggression and loudness, the silent girl resists hegemonic notions of femininity and political resistance. While the other girls tape their eyelids to make their eyes look bigger, accepting Western notions of femininity and patriarchy, the silent girl continues on a different path (while also distinct from the dominant model, her path will still be culturally and socially constructed and located and thus is not necessarily “good” in and of itself; nevertheless, she does pose challenges to the narrator and her assumptions). While the narrator is struck down by illness and struggles in college seminars, the silent girl continues to “read aloud.”¹²

On this level, the narrator experiences emotions about having had emotions because she had accepted certain evaluative propositions (e.g., that silence is bad, regardless of circumstances). In this case, both the narrator’s and the stubborn, silent girl’s states of mind are temporally compressed and cannot be evaluated solely in terms of their underlying beliefs at one moment. Rather, the scene requires that we take into account the multilayered, multitemporal, historically constructed ideological and cultural topography. Exploring these contending levels of and reasons for anger—including the array of readers’ possible responses—illuminates the range of ways emotion can function.

For instance, we see that emotions do not necessarily correlate one-to-one with cognitive evaluations, although they nevertheless have some propositional content. Historical-social forces shape and inform emotions, and emotions respond to, tell us about, and help us to affect the world around us. Furthermore, emotions are not only individual but

also communal, shared among members of groups with shared historical experiences *and* among readers, textual voices, and authors (I will return to the last group below). For groups with shared historical pasts, emotional responses can be shaped not only by past events in an individual's life but also by *communal* pasts. This communal history, which may be as emotionally powerful as the present, works in conjunction with individual histories in a myriad of unpredictable ways. Moreover, emotions are based on more than just a linear time progression, as with de Sousa's paradigm scenarios, in which prior events condition the understanding of later ones. Rather, as Greg Forster suggests in his work on collective historical trauma, *future* events can condition our understanding and experience of past events. In fact, some emotions can be experienced—and made sense of—only through the interaction of multiple moments in time.¹³

Considering the emotions evoked between readers and figures in the text further illuminates the ways that being, thinking, and feeling interact. In Asian American and women's studies, this scene can be said to provide a paradigm scenario or stock narrative that produces certain emotions in certain readers. In countless classrooms over the decades, the scene has been read as a paradigmatic moment of anger against stereotyping and silence. In this sense, a canonical reading of this scene has accompanied the inclusion of *Woman Warrior* in the American canon. But as I have discussed, the axes of identification and the production of emotion in the text are not simple: some things that the narrator thinks and does are justified, while others are portrayed ambivalently or even critically through the textual layering of times, places, and people. Therefore, the kinds of identificatory or relational emotion evoked are important in the text's social function. For example, if readers identify with the sixth-grade narrator's explicit evaluative assumptions, such identifications would be problematic because readers would be sharing her disdain for silent others. If readers share the sixth-grade narrator's *emotions*, however, why do they do so? Readers may identify with the narrator because they condemn the silencing of women, but such identifications run the risk of ignoring that the sixth-grade narrator's conscious reasons for attacking the silent girl are not liberatory but complicit. The text's critique of silencing is tied to an implicit critique of both the narrator's unproblematic embrace of aggression and violence and a concomitant notion of Westernized femininity. Built into the form of the text is a warning about an unproblematic emphasis on coming to voice and resistance to silence that does not examine its own assumptions.

In other words, readers may identify with the figures in the text, but

this identification is not the only or even the primary reason for its continuing relevance, despite the changing theoretical orientations of Asian American and women's studies over the decades. The complexity of *Woman Warrior's* depiction of emotion helped scholars theorize Asian American and female subjectivity by exploring the ambivalence of historically specific, politically necessary collective identity. This scene from *Woman Warrior* captures the narrator's anger about the ambivalence of collectivity, or at least identification. If the girls are interchangeable, they lose individuality in a world in which they are constantly told to be individuals, either explicitly (by American culture) or implicitly (as, for example, when Brave Orchid, the narrator's mother, demands the narrator to do certain things that require her own agency). But historically, culturally, and politically, the girls also need to identify with each other to have a sense of community. Their collectivity arises from a situation in which the choice between the individual and the communal is not wholly voluntary. The kinds of identification explored in the text—gendered and racial or cultural—are cultural and familial, a source of strength and communion, but identifications are also imposed on the girls by others in oppressive and dehumanizing ways. Alternatively, these external groupings often demand that the collectives rearticulate themselves and band together even further. Such groupings preexist and shape the individual, even as the groups themselves are in process and can become the foundations for new collectivities.¹⁴ Published in the post-civil rights 1970s, at the height of second-wave feminism, *Woman Warrior* served not to resolve this individual-community contradiction but rather to help the Asian American and feminist subject work through and appropriate that contradiction for her own use, within cultural contexts bearing contending and contradictory messages about individuality and collectivity (e.g., the “us versus them” American individualism that nevertheless demands conformity).

In contrast, if some readers do not so much empathize with the narrator as they *sympathize*, in the sense of feeling things *about* another person's emotions rather than sharing the initial emotion, then does that mean that they do not share the narrating-I narrator's anger about the structures that would produce such a situation in the first place?¹⁵ Say, for example, an American reader does not share the older narrator's anger about the entire situation but only feels sorry for the younger narrator and her inability to understand the situation. Given the text's explicit situation in contemporary *American* society, such a reading infantilizes the cultural other and distances the reader's self and responsibility

from a problematic situation that *includes* the reader. Such distanced sympathy, rather than empathy, characterizes the reading mode of liberal multiculturalism, in which texts such as *Woman Warrior*—regardless of their intent—function as Asian American representatives in a buffet-style approach to discrete, exoticized cultures. Such readings produced initial reviews of the text as an “East meets West” tale, as Kingston discusses in her response essay, “Cultural Mis-readings by American Reviewers.” In such cases, readers’ nonidentification results from the assumptions indoctrinated in them by liberal multiculturalism, which blocks off part of the reading of a text by designating a certain reading—distance and difference from the othered figures in the text—as the politically correct one. As such, readers want to do the right thing, but the separation of otherness hinders readers’ potential to identify not only with figures in the text but also with emotions elicited by situations and events.

This point is tricky but important. On the one hand, it is almost impossible to stress too much or too often the importance of avoiding unproblematized, ahistorical appropriation. On the other, the notion that an outsider can read the author’s work only as a privileged recording of experience that such readers cannot access or with which they cannot empathize risks blocking off understanding a large part of the potential and actual ways the text functions. In this way, emotions produced in readers are significant and telling. Both Martha Nussbaum and Lisa Zunshine emphasize the importance of identifying with and feeling things about characters and texts. Nussbaum argues that readers’ emotions toward characters, authors, and the possibilities in readers’ own lives are crucial for developing moral reasoning (238–248). Such emotions are not merely “playacting” but genuine responses that evince and produce cognition. Similarly, Zunshine notes that despite our conscious distinction between fictional and real characters, “*on some level* our evolved cognitive architecture indeed does not fully distinguish between real and fictional people” (19). Identifying with racial, cultural, and gendered “others” in literature—and the structures that implicate all of us—is deeply correlated to our ability to see those others as real human beings. And just as Zunshine notes that reading is “never completely free from the danger of allowing the ‘phantoms of imagination’ too strong a foothold in our view of our social world” (19), we could say the reverse is also true: our views of the world around us can—and often do—overpower a text, determining and delimiting how it can be read.

I want to conclude by returning to my initial observations. The fact that, for several decades and for a variety of reasons, politicized criticism

has focused on asserting difference has been much discussed.¹⁶ Indeed, the recent history of U.S. unilateralism on the world stage seems to underscore the continuing need to assert fundamental difference. But I am concerned about the way in which these ideas of difference affect how our students and we ourselves think about the world and other people.

Consider, for example, the form that the story of a life takes. *Woman Warrior* demonstrates that such stories need not be linear or individual. But the postbildungsroman or postmodern autobiography is not then necessarily politically or culturally more desirable. When we posit the nonlinear, nonindividual life story as a progressive good because it avoids the narrow confines of a previous literary genre, we institute a new kind of imposed linear narrative that takes place not within the plot but in our reading framework. In fact, this narrative has become so commonplace in many fields of literary studies that we run the danger of naturalizing it and forgetting that it is a specific historical development. We risk, then, ontologizing the text's form, as if Asian American or Chinese American women could write *only* such a nonlinear text, rather than responding to a particular kind of life narrative form in a particular historical situation. Rather, the text demonstrates a human agent's active negotiation of the political and psychic structures and processes in her world. Thus, in its social role, *Woman Warrior* may differ from traditional life stories in *shape*, but that does not mean we cannot understand it within a similar framework, understanding its complex role in society.

For example, Moretti explores the *social function* of the classical bildungsroman at the advent of modernity to argue that, although it was "intolerant, normative, [and] monologic," it also enabled subjects to interiorize the contradictions of modernity (10). In fact, Moretti claims that "in our world socialization itself consists first of all in the *interiorization of contradiction*. The next step being not to 'solve' the contradiction, but rather to learn to live with it, and even transform it into a tool for survival" (10). Taking the European bildungsroman as one of the numerous literary traditions and social contexts in which *Woman Warrior* intervenes,¹⁷ we see that while *Woman Warrior* does make a specific, historically located intervention through its form and content, it serves a social function similar to that of Moretti's bildungsroman. *Woman Warrior* enables readers to work through the contradiction between ideologies of individuality and collectivity at a historical moment when racial and ethnic collectives were invested anew with political and cultural significance. The 1960s and 1970s saw social movements foreground the issue of an individual's purposeful choice to make a collective political

identification. Seen in this sense, *Woman Warrior* becomes a pivotal text not only in the margins but also in the “mainstream,” where “white” takes on a meaning as historically constructed and particular as that of “Asian American.”

What would it mean to use the analysis of such shared contradictions to find common ground to critique and challenge the divisions and hierarchies that implicate us all? How would the landscape of literary studies change if we truly interiorized particularity and universality not as a mutually exclusive binary but as a central and productive contradiction that informs our current existence and can be used to change that existence for something better? More specifically, how can the exploration of specific treatments of political emotion in literary and cultural texts engage in dialogue with the burgeoning field of cognitive studies? To return to Sau-ling Wong’s words, all this would involve not reducing “the fullness of life” to “meaner if more manageable proportions” but rather embracing the kinds of complex challenges offered to us by our historical moment and by texts, such as *Woman Warrior*, that delve into the heart of such moments.

Notes

For extremely useful feedback that helped me develop this essay, I would like to thank my fellow panelists and the audience participants at the 2008 Narrative Conference in Austin, Texas.

1. For discussions of these developments in Asian American studies, see Shelley Wong; Sue-Im Lee.

2. For more on this debate, see Cheung; Li; Lim; Shu; Myland; Sau-Ling Wong; and Moyers.

3. For explication of the first argument, see Lowe; for explication of the second, see both Schueller and S. Smith 150–173.

4. Gary Okihiro, among many others, notes that the academy—like corporate and government institutions—sanitizes and co-opts ethnic studies into simplistic liberal multiculturalism and identity performances.

5. For introductory reviews of such debates, see Ahmed 5–12; Power and Dagleish; de Sousa; Hogan (*Cognitive*); and Evans and Cruse.

6. For further discussions of the repercussions and implications of feminist anger as raised by the particular case of Virginia Woolf, see both Helal and Hsieh. For discussions of black rage, see hooks; West; and James Smith. Smith in particular bridges studies in emotion and psychology with studies of race and society, writing, “Race does matter, and it is correlated with emotion and behavior in numerous ways, positive and negative, conscious and unconscious” (108).

7. For further discussions of the epistemic content of emotions, see Mohanty.

8. Particularly for discursive psychology, which does not assume that minds preexist discourse, narratives play a crucial role in the very constitution of minds; as Herman writes, “storytelling practices . . . themselves help constitute the minds engaged in the production and interpretation of narrative discourse” (“Storytelling” 314). Likewise, in moral philosophy, Martha Nussbaum argues that because emotions have “a complicated cognitive structure that is in part narrative in form, involving a story of our relation to cherished objects that extends over time” (2), literature and other art forms should have a place in moral philosophy.

9. For a further discussion of “cultural narratives,” see Phelan, *Living* 8–9.

10. Smith and Watson’s point about the supraindividuality of texts can apply to writers from other backgrounds and in other contexts as well.

11. For further discussions of the relationship between author and text, see Lanser, “The ‘I’”; and S. Kim.

12. I would like to thank Jennifer Wilks, the respondent for my 2008 Narrative Conference panel, for many insightful comments and useful suggestions particularly on the implications of the silent girl’s alternative paths of resistance.

13. Forter critiques current models of trauma studies for failing to provide ways to account for collective, “everyday” traumas that occur over time, such as racism and patriarchy. Models in contemporary trauma studies often render trauma as the result of the ahistorical or antihistorical condition of being-in-language; Forter instead explores analytical models that help us to understand trauma as *social* and *historical*.

14. Yen Le Espiritu’s text *Asian American Panethnicity* outlines some of the contradictions in inhabiting and mobilizing a panethnic political grouping such as “Asian American.”

15. For a more in-depth discussion of the implications of empathy, see Keen, “Theory.”

16. For one of the most incisive and insightful analyses of the implications of the poststructuralist emphasis on difference, see Chow.

17. I once had a conversation with a writer who had studied with Maxine Hong Kingston at UC-Berkeley. This person, informing me that Kingston regularly taught Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield*, expressed surprise and puzzlement that it should be one of Kingston’s preferred texts. In turn, I was puzzled: I could not figure out why this person should be puzzled by Kingston’s use of *David Copperfield*, since both authors write texts that are character-focused, panoramic, roving, funny, and insightful. Moreover, Kingston and Dickens are two of my favorite writers, so in my mind they naturally go together. I was so busy puzzling that I neglected to ask this person to clarify, but the obvious and somewhat depressing answer would be that Dickens and Kingston have been categorized into separateness.

CHAPTER 8

Agency and Emotion: R. K. Narayan's *The Guide*

LALITA PANDIT HOGAN

In her essay “Identity/Alterity,” Monika Fludernik says that “more radical postcolonial texts [. . .] demonstrate their independence from the West by choosing to militate against patterns of colonial literature [by] writing [not] in English but in one of the native languages” as well as by focusing on native protagonists “exclusively” (270). Fludernik first cites the famous example of Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s radical choice to write in Gikuyu, and she goes on to explain that the anticolonial strategy of eliding “contact with Westerners” by focusing only “on native protagonists” is more evident in the Indian novel today. To Fludernik, this means that Indian novelists are saying, “for India today, only Indians are important” (270). While Fludernik’s discussion of alterity in postcolonial narrative is thought provoking, it should be noted that many Indian writers during the colonial, late colonial, and postcolonial periods chose to write in Indian languages naturally, not as a part of their anticolonial agenda. Thus, the Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore wrote in Bengali. Likewise, Premchand wrote in Hindi and Urdu; Faiz Ahmed Faiz, in Urdu. The same is true of literary figures writing in Gujarati, Panjabi, Marathi, and most notably Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam. These literary traditions antedated the entry of the East India Company and the establishment of the Raj. They continued through the latter’s ravages and emerged as potent vehicles for thought and creative expression that addressed the complex issue of colonial occupation.

For Indian authors, then, writing in “native” languages is not inherently a strategy to assert independence from the West, and Indian writers often tend to blend aesthetic models and narrative tropes of the West with models and tropes derived from the Sanskrit, Tamil, and Arabic-Persian traditions. By far the vast majority of Indian postcolonial writers,

whether writing in English or Indian languages, are syncretists. However, this does not mean that Indian postcolonial writing abjures the anticolonial project.

Unlike writers such as Premchand, Tagore, and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, R. K. Narayan wrote in English but populated the storyworlds of his novels and short stories with mostly Indian protagonists. These choices, however, do not demonstrate either colonial conformity or anticolonial dissent. For many Indian writers, the decision to write in English comes from a desire to reach a wider readership in India. If R. K. Narayan had written in his birth language, Tamil, Indians from other parts of India who cannot read Tamil would have had at best partial access to his writings, as is the case with Tagore, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and many others. The *lingua franca* status of English brings in an issue of access that relates to legacies of colonial education in India. Moreover, the Indian postcolonial writer's own perception of the relative advantage or disadvantage of the language he or she chooses can vary. Anita Desai, for instance, thinks that within India the sales figures for some regional authors are significantly better than sales figures for literature written in English. In other words, only the educated elite read English novels, while the more numerous others devour what is written by the regional authors (see Desai, "Sense" 163).

Whatever the general case may be, R. K. Narayan's fiction is widely read all across India and throughout the Indian diaspora.¹ Like Tagore, R. K. Narayan reconciles his indebtedness to European tropes and models with inspiration drawn from Indic myth, poetry, and story. At the same time, this integrative model in his *Malgudi* stories, as well as in novels such as *The English Teacher*, *Painter of Signs*, and *The Guide*, does not inhibit but rather facilitates Narayan's incisive critique of the harmful effects of colonialism.

An example from *The Guide* will demonstrate this point. Though all the characters in this novel are Indian, the protagonist, Raju, the tour guide of Malgudi, names one of them Marco. Naming this character after Marco Polo (who traveled the Silk Road, made a long journey to Asia, and returned to write of his travels and "discoveries") provides Raju a metonym for someone who is an outsider to Malgudi, who has come to discover undiscovered caves and study cave art. During his first encounter with the archaeologist and his young wife, Raju shows the same inner contempt and outward deference to his client that a "native" might show toward a European who has come to study his country. At the same time, Raju is attracted to the wife and comments on their

names thus: “Instead of calling herself Rosie, she could more logically have called him Marco Polo. He dressed like a man about to undertake an expedition—with his thick colored glasses, thick jacket, and a thick helmet over which was perpetually stretched a green, shiny waterproof cover, giving him the appearance of a space traveler. I have, of course, no idea of the original Marco Polo’s appearance, but I wanted to call this man Marco Polo at first sight” (7).

In the Hindi film adaptation of *The Guide*, Marco’s character comes to exemplify colonial mimicry in manners, attitudes, and dress as the archaeologist sets himself above the “natives.” Though the film takes some liberties in this and flattens his character, Marco does betray an attitude of superiority in the novel as well. Following the European classification of systems of knowledge, he considers his archaeological research a respected “branch of learning,” while he views *bharatnatyam*, a highly revered dance form in India, as “street acrobatics,” not a worthwhile pursuit for his wife because it is no more than an “acrobat on a trapeze [going] on and on doing the same thing all his life” (130). Though he clearly focalizes colonial attitudes toward indigenous arts, the character is not as one dimensional in Narayan’s novel as he is in the Vijay Anand film. Nonetheless, Marco’s real name is never revealed in either the film or the novel; he is referred to only by the appellation that Raju, the novel’s center of consciousness, assigns him when he declares: “he shall be referred to as Marco henceforth” (64). Conversely, when Raju begins to guide Rosie’s career in *bharatnatyam*, he changes her name to Nalini. Nalini is one of the names of the goddess Saraswati, the deity of knowledge and the arts. This particular name associates the goddess with the lotus flower, which in Hindu and Buddhist texts symbolizes detachment from the world (*samsara*) even as one remains engaged in its work—just as the lotus sprouts in the mud, water, and slime of the pond but is untouched by it. The secular concept behind the theological construct is that cultivation of knowledge and the arts should endow a human being with calm detachment from the world. It is important, however, to note that detachment in this sense presupposes engagement with the work of the world and does not entail flight from it. The idea that Hinduism advises renunciation and rejection of the world is a colonialist construction. Believing that engagement with the world, or *samsara*, is important, Raju guides *Rosie*, the frustrated dancer and unhappy wife, to become a *Nalini*. In other words, he guides the paper rose to become a live lotus. Such recruitment of cultural memory, myth, and emotion allows Narayan to offset irony, giving his characters agency in a society

that has recovered neither from the economic exploitation of colonialism nor from the learned disrespect for the subaltern's race, history, education, and knowledge systems.

In the following pages, I will direct my attention to the way the novel's turning points are marked by indirect reporting of Raju's memories and inner states of consciousness through free indirect discourse, where the narration is cast as third-person omniscient but is guided by the principle of minimal mediation from the authorial narrator, providing as much free access to the fictional mind of the character as autodiegetic narration would. All these instances focus on different kinds of emotion memories or experiences and underscore the role of emotion in defining subjectivity, agency, and consciousness in the novel.

Plot Information for *The Guide*

Considered by many to be Narayan's masterpiece, *The Guide* was written in 1958. Through many earlier tales Narayan had already created the fictional city of Malgudi, by then as familiar to his readers as were the urban habitats in which they lived. The experiences of many of the Malgudi characters, though sometimes fantastical, had become the readers' own. In *The Guide* Raju is a part of the rich storyworld of Malgudi. Rosie and Marco enter this *katha* (story) from the outside. Rosie, the daughter of a temple dancer, is married to an archaeologist who is more interested in his research than in his wife. Marco employs Raju to guide his field trips. Between trips and errands, the tour guide of Malgudi falls in love with the wife. He gets in the habit of referring to Marco as the proverbial third wheel and refers to himself and Rosie as "we," as the two spend hours watching the landscape, the wild animals, and game from the large glass doors of room 28 of the Peak House (64–66). Interestingly, the caretaker at the Peak House bungalow is Joseph, a Christian. When Rosie asks how Joseph became a Christian, Raju vaguely answers, "There was a mission somewhere here" (66). Through ironic inversion, then, Joseph fits the role of the native caretaker in many Indian stories and scenarios from the colonial era, where the hotel guests are usually Europeans and the native caretaker is rarely Christian. Joseph is involved in the daily routines at the Peak House resort hotel, and like the former "natives," he blends with the atmosphere while observing those whom he serves. Joseph is loyal to Marco, just as Raju is loyal to Rosie, and at one point Rosie and Raju quip that Joseph should be Marco's wife, not Rosie.

At a turning point in the novel, when Rosie presses the issue of continuing her career as a *bharatnatyam* dancer, she inadvertently tells her husband about her affair with Raju. After completing his research in Malgudi, Marco leaves Rosie and departs. To convince his mother that they must take in Rosie, Raju emphasizes that she is a “refugee” who has nowhere else to go. Having been thrown out of her husband’s life, she has no home. With Raju’s impassioned management of her talent, Rosie achieves her dream of being a famous dancer. Once the goal of guiding and being guided is completed, however, their relationship reaches an impasse. Around this time, Raju forges her signature on a bank document sent by her estranged husband and goes to jail for the crime. When he comes out of jail, shame prevents Raju from going back to his old, pre-Rosie life. He wanders aimlessly away from the gates of the jail. The colonial irony of Rosie’s London tours during this time cannot be missed. While the indigenous resources and the “natives” of Malgudi, the *periphery*, nurtured her ambition at great cost to themselves, the *center* of culture—the metropolitan city, Madras/Chennai, and later a city in the ex-mother country, London—have the symbolic and material capital to determine the exchange value of her art. Raju has become irrelevant, and when he is homeless, there is no one to give *him* a home.

The map of Malgudi, as it is detailed in the preface to the penguin edition of *Malgudi Days*, shows the location of the village, Mangala, where Raju takes refuge. Mangala lies at the northwest periphery of Malgudi. However, while Raju, the ex-convict, takes refuge in this village, it appears that, in terms of cultural practice and prevalent belief systems, Mangala is distanced from Malgudi. The jail stands on the opposite side, and the train station is in the middle. Thus, the distinctiveness of Mangala has more to do with its culture than with its imagined distance from other Malgudi localities. Vijay Anand’s film shows this as physical distance as well as cultural distinctiveness. After a few days of camping in the temple, Raju encounters a man named Velan. Thinking Raju has voluntarily renounced the world in search of spiritual merit, Velan installs him in the village temple. Raju’s exile in the Mangala temple resembles the way the culture of imperialism makes the home society an exile for the native because, lacking patronage and support, the home traditions do not have a chance to grow and develop to meet life’s changing demands. At the same time, colonialist discourse wrongly constructs the home culture and tradition as unchanging. For instance, if Hinduism had been an unchanging, static entity, Buddhism would not have come into being. Earlier, the Vedas would not have been followed by the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and so forth. Raju’s imprisonment in

Mangala is an imprisonment in the static, fossilized belief system of the inhabitants—a belief system that has suffered years of imperialist slanders, denigration, misuse, and mistranslation. Raju's village, like many others throughout the country, is neglected financially and otherwise, leaving it perhaps as bad off as it was during the colonial period. In their darkness, isolation, and loneliness, the villagers, under the leadership of Velan, cling to Raju for guidance and edification.

At first Raju is frightened by the attitude of the villagers, who all think of him as an enlightened soul seeking to give spiritual guidance to others, but he becomes accustomed to the refuge the temple provides and the respect the community accords him. The status quo of this arrangement, however, is disturbed when drought and famine strike the region and the government does nothing to relieve the situation. At this point, Raju is more or less coerced into ritually fasting to propitiate the god of rain. On the last day of his fast, standing knee-deep in water and thinking that his feet sense rain up in the mountains, though there is no sign of it on the parched ground, Raju dies. The novel ends on a somber note as the street-smart, lighthearted, hopeful "Railway Raju" of the novel's opening dies the death of a reluctant sacrificial hero. Narayan combines autodiegetic narration with free indirect heterodiegetic narration that contains "expressivity markers that point to the speech patterns of a particular character" (Herman, "Cognition" 248) to deal with the problematic subjects of faith, superstition, despair, and agency. Raju does not believe in his own sainthood, and he does not endorse the ritual of propitiation. The overall discourse of the novel depicts the mahatma phenomenon with ironic distance, but without the derision, condemnation, or condescension typical of a colonialist perspective.

In this novel, derision and condemnation are reserved for Raju himself, and blocks of autodiegetic narration are rife with both. The interpretative difficulty about whether we, as readers, should regard Raju *mimetically* as an individual, *thematically* as an idea, or *synthetically* as a construct (see Phelan's *Narrative as Rhetoric*) is resolved by the fact that large blocks of narration and novelistic discourse in *The Guide* center on Raju's construction of himself as a character in the events that affect his life. Narayan's characterization allows for all three possibilities, and in cognitive terms, as I will discuss, the emotion scripts define him as a mental model of a person, while self-directed irony and humor construct him as an *idea* of a colonized psyche, though unconsciously so. In the following discussion concerning the role of emotion scripts and the cognitive-emotive causality linked to them, I will focus on three blocks

of description narration that provide this information. The first focuses on Raju's attachment to space and landscape emblemized in a tamarind tree that framed the Malgudi landscape before the train tracks divided the town, making the tree recede into a distant, less inhabited, and less accessible spatial location. This memory and emotion script mark the end of a childhood that has been in many ways lonely and deprived but also has an idyllic quality to it. The second moment of experiential narration concerns a temple (and a tourist site) marking the path of an ancient river that has dried up, though the place is still considered sacred. This descriptive segment figures prominently in the development of the romantic plot. The third moment commemorates Raju's final viewing of Rosie's dance before he is taken to prison. In his exile at the Mangala temple, Raju's ability (or need) to remember the past is diminished. Brief moments of recall come and go; the exiled identity of the ex-convict is as if hollowed out of links to the past that can be activated by present experience into a meaningful whole. Similarly, in the prison, where he is strangely happy and at peace with himself, Raju spends most of his time working diligently.

Narration and Characterization: Irony and Parody

Raju's ironic distance from things he loves—as well as from that in which he can take pride and joy—is from the start marked by a tendency to deride and draw attention to the antiself aspect of the self, whereby he adjusts every narration of an event and description of atmosphere to an opportunity for self-censure. Yet this self-censure is a way of gaining control over an environment where Raju feels limited in his possibilities for free action, autonomy, and agency. In general, the insistent construction of a witness self, though it is a critical and condemning witness, affirms the Indic idea of the worldly self as a false construction that camouflages the *atman*, the transcendental self, in layers of self-deception. From this perspective, the distrust and skepticism directed at the ego consciousness, or *ahamkara* (I-ness), filters out dissonant noise to achieve a state of epistemological silence. At the same time, a consistent repudiation of one's social and psychic self through parody, mockery, and derision mimics a deeply internalized rejection of the self by the colonial subject. Within this ironic, autodiegetic discourse, the question of agency (for the colonial subject) becomes problematic, while passages of heterodiegetic narration portray Raju as hero and antihero—a protagonist and

an antagonist, someone the reader may repudiate but also sympathize with, a character with agency and subjectivity.

To put it simply, Narayan combines homodiegetic narration with externalized narration. The third-person narration intersects with Raju's voice as shifts from the past to present are aligned with shifts from Raju's narration to some other's reporting. This pattern continues up to Chapter 6. The narrative reaches a climactic point here, and Raju begins to tell his story to Velan in a kind of self-exposure intended to convince Velan that a fast-unto-death by an ex-convict cannot have the efficacy of ritual sacrifice. In addition to using autodiegetic narration and limited omniscient narration, the novel is lyrically enriched by the recounting of memories that constitute a sense of place and time as they are memorialized in art and literature. In these segments, Raju's fictional mind emerges as a locus of desire, of visual and ethical perspective, and of focalization in terms of space, time, and consciousness.

In conventional terms, R. K. Narayan's characterization combines elements of the picaresque and the bildungsroman hero. Raju's search for romance, fame, and wealth marks his rise from lower to higher status in society, a progression from obscurity to fame. This movement is inscribed into the *Bildung* of his life's journey, which educates by default or negative example. In his characterization of Raju, Narayan can be seen to merge the *eiron* (the deceptive trickster) with the *alazon* (the character with an inflated sense of self). We find this also in classical comedy, where comic action and a portion of comic discourse results from the *eiron*- and the *alazon*-identified figures trying to bring each other down. Given Narayan's insistent irony, the *eiron* prototype is significant here, because it draws attention to the source of verbal processes of *irony* (the term being derived from *eiron*) in narrative action and a character of a particular type. In addition, combining the *eiron* and *alazon* schemas in one fictional consciousness has the advantage of depicting the divided self of the postcolonial subject, with one part struggling against and constantly undermining the other.

More important for considering the significance of the comic elements of characterization in *The Guide* is the fact that, traditionally, both the *eiron* and *alazon* figures are imposters. To hide his tracks, the resourceful *eiron* presents himself as lesser than he is, while the *alazon* presents himself as greater than he is. Sometimes the *alazon* is the *sinex iratus*, the angry father, or the *miles gloriosus*, the braggart soldier.

A more contemporary example of prototype mixing of this sort can be found in Salman Rushdie's conception of Shalimar, the clown in his

2005 novel titled after that character. Rushdie's protagonist is a member of a terrorist organization who worms his way into the life of the U.S. statesman and counterterrorism chief Maxmilian Ophuls, becoming the latter man's driver and personal attendant in order to assassinate him. Shalimar's prehistory, however, takes us to the history of a dying folk art in Kashmir, the dance theater of the *Bhand Pather*, which is handed down from father to son (Rushdie 78–89). Accordingly, Shalimar is an acrobatic dancer-performer in the Kashmiri folk-dance theater of *Bhand Pather*. The two stock characters in this dance theater are the *magun*, a shrewd, secretive *éiron* of sorts, and the *maskhara*, the jester or the clown. In actual *Bhand Pather* performances, Shalimar could play only one character, whether the *magun*, the *maskhara*, or someone else, but in Rushdie's novel this oddly named protagonist combines the traits, skills, and agency-seeking potentials of both the *magun* and the *maskhara*. Similarly, R. K. Narayan's "Railway Raju," who becomes a mahatma, not an assassin, combines two contrary but codependent elements. This is not to suggest that Narayan is specifically alluding to Kashmiri folk theater but to emphasize that versions of these prototypes are found in many world traditions. Even if they were not, the Kashmiri and Tamil-Sanskrit theatrical traditions have their common source in Bharatmuni's *Natya Shastra*, an ancient Indic treatise on dramaturgy that discusses a varied repertoire of character types (Raina).²

As *éiron*, Raju is the bad student who is resourceful in evading the discipline of his teacher, a *sinex iratus* figure who appraises the boy's lack of focus on studies as an act of rebellion. Later in his life, when Raju has an affair with his employer's wife, he imagines Marco as this *sinex iratus*, the *alazon* to his own *éiron* capacities whom he brings down and whose neglect of his wife he corrects. As *alazon*, however, he is the braggart "Railway Raju" and the overzealous tour guide who exults in his influence over the gullible tourists. Toward the end, the ex-convict is trickily concealed in a long beard, and concomitantly, the inflated social self of the spiritual guru is born. However, the most interesting aspect of this merging of the two components in one consciousness is that character narration is motivated by shredding the masks of Raju's public self, his exhibitionist self as the guide and the leader of people. In other words, Raju's consciousness is like a stage for playing out the contest between being nobody and wanting to be somebody, being a cheat and being seen as a capable leader and saint, being self-interested and being seen as unselfish.

Perhaps the most significant effect of this is the reader's access to

Raju's intrapersonal knowledge (his self-reflection), through which he betrays a sense of being an imposter in his home, in his profession, at the railway platform, and in Rosie's life. This self-concept develops, in part, in reaction to guilt about not doing well in school, where the curriculum is still largely colonial English. In a society where social respect comes from doing well in this system of education, Raju thinks of himself as not deserving respect. In practical terms, he cannot get a job without a college degree, and he cannot attend college without decent grades and a high school degree. Many adolescent male characters in the *Malgudi* stories experience extreme despair over performing poorly in high school. This failure punctures their hopes for a future, diminishes others' respect for them, and erodes their self-esteem. Raju's situation is not as desperate as those of others, because his father runs a shop that he passes on to the son. Still, when he earns a living by being self-employed and educates himself with the books schoolboys bring to his shop to sell, Raju feels somehow that this too is like being an imposter. The requirement for self-esteem is defined from the outside, and the key is a mastery of the colonial system of education. Without books and education, one does not qualify for social respect. Thus, Raju takes pride in the changes he has made in the railway platform shop, making it more like a bookstore and a tourist reception center and less like the convenience store that his father had. When he replaces a row of coconuts with a row of books, he is triumphant. As Rosie's agent and manager, as well as the transient beneficiary of her wealth and the flushed recipient of a duplicate garland at each of her spectacular performances, he feels like an imposter and presents himself in these terms to Velan, the narratee in this part of the novel (172–181).

More important, the imposter identity ties into the colonial and post-colonial condition of society and culture, in which tradition as well as modernity are inauthentic. To follow tradition is to be stuck in the past of the home society, and to be modern is to ape the West. In colonized societies, the pervasive play of the trope of "Manichean allegory," through which racial and cultural difference is transformed into "moral and metaphysical difference," gives rise to the overinterpretation of an already overdetermined oppositional value system that pits black against white, materialism against spiritualism, self-interest against self-sacrifice, and so forth (see JanMohammad 80). Some portion of the self-division and derision in Raju comes from an unconscious imperative to think in the terms of the Manichean allegory. Thus, Raju continually derides himself for his success as the tour guide "Railway Raju" and as Rosie's

agent (47–51, 167), defining the value of dynamic success against static contentment. According to colonial constructions of the native value system, this is supposed to be the case. All natives know, though they may have forgotten, that prominent in the Hindu pantheon is the god of wealth, Kubera, and that people pray to Ganesha for expedient success of their newly started endeavors. How can people live without valuing wealth and success, no matter what ambivalence and contradiction these values may generate? The imperialist discourse on colonial societies is so myopically obsessed with seeing the colonized as the opposite of the colonizer, an inversion of the imperial self (JanMohamed 86–87), that it leads to an elaborate fabrication of binary terms that should not get past even minimal empirical testing. Though Raju does not explicitly employ the binary terms of the Manichean allegory, his painful sense of goal conflict and his inability to reconcile contrary aims and goals of life show his disconnection from indigenous tradition. They reveal an amnesia about the much-discussed ways of life, the thousands of years of ethics and metaphysics, law books and conduct books, that, by identifying stages of life, various aims and goals of life, ethical duties, and efficacy of desires, underscore the significance of reconciling contraries rather than selecting only one pole of traits, desires, aims, and goals set in binary oppositions (Pandit, “Dhvani and the ‘Full Word’” 146).

Seen from a perspective less grounded in cultural circumstances and more inclined toward narrative universals, the two character prototypes are generalized emotion scripts for the trickster and the braggart in all human beings. To be a tour guide is to be a braggart whose job is to inflate the value of places, art objects, and historical ruins. Every site and object is an imposter clamoring for attention, as is the person who sells it to the tourist. The socially specific circumstance of colonial history does no more than nuance this universal feature of social and psychic life. Consequently, renovating and popularizing the precolonial past in the postcolonial nation is equivalent to being a braggart, turning caves, old houses, dance forms, and even the nation itself into an imposter, an exotic object clamoring for attention and celebration. An example of today’s nationalist braggadocio is the “India Rising” slogan in a technophilic global marketplace. From Raju’s perspective, the converse role of a mahatma also involves him in being a braggart and an imposter.

Realizing there is no escape from the role that Velan has given him, the derisive voice comments, “Raju decide[s] to look as brilliant as he [can] manage, let[s] drop gems of thought from his lips, assume[s] all the radiance available, and afford[s] them all the guidance they [require]”

(29). Further, we are told, “he decide[s] to arrange the stage for the display with more thoroughness” (29). The close monitoring of a thought process and Raju’s objectification of this new, highly saleable, grandiose self that circumstance has minted out of desperation mark loss of choice, freedom, and identity and the pursuit of agency through masquerade. Through inversion, repetition, and interpersonal mirroring, the *iron* is the colonized subject who achieves agency through the playful guile of his masks, such as Rushdie’s *magun-maskhara* and Narayan’s Raju as guide. In explicit terms, the *alazon* is the imperialist, such as Maximilian Ophuls in Rushdie’s novel and the mimic man, Marco, in *The Guide*. More indirectly, and through a countermovement of narration and discourse, Raju appropriates the *alazon* attributes. Likewise, the *imposter* is the colonized subject who has little or no agency, and the *braggart* is the unself-conscious imperialist, bragging about the superiority of his race and culture. Conversely, the insecure imposter (the colonial subject) emerges as a braggart when he wears a mask of exaggerated pride in his otherness and alterity: his exoticism. He becomes a trader of tangible and intangible native commodities. In *The Guide*, some of the burden of trading in artifacts is portioned out to Rosie when she takes her *bharatnatyam* to London and some to the idea of Marco’s planned travels to foreign countries, in his case Mexico and various eastern countries (129).

Like many other postcolonial writers, Narayan does not engage in global critiques of colonialism. Instead, he focuses on particular situations and presents close-ups of the consequences and the difficulties of historical change that result from colonial (and postcolonial) domination and bureaucracy. For instance, India’s independence and the subsequent partition do not emerge as iconic events anywhere in Narayan’s fiction, as they do, for instance, in Salman Rushdie *Midnight’s Children*. However, the urbanization of Malgudi as it is inaugurated by the railways marks a point of no return for the old ways of this city.

When the station is constructed beyond Raju’s favorite tamarind tree, the town is divided into “this side of the railway line and that side” (31). Before the station was erected, the tree divided the landscape in a different way. As memory scripts are introduced in the narrative, the tree emerges as an emotion object with agency. At the most basic level of cognitive construal, we assume that everyone acts on goals and plans and thus has agency. In postcolonial theory, however, *agency* emerges as an important concept in relation to the postcolonial subject’s ability or inability to act freely and autonomously and his or her ability to construct a subjectivity outside the denigrating, demeaning, fragment-

ing discourses of colonial and imperialist ideologies (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 8–9). The contrary term, *interpellation*, though in many contexts an ambiguous and unclear one, is “useful for describing how the ‘subject’ is located and constructed by specific ideological and discursive operations” (221).

What I have been arguing, then, is that considering both the notions of action and choice within cognitive theory and postcolonial theory’s claims that the idea of a “natural” or “normal” life will be problematic for the colonized subject, the dissonance and derisive noise of Raju’s self-construction is caused by his sense, conscious or unconscious, of the way he is constructed. Raju’s character shows a metarepresentational sense of being *interpellated*—in terms of the Manichean allegory—as essentially Asiatic. The terms of this discourse define him negatively as an imposter and a cheat or positively in exotic, elevated terms as the mahatma or the swami.

To balance this fragmenting discourse, blocks of heterodiegetic narration, using verbal features of free indirect discourse, construct him in terms of various emotion scripts. The theory of emotion scripts and their role in the construction of narrative and character uncovers the construction of subjectivity in dream, daydream, and aesthetic pleasure to combat the damage of *interpellation* as it produces a fragmented subject, one-half of something that is always already alien to consciousness.

The first emotion script foregrounds a natural object: the shadow of the tamarind tree, where Raju can seek freedom from the rigid and ineffectual regimentation of his life by others—his parents and his teacher. The memory processes inscribe the tree into a schema of imaginary attachment to something that is more efficacious than home, mother, and father, and Raju says:

I told her, “I’ll go out and play and won’t trouble you. But no more lessons for today, please,” and with that I was off to the shade of a tamarind tree across the road. It was an ancient, spreading tree, dense with leaves, amidst which monkeys and birds lived, bred, and chattered incessantly, feeding on the tender leaves and fruits. Pigs and piglets came from somewhere and nosed around about the ground thick with fallen leaves, and played there all day. I think I involved the pigs in some imaginary game and even fancied myself carried on their backs. (10)

The tree works almost as a motif for an extended family in which children, symbolized by animals, can thrive without the obsessively restraining attention from parents, in the more permissive, sheltering shadow of

aunts, uncles, grandparents, and most important, male and female cousins, who provide plentiful possibilities for play and the companionship of other children. It is a part of social life that, in Narayan's imaginary city as well as in the immediate social world the author knew well, was in the process of disappearing.

While the tamarind tree suggests a preindustrial Malgudi of stable kinships, the coming of the railways highlights postindustrial India's possibilities for financial mobility. When the father is asked to open a new shop at the railway platform, he asks Raju to mind the old hut shop. For a time, the old shop and the new one compete with each other, but eventually the old shop disappears, and with it a part of Raju's life. Only the tamarind tree remains—an integral, insistent part of the inner story of memory in the face of historical and social change. This change, however, has its own romance for Raju, and he confesses, "Engines with their tremendous clanging and smoke ensnared my senses" (8). Though the stationmaster and the porter become his new family and the railway platform becomes his new home, Raju senses "the loss of his freedom under the tamarind tree," because trucks are now parked there (19). The locus of desire and agency is still the tamarind tree, though Raju can now have only a distant view of it. He says, "During the interval between trains, when the platform became quiet, there was nothing more pleasing than picking up a bundle of assorted books" and reading them in his shop, "occasionally breaking off to watch through the doorway the immense tamarind tree in the field" (42). As focalization through different visual perspective changes, the relation to the tree also changes. Raju can no longer take part in the lives of the pigs and piglets, the monkeys and birds. He cannot even see them; the tree itself is now visible only as a distant object, without close visual detail. It is important to keep in mind that Raju's reification of the tamarind tree does not suggest some Asiatic love of nature as nature or Hindu nature worship. The object in this case could have been an ugly city wall or a house. Its special status for Raju lies in its being part of an emotion script that involves his relation to his mother and his teacher, the development of imagination and subjectivity that seeks to redress how Raju is interpellated by his mother, his teacher, his father, and others—namely, as the bad boy. Raju does not have the same relation to other trees and shrubs, though his vivid visual recall repeatedly brings other trees and shrubs into a close-up or a distant focus.

For instance, the "rustle of peepal and banyan tree" in the vicinity of the Mangala temple appears "loud and frightening" to Raju (13), mirror-

ing his incipient awareness of fear and danger. The community of the villagers is benign and friendly, but it is also alienating and slightly sinister. To avoid them, “crouched like an animal at bay” one evening, Raju hides from the approaching throng of worshipers “behind a gigantic hibiscus bush full of red flowers” (26). The sense of a secure self-identity associated with the old tamarind tree accentuates the atmospheric alterity of these other trees and bushes, even when they protect Raju from the collective gaze of those who demand something from him that he cannot deliver. Hiding behind the hibiscus bush, as he “holds his breath,” Raju plans self-defense. If they discover him, he will say that “he was in deep thought and that the hibiscus shade was congenial for such contemplation.” The self-defense is not necessary, because the congregation does not find him and leaves, with one individual saying that Raju could be a yogi who can travel to the Himalayas “by a thought” and another commenting, “I don’t think he is that kind of a yogi” (27). Meanwhile, Raju, the lurker, the bad boy “yogi,” overhears the conversation.

A cognitive function of the mixing of the comic and the serious, of parody and tragedy, is that this synthesis constitutes masks of indifference and disinterestedness to hide Raju’s feelings of loneliness, inadequacy, shame, and pain of disrupted attachments. This contributes to an avoidance of sentimentality and melodrama. For instance, Narayan’s use of the *eirōn* and *alazōn* prototypes mitigates the degree of affect that the *pharmakos* (scapegoat) schema would elicit. Vijay Anand’s film, in contrast, wallows in melodrama and sentimentality, concluding with a grandiose deployment of the *pharmakos* component to sponsor a greater degree of affect.

Vijay Anand’s *The Guide*—The Film and the Novel

The cinematic turn toward sentiment is, however, instructed by the novel itself. In his self-disclosure, Raju tells Velan how the defense lawyer (paid well by Rosie) proceeded: “[He] presented my case as a sort of comedy in three acts, in which the chief villain was Marco, an enemy of civilized existence. . . . the second part of the comedy was that the wife survived the onslaught . . . and the humble humanitarian called Raju, . . . whose personal sacrifices . . . enabled her to rise so high. . . . Her life became a contribution to the prestige of our nation and our cultural traditions” (109). This is, generally, the script, the screenplay that the film uses: the defense lawyer’s story. The film elicits a strong affective response largely

by turning Marco's character into a villain. As I have shown, in the novel the hero himself is the villain.

In another significant change, the film alters the end of the story. It draws a parallel with Mahatma Gandhi, a reference made in the novel only to underscore the incongruity of such a comparison. Consistent with its movement away from irony, the film models its representation of the famine and human suffering caused by it on Ray's *Distant Thunder*. In the novel, too, the famine is understood to be a major catastrophe, but much of that detail is deliberately occluded to make room for social satire. Thus, we are told how the Tea Propaganda Board takes advantage of the situation. To capitalize on this miraculous access to potential consumers, the "Tea Propaganda Board" is opening big tea stalls because "in these parts people drank too little tea and too much coffee" (214). Not to be outdone by the private sector, the national government uses the opportunity to raise public awareness by showing films about dams and other hydroelectric projects (214). Given the context, with the government incapable of remedying the devastation caused by the drought, these films point to the failure of the local administration and the central government. Apart from its satire, the commentary also focuses on the pageantry of the government's show. When a man wants to take his children to touch the feet of the swami, the children cry, "They are also showing an Ali Baba film" (215). To top it all off, at the periphery there is "a gambling booth with a dart board on a pole" (214).

Unlike in the film, where the village community is emotively connected to Raju's sacrificial fast, the novel highlights Raju's alienation by emphasizing how it turned into a sort of spectator sport and a country fair, with picnickers cooking food nearby, so that the aroma of spices tortures Raju with hunger pangs (109). While the man is dying of hunger, just as the reiteratively referenced crocodile at the river crossing dies of dehydration, an American reporter shows up to interview Raju, filming a unique cultural phenomenon for global consumption (216). The interview with a female reporter in Anand's film is also somewhat comic, yet it reinforces a parallel with Gandhi's life story. Though the film follows the plot more or less faithfully, it differs with respect to aesthetic, social, and intellectual meaning. The film was made much later, and because its genre is that of the Bollywood film (even though it is an adaptation of a literary classic), its cinematography embraces emotion, the ideas of sacrifice and purification, and a grandiose metaphysics of transcendence (Pandit, "From Despair" 88–89).

Memory, Emotion, and Narration

Thus far I have shown that while Narayan's novelistic discourse shuns sentimentality, it does not eschew anchoring the narrative in emotion. Keith Oatley reminds us that the "idea of an [emotion] script is taken from theater, from the idea of set of lines from which a role can be enacted" (106). Emotion memories, according to Oatley, Daniel Schacter, Klaus Scherer, and others, are stored in the brain like a set of lines, images, and episodes. In other words, scripts are primed to elicit reactions and responses to things in the environment that have an impact on our goals and plans. A variety of emotional states, with action tendencies or without them, are elicited by this priming activity, which constantly shapes our emotional life. There is thus a natural affinity between the way the brain stores memories of past experiences to shape responses to future events and experiences and the way stories are written, remembered, or forgotten to meet perceived exigencies of adaptation and survival. In his discussion of the evolution of subjectivity in the brain, Panksepp says: "It is not farfetched to suppose that cultural memory (or ancestral memory), whose repositories are 'myths,' 'legends,' story and song, become part of the cognitive architecture of the brain in establishing patterns of emotion as response priorities, and basic organismic affects" (314). More decisively inclined toward a cognitive study of narrative is Lazarus's claim that core relational themes are like prototypes that guide our appraisals of events, plans, and goals (Lazarus, "Relational" 65). For Lazarus, emotions are "dramatic stories about particular classes of struggles to survive and flourish under diverse life conditions" (65). Highlighting the idea that the cognitive structure of emotions is nearly identical to components of narrative, Lazarus says, "Emotions are always about some harm or benefit in the relation between person and the environment," and core relational themes have to do with "scenarios of meaning, stories and plots, as it were" ("Past" 307). For the purposes of this discussion, an emotion script may be thought to combine features of "emotion disposition," defined by Nico Frijda as "motivational action readiness dispositions" that are sensitive to "particular kinds of information" (*Lams* 52–53), and a narrative episode (Oatley 107), and it may be considered as part of the human emotion system that is linked to what Oatley and others call systems of social motivations, such as affiliation, assertion, aggression, and attachment.

In more technical terms, these social motivations link biology to cul-

ture by bringing social contexts into play. People are joined to a social unit via responsibilities and rights; for this reason many of their emotions are elicited in connection to their affiliation goals. Conversely, people often wish to assert their subjectivity *against* group consciousness. As a consequence, some emotions are constituted by this need and desire. Further, the antisocial motivation to use aggression when one detects harm or threat to oneself, whether as a member of a group or as an individual, has undesirable consequences and yet remains an undeniable fact of life. The most important motivations, however, are those coming from the need or desire for attachment to others as lovers, friends, neighbors, a spouse (or spouses, in some cultures), parents, and children. Social motivations do not confine the individual's emotionality within a particular culture; these motivations are merely environmental factors that may define the emotion system as an organismic priority-defining system, able to instantly evaluate change in circumstances and interact with the environment.

Evaluations are inferences, however, never error free, and interactions can have effects that are opposite to what one desires. This is why we find that though everyone sets out to be happy, and none actively seeks unhappiness, there is so much unhappiness in life. One of the philosophical questions for the cognitive theory of emotion can be why, when all goals are by definition happiness goals, there is so much unhappiness in life. More important, why and how do people seem to seek their own unhappiness? Narayan's protagonist seeks and finds love but loses it as if by design. He seeks and finds success and upward mobility and loses that, too, again as if by design. More important, he seeks life but loses it. Vijay Anand's film constructs the issue theologically. Raju loses his life to find immortality; he loses human love to find divine love. Even more, he pursues self-interest to find meaning in self-sacrifice. Secured against such certainties by its skepticism and irony, the novelistic discourse raises questions to which there are no answers.

I have discussed the role the tamarind tree plays in Raju's personal memory and how it encodes Raju's contradictory (or complementary) need for freedom and solitude as well as attachment. Other trees in other Malgudi stories serve a similar function. In one particular story, an old man—a caretaker who has worked for years away from his home and family in a feudal household—refers to a tree he loved as his “child.” The man screams at the construction workers who have orders to fell this tree and expresses extreme anguish (see Narayan, *Malgudi Days*).³ In *The Guide*, Raju's tamarind tree has not been cut down. There is no

crisis of this sort. The tree has only receded into a distant field of vision, as childhood memories do.

A different instance of an emotion script grounded in cultural memory takes us to Narayan's plot of adulterous romance, the outer form of which is a standard story, while the inner is located uniquely in the context of myth, memory, and metaphor. This emotion script also involves objects in nature and visual orientation in space. These are not only objects of nature, however, but also objects reified in art, ritual, and myth. Though I will concentrate on a particular narrative-descriptive sequence, I will conclude with a discussion of another particular sequence: references to the river Sarayu recur throughout this novel as well as other stories and novels by Narayan. In this particular case, the reference to the river is linked to the emblematic image of snakes (specifically, the cobra) and snake charmers and finally to Rosie's snake dance, whose *rasa*, or aesthetic emotion, is constituted by the merging of secular time with an imaginary perception of sacred time.

While the tamarind tree situates attachment and affiliation themes in the contexts of solitude in the company of a sheltering and nonintrusive other, the river, the dance, and the snake-song memory locate a more potent attachment theme in the context of one's suprasensory kinship with the celebrated family of gods—Shiva, Parvathi, Murugan, and Ganesha—in terms of a real-time sensory experience of a transient nature. What is important here is not the truth status of theological claims about the existence or nonexistence of deities but rather image, metaphor, and music and the potential for the representation and elicitation of emotion.

The River, the Snake, and the Snake Dance: The Holy Family

“Sarayu” is the name of a river, perhaps only mythic, mentioned in the Rig Veda; it may be a different name for the Sarswati, a river in ancient India that supposedly dried up. The Sarayu is also a real, modern river—a tributary of the Ganges that meets two other rivers at Sangam, in Uttar Pradesh. Insofar as Narayan's imaginary city is located in southern India, he has transported the Sarayu, fictionally, to this place. It is mentioned first in profiling the not very likeable schoolteacher who points to the river's link to the gutter and warns the boys about drowning in it if they continue to float boats in drain water (23).⁴ Next, Raju speaks about the river in connection with tourists who want to go and see its source, its

place of origin. There is money in this for Raju, so he does not object, though it seems silly to him that someone would take the trouble “to go hundred miles to see the source of Sarayu when it had taken the trouble to come down the mountain to come to [their] door” (49). Stepping back from this ironic distance, he tells another story about the Sarayu, reporting what someone else said about a visit to the lonely, unused shrine near the source of the river, where the goddess Parvathi “plunged into the fire,” after which “water arose from the spot” (49).

More specifically, the story is about Sati, the daughter of Daksha, who threw herself into the fire at her father’s sacrificial rite when she found out no offering was made to her husband, Shiva. In mythic history, Sati burns to death but is later reborn as Parvathi and united to Shiva, who is a cosmic deity, never born in time and hence not subject to death. The moment of Sati’s self-sacrifice is also the moment of Shiva’s cosmic dance, as he lifts up the half-burnt corpse from the flames and dances the dance of anger and grief, death and life. The dancer in *The Guide* is Rosie, not Raju—the female, not the male. The myth is enlisted and revised to prime memories eliciting an emotion mode that would be efficacious in dealing with a particular type of life struggle. Reinventing an ancient dance form in postcolonial India involves a kind of cultural struggle for self-definition in the wake of colonial damage to traditional forms that define an identity outside European forms.

In this context, it is interesting to note that Raju always remembers to bring the *nataraja* icon (of Shiva’s cosmic dance) to place it somewhere, decorated with flowers, wherever Rosie does her daily dance practice, be it in a hotel room or some corner of his house. The act bears no religious significance, however; Raju is using the *nataraja* icon only as an emotion object to create a mood-congruent emotion in Rosie that will make her dance practice fruitful.⁵

The full articulation of this emotion theme introduces another culturally significant script associated with serpents, particularly the cobra that Rosie wants to see the minute she gets off the train. On the very first day in Malgudi, Rosie asks Raju to take her to see the “king cobra dancing to the music of a flute” (55). Raju takes her to the “forlorn walled area on the other side of the river,” the Sarayu. It is helpful here to know that the cobra is associated with the life of the Buddha and that serpents more generally figure in the iconography of Shiva. At the same time, snake charmers and cobras are marks of India’s otherness and strangeness to outsiders. To the extent that Rosie is at this early stage an outsider to Malgudi, a tourist, and not yet fully initiated into the art

of dance, she too mirrors this attitude. However, when she becomes immersed in her art, the king cobra and the Sarayu references mean something different to her because she is now an inspired performer; the snake dance is one of her favorites. Thus, the references to snakes take center stage in the love story of Rosie and Raju when, toward the end of the novel, Raju watches Rosie dance after his police inspector friend has told him about the warrant for his arrest but before he is taken in and before Rosie finds out.

The scene is a benefit dance for a maternity hospital. Rosie begins with the dance of the elephant god, Ganesha; in the legend, Ganesha is Parvathi's self-created son. The fifth and the last item in her performance is the snake dance. It is her masterpiece. In accompaniment to the "famous snake song," the dance gathers into one format a configuration of emotions including surprise, fear, wonder, and exultation.⁶ Raju is transported, even as the aesthetic emotion determines the meaning of his own situation, turning his own shame, abjection, fragmentation, and failure into grief and sorrow over nothing in particular but everything in his life and the lives of others. Yet exultation follows, as the song and the dance bring him into proximity with mythic time. In this transient moment, he can claim as his own an imaginary time and place as it is memorialized in the stories of India's forgotten and censored past. As he enters this moment, Raju comments on the snake residing in the "locks of Shiva"; its replica, an ornament on "the wrist of his spouse," Parvathi; and that ever-radiant home of the divine family residing on top of the mountain Kailasha (188).

Interpreting the emotion aesthetic of the dance, Raju says that the song brings out a mystical quality as the dancer's body becomes one with the symbolic body of the snake. More exactly, Raju says that Rosie's dance elevates "the underground reptile into a creature of grace and divinity and an ornament for the gods" (188). Rosie's background as the daughter of a temple dancer is significant from this perspective, though it brands her, socially, as a borderline outcast. Traditionally temple dancers did exactly what Raju describes. Their bodies, in accompaniment to song, became what they wished to portray: leaves fluttering in the wind, Shiva drinking the poison that emerged when gods and demons churned the ocean of life, rivers flowing, shimmering petals of white flowers in a blue night, or the serpentine splendor of the sacred snake as a symbol of the beauty and the terror of life. In becoming one with life forms and processes of nature, the temple dancer ritualizes devotion not as subjugation of the human to the divine but as an exultant discovery of one's

own Shiva-nature, one's own divinity, one's own potential for good and for evil, for destruction, the chaos of existence transformed into the order of movement and rhythm.

Just as the dancer's body imitates the snake and abstracts a diffuse, multifarious emotion experience into an event structure, so does the river Sarayu descend from the mountain of the gods, as if in a dance, shaping its serpentine course to reach Narayan's imaginary city, Malgudi—to absorb into its pristine waters the filth of that city's gutters. The choreography of Rosie's dance, as I have shown, indexes Puranic stories about the life of Shiva. The struggles and trials of the members of his odd family are situated outside social time, in sacred time; yet, through the ritualization of emotion encoded in song and dance, the stories constitute culturally coded attachment themes that enlist spectators' own memories of loss and pain and transform them into joy.⁷

The hypnotic spell of being part of this divine family, feeling at home in this imaginary home, is broken when Raju becomes aware of his situation and recalls his mother referring to Rosie as “serpent woman” (188). To dissociate herself from Rosie, she had said that serpent dances came to India from Burma (now Myanmar) and that snake dancers are often Burmese women. His mother's disavowal of the snake dance in particular, and of all dance and dancing women in general, is a repudiation of an entire *bharatnatyam* tradition. Though Raju's mother values traditions and wants Raju to marry in a traditional way, she rejects a part—in this case, a better part—of the tradition. The same is true of Marco. He is writing a history of South India on the basis of cave paintings of barely clad women in dance postures, but he thinks a live *bharatnatyam* dancer, especially if she is his wife, is vulgar. Raju, however, has the same attachment relation to this dance form that he has to the tamarind tree. Both are vital emotion scripts that activate memories and elicit desirable emotion. While the latter is part of his childhood, the former defines the freedom and constraint of his adulthood, the free choices he has made and the points at which he has gone wrong in prudential terms. The songs and the stories supply the transient episodes of joy in his otherwise lonely life.

Later, after the spell of the dance is broken, anger, resentment, grudge, and hostility motivate Raju to displace the serpent from the mountain of the gods and the river and to associate the predatory reptile with Marco, who “like a cobra” has been “lying in wait of its victim” (194). This later construal, however, is a palliative emotion appraisal, triggered by the social motivations of aggression and assertion that allow him to maintain personal dignity by projecting himself as the victim of social predation.

Imagining Marco and Rosie as different versions of the cobra leads to the emergence of a new emotion script. The one enchants him with her dance; the other tempts him into crime. The crime, we must recall, is forgery, trying to be what one is not. In this case, Raju, the imposter, was trying to be Rosie. The shame of being an imposter combined with the hurt of an unfulfilled attachment goal is evident in this construal. The perfect flowering of the divine family's mutual attachments, the self-fulfillment and agency that each member achieves, contrasts with the imperfection of Raju and Rosie's life, and of Rosie and Marco's life, and exemplifies an appraisal that gives rise to negative emotion.

Toward the end, a Sarayu reference again occurs when Raju and Velan note that the drought is making the river dry up. Raju looks to his left, "where the river seem[s] to wind back to the mountains of Mempi, to its source, where he . . . often conducted tourists" (80). That part of his life is far behind him. And figuratively, the river (both real and fictional) has dried up. Within an imaginary geography of the North and the South, the Ganges (also associated with Shiva and allusively indexed as such in this novel) and its tributary, the Sarayu, as well as the Rig Veda's Sarayu, become one. Despite the indexing of mythic reference, or because of it, it suits the author's aesthetic project to end the way Narayan does, with Raju flopping down into the water on the final day of his fast—his death portrayed as the "sagging down," a deflation of something that was inflated (220).

The emphasis on Raju's food cravings and his nagging hunger as he fasts, though depicted with ironic distance, draws attention to hunger as an emotion. Nico Frijda considers hunger and thirst motivated emotion modes, especially, as he puts it, "hunger in hunger strikers and pain in martyrs" (*Emotions* 169). The argument for hunger as it relates to the sacrifice theory of the Mangala villagers is not just superstition. The *pharmakos* figure's voluntary or forced subjection to hunger cannot bring rain, but it presents him as a ritualized, embodied emotion script for the looming threat of hunger for a helpless multitude. If they can witness, and even worship, what happens to this one man, who is only a man and not a saint, they can prepare themselves for possible death by starvation, their own and that of their kin. Sensitivity to the possible adaptive efficacy of cultural practices that encode emotion enables us to see the ritual sacrifice not as blindly antirational but as an emotively rational (if we can say that) way of gaining control over an overwhelming fear and the mass despair that may result from fear of death by starvation and dehydration.

In today's world, while there is an abundance of food everywhere,

there is also starvation, and millions of people experience its terrors around the globe. Perhaps for Narayan, Raju is in the end a figure for the human organism, endowed with a mind, emotions, and consciousness, imagined through a synthesis of the fattened imposter and the famished scapegoat.

Notes

1. R. K. Narayan, Rasipuram Krishnaswami Ayyar Narayanswami, in India and among the Indian diaspora a noted Indian writer writing in English, was born in 1906 in Madras (now Chennai) and died in 2001. From 1935 to 2001 he wrote several novels, short stories, and nonfiction prose and translated the epics *The Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* into English.

2. A. K. Raina, "Bandh Pather," <http://www.koausa.org/Culture/Index.html>. Raina sees a continuity between the *Bandh Pather* tradition and the ancient dramaturgical work the *Natya Shastra*.

3. The tamarind tree is an essential part of the Malgudi landscape and its social life. In "Astrologer's Day," the main character "sat under the boughs of a spreading tamarind tree which flanked a path running through Town Hall Park" (Narayan, *Malgudi Days* 10). Other trees also figure prominently as parts of emotion scripts of characters. Most poignantly, in "The Axe," Velan's attachment to the Margossa tree produces a violent scream when he sees men hacking its "massive trunk." To the men, Velan says, "This is my child. I planted it. I saw it grow. I loved it. Don't cut it down" (107).

4. In *The Guide* the teacher warns the boys against floating boats in the drain water, telling them, "If you fall into the gutter, you will find yourselves in the Sarayu river, remember, and I shall have to tell your father to go and look for you there" (23). In this context, it is interesting that in "Ishwaran," from *Malgudi Days*, the protagonist, Ishwaran, like Raju a "bad boy," drowns in the Sarayu. Ishwaran fails the matriculation examination several times, and on the day when he finally finds out he has passed and *can* go to college, his mind, strung to the limit by years of chronic fear and foreboding, cannot bear the shock of change (of fortune). Euphoric on his day of success, he rides an imaginary horse to the edge of the Sarayu and drowns (53–60), exposing the debilitating cruelty underlying the mockery and shame that a young boy is subjected to for failing his exams. These myriad references to the river constitute it as part of a collective emotion script.

5. The reference to the nataraja is insistent in Narayan's fiction. One of the stories in *Malgudi Days*, "Such Perfection," is about an artist who creates a *nataraja* statue that is too perfect, so that it is not fit for mortal eyes, for it will blind them. The priest tells Soma, the artist, that his creation requires some imperfection. Eventually, the too-perfect image gives rise to a storm that ends up breaking off the toe of the dancing Shiva, and thus this *nataraja* qualifies for being installed in the temple (61–65). In another story, "Naga," we are told, "As you know, Shiva is the Lord of Cobras, which he ties his braid with, and its hood canopies his head," and the child protagonist in this story, when abandoned by

his father, protects the cobra, at great inconvenience to himself, when the kite, Garuda (associated with Vishnu), threatens it. The narrator's comment compares the Naga, the cobra returning to the snake charmer's basket, thus, "Naga slithered back into it, as if coming home after a strenuous performance" (169). This description clearly likens the cobra to a dancer or an athlete.

6. "The Snake-Song," another story in *Malgudi Days*, uses magical realism with a touch of humor to tell the story of a musician, who, when he practices the "*punnaga varali*" segment of his song, causes a black cobra to appear at his door. The cobra is mightily displeased when the musician stops practicing, and it stays still like a "carven snake in black stone" when the musician resumes practicing this particular movement. The musician is driven to distraction by the cobra's blackmail. The reptile makes it impossible for him to stop practicing, and the musician gives up the flute altogether (73–77).

7. As the spectator of Rosie's dance, Raju is not the infatuated lover or the business-minded agent but the *sabridaya*, the man with the heart, who has trained his imagination to be receptive to representational emotion.

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CHAPTER 9

The Narrativization of National Metaphors in Indian Cinema

PATRICK COLM HOGAN

As writers such as Salman Rushdie and Benedict Anderson have stressed, nations are communities that we can never experience directly. We can only imagine them. It should come as no surprise, then, that we rely on metaphors to understand the nation. Needless to say, nationalists draw on a variety of models to represent the nation. However, there are patterns to the selection of these models depending on the precise nationalist purposes at issue. One fundamental reason for metaphorizing the nation is to work against subnational divisions that threaten national unity. In consequence, threats to national identification are a crucial factor determining the source domain of national metaphors.¹

More exactly, national identity potentially conflicts with other categorial identities. (One's categorial identity is one's definition of oneself in terms of a putatively crucial or even essential property—the identity category. This property locates one within some in-group, commonly in opposition to one or more out-groups. Identity categories include not only nationality but also ethnicity, religion, race, and so on.) A person may easily find him- or herself torn between loyalties to nation, on the one hand, and religion, race, or ethnic group, on the other. One technique for dealing with this is to co-opt alternative identities. Consider the case of ethnicity. One obvious technique for overcoming ethnic/national oppositions is to affirm, for the nation, bonds of kinship that are supposedly definitive of ethnicity. As a result, this sort of affirmation accounts for some of the most common national metaphors. Indeed, the metaphorical affirmation of national kinship typically draws on the most intense form of biological relatedness—the family. The point is obvious in such idioms as “the Founding Fathers” or in common references to the brotherhood and sisterhood of citizens. The family has two obvious social components: lineage relations (prominently, parent-child and

sibling connections) and mating relations (thus wife-husband connections). These serve as important source domains for imagining the nation. The nation is a geographical unit as well as a social one, however, and thus it has a distinctive relation to place. Because of this, the family place—the home—becomes an important metaphor also, as suggested by such common terms as “homeland.”

Of course, to say that such metaphors are common is not to say anything about the way they operate. Here, then, we might ask how familial metaphors develop and direct nationalist thought, feeling, and action. In the following pages, I will argue that familial metaphors often work to constrain our thought and feeling about nationalism within dominant ideological bounds and thus within the bounds of current national ideologies, but they may also be given innovative uses that challenge dominant ideology. In short, national metaphors are consequential but not determinative. The first goal of the following discussion is to explore the ideological and counterideological uses of national metaphors. National metaphors, though, always appear in particular discourses in particular contexts; to explore this particularity, I will consider a series of Indian films—three films that take up the familial metaphors of kinship, marriage, and home in ideologically problematic ways and three that take up these metaphors in ways that challenge dominant ideologies. Before addressing these particulars, however, we first need to consider the cognitive operation of metaphor. We also need to examine the relation between metaphor and narrative, for these films—like so many nationalist works of art—incorporate the nationalist metaphors into stories.

Metaphor and Inference

Conceptual metaphor theory currently dominates the analysis of metaphor, but my own view is closer to the account of metaphor developed by Tversky (“Features”), Ortony (“Are Emotion” and “The Role”), and others. As these writers view it, metaphor is a transfer of semantic features from a source domain to a target domain or the rendering salient of semantic features in a target domain by way of the source domain. Drawing on this account, I have argued somewhat more broadly that metaphorical interpretation is best understood as a sort of selective application of information (including information related to procedural schemas and affective attitudes) from a source to a target. Moreover, this transfer involves the same general cognitive processes that occur in

literal interpretation with the simple but crucial difference that metaphorical interpretation does not assume default values from the source to apply to the target. Finally, the information from both the source and the target is multiple, and it is constantly supplemented by information extrinsic to the metaphor proper. As a result, metaphorical interpretation involves the synthesis of a diverse array of information in working memory and the (explicit or implicit) drawing of inferences—again, in direct parallel with literal interpretation.

Like conceptual metaphor theory, the information-transfer account is clearly cognitive in the sense that it does not reduce metaphor to incidental verbal ornamentation. In other words, it makes metaphorical interpretation and understanding into a cognitive process with cognitive consequences, in parallel to literal interpretation and understanding. However, it does not treat cognition as seriously constrained by metaphors. Conceptual metaphor theorists often stress structure projection from the source to the target. Through structure projection, the source leads us to understand the target in ways that are governed almost wholly by the source. This has been codified in the “invariance hypothesis”: “Metaphorical mappings preserve the cognitive topology . . . of the source domain,” as George Lakoff put it (54).² Given this, it is not clear how we can escape the cognitive control of metaphors, for their invariant cognitive topology seems to determine our understanding of the target.

There are some parallel elements in an information-transfer account. If a particular metaphor is used extensively, it might provide us with a great deal of “information,” some true, some false. It may highlight certain sorts of relations and occlude others. It may prime certain associations, inclining us toward certain emotional attitudes, and so on. Consider the nation as a home. The use of this metaphor will incline us to think of citizens as people living in their home. When we think about immigrants or refugees, then, it will incline us to view them as people trying to enter that home—either invited or uninvited, depending on their circumstances. We might then tacitly associate the “uninvited” group with, say, thieves, since these make up the most salient group of people trying to enter a home without an invitation. In short, in information-transfer theory as well as conceptual metaphor theory, the metaphors we use may incline us toward certain ways of thinking about and responding to target domains, including the target domain of the nation.

Yet the two accounts differ significantly. First, according to the in-

formation-transfer account, this biasing of thought will occur only with thorough or “deep” processing of metaphors. Our spontaneous processing of a metaphor may be very shallow; in fact, it probably is shallow in most cases. If so, our prior knowledge of the target may exert a greater influence on our construal of source information than vice versa. This is one reason we so readily use and understand mixed metaphors. Consider the following advice one might give to an undergraduate student: “You won’t tap into the road to success by adopting a random smorgasbord of courses.” We both generate and understand such statements without any difficulty. If our thought were deeply guided by the cognitive topology of the source domain, it is difficult to see how this could occur. In fact, the shallow and nonbiasing form of metaphorical interpretation is almost certainly the most prominent in daily life.³

Moreover, according to the information-transfer view, we are constantly processing information from a variety of sources, literal and metaphorical. We are continually synthesizing this information and drawing conclusions about it. More exactly, we may distinguish two aspects or strata of inference—and of emotional reaction, which is no less important. The first, which is spontaneous, we might call the *response stratum*. In ordinary life we need to draw most of our inferences quickly and unreflectively. Moreover, our emotional reactions must operate swiftly as well. (If fear does not lead me to jump spontaneously away from an oncoming car, then fear is of little use.) However, a wide range of our mental operations is open to a second set of inhibiting and redirecting processes that we may refer to as the *monitoring stratum*. We are able to monitor our inferences and reactions, inhibiting them (within limits) and altering them, in part by searching other relevant information (perceptual or mnemonic).

Thus, in very simplified terms, we have the following structure governing our metaphorical—and, indeed, literal—cognition. First there are complex perceptual and semantic inputs that are processed more or less automatically through perceptual and linguistic circuits. These involve the usual selection, grouping, and structuring of information—in the case of metaphor, selection, grouping, and structuring that take both a source and a target into account. In some cases, this processing is “shallow.” Indeed, it may stop with a selection of information from the source that largely fits prior information about the target. In other cases, the processing is “deep.” It may even go beyond inferences about isolated bits of novel information, incorporating a broad range of implications and associations from the source domain. These implications and

associations feed into working memory and, particularly when sustained through elaboration of the metaphor, may come to have motivational and long-term conceptual consequences. In each case, however, we are able—indeed, we are often compelled—to monitor these processes. Monitoring involves two operations: first, the inhibition of spontaneous responses, and second, the integration of extrinsic information into working memory. In the case of strong, pressing emotions, our inhibitory capacities are weak, but given adequate attenuation of emotional response, its spontaneous reduction below an actional threshold, our inhibitory capacities may be quite robust. Moreover, once information extrinsic to the metaphor is introduced into working memory, our interpretations and attitudes may change radically.

The difficulty with monitoring is that our default mode of operation is to forgo it. After all, we are constantly synthesizing information and responding emotionally. If we monitored everything, we would never get anything done.⁴ This limitation on monitoring is what gives metaphors some cognitive force in cases of deep processing, either productive or receptive.

Given this account, we would expect nationalist metaphors to operate in the following way. On the one hand, as an author is developing a story, we would expect these metaphors to prime some associations and not others, foster certain tacit inferences and not others—in short, to involve certain sorts of spontaneous information selection, inference, and emotional response. Because the metaphors produce a biasing effect, these processes may spontaneously lead to xenophobic or other tendencies in the work, even if these are contrary to the author's consciously avowed attitudes. On the other hand, enhanced monitoring may alter the ways in which the author processes these metaphors in the course of story development. In both cases, the results are likely to have systematic effects on the readers' responses. Put differently, when elaborating metaphors—particularly when this is done unreflectively—authors may be led into implicit conclusions that they would not ordinarily endorse. In the case of nationalism, these implicit conclusions may affect readers in ideologically consequential ways. If the authors monitor the development of those metaphors, however, they may be able to “narrativize” them in counterideological ways—also with consequences for reader response. This monitoring may derive from a focused political decision or from contingencies related to the range of information incidentally synthesized with the metaphor in working memory. Either way, such monitoring results in a different form of narrativization, as just mentioned.

To understand these alternatives more fully, we must understand the general processes of what I am calling “narrativization.”⁵

Narrativization

We may consider storytelling first as the development of a plot from some narrative schema or prototype. At minimum, the initial schema involves (roughly) a causal sequence of emotionally significant nonnormal events. A slightly enriched schema specifies the causal sequence as involving agency and as beginning and ending in normalcy. Obviously, prototypical story structures (such as heroic or romantic tragicomedy) fill out this structure still further. These schemas and prototypes may serve to guide fictional imaginings or to shape our construal and understanding of real life. Conversely, the production of particular stories may particularize narrative structures relatively freely, or it may be constrained by other factors, such as actual events. For instance, as Hayden White has famously discussed, historiographical storytelling incorporates historical occurrences, circumstances, and so forth. This incorporation is referred to as “emplotment.” Specifically, emplotment is the organization of events, conditions, ideas, and so on into a story—commonly by reference to a prototype, but at least by reference to some minimal schema. In the case of historiography, then, storytelling is at least in principle constrained not only by narrative structures per se but also by a set of target events for which those narrative structures—along with causal attribution and other cognitive factors—guide selection, grouping, and the delimitation of structural relations.

In short, emplotment is a process whereby a large, unwieldy set of events, ideas, agents, and so on is reduced to a cognitively tractable form through narrative organization. That is not what happens with metaphor, however. Metaphor is not emplotted but rather, as I put it earlier, *narrativized*, by which I mean almost the opposite of emplotment: specifically, the expansion of a subnarrative idea into a story or part of a story, the use of such an idea to guide the development and particularization of a basic narrative schema or some more complex narrative prototype. The elaboration of a metaphor into a plot is a primary case of narrativization.

More exactly, narrativization begins with some property or relation—a “simulation elicitor,” we might call it—that we connect to events, characters, or circumstances in a story. In addition to metaphors,

simulation elicitors prominently include emotion triggers, as well as social and political issues or topics (referred to as “themes” in a literary context).⁶ Simulation elicitors become narratively consequential when they are introduced into working memory with events, characters, and conditions. In that cognitive context, an emotion trigger, a theme, or a metaphor will activate complexes of associated ideas, memories, scripts, and prototypes (e.g., emotion scripts and emotion prototypes). These will in turn guide an author’s imagination of events, character traits, scenes, and so on. When these events, traits, and scenes are integrated into an ongoing narrative, the simulation elicitor has been narrativized. Allegory presents an obvious case of this sort. If narrativization is based on a single metaphor or complex of related metaphors and is sustained fairly consistently throughout a narrative, it produces allegory. Allegory is, then, a special case of metaphor narrativization. Allegory is far less common than *localized* metaphor narrativization, however, and thus should not be considered paradigmatic of such narrativization.

Note that the idea of metaphor narrativization has consequences for our understanding of the breadth of national allegory, an important topic in some debates over postcolonization literature. Fredric Jameson famously claimed that “all third-world texts are necessarily . . . to be read as . . . national allegories” (“Third World” 70). As writers such as Aijaz Ahmad have pointed out, this is not a particularly plausible claim, but the ideas of simulation elicitation and narrativization may allow a more nuanced formulation of Jameson’s basic insight. Specifically, authors writing during periods of mass nationalist movements will almost invariably and continually face simulation elicitors that have nationalist content. These will prominently include national metaphors. Insofar as these authors do not monitor and reject or modify such elicitors, they are likely to incorporate moments of nationalist narrativization repeatedly in their works. Thus, rather than espouse Jameson’s absolutist claim, we might more moderately say that narratives written during or shortly after periods of intensified nationalism—including many postcolonization narratives—are likely to incorporate elements that narrativize national metaphors. In most cases, this incorporation will be local. However, it may also be extended more consistently, leading to national allegory. Readers are likely to miss important aspects of these narratives if they fail to recognize this narrativization.

As one would expect, the nationalist use of narrativization—in national allegories and elsewhere—takes up metaphors for motivational and political ends. Up to this point, I have been speaking as if emotion

triggers, themes, and metaphors are all separate simulation elicitors, but in fact, the three commonly operate together. Indeed, emotion is usually, perhaps always, critical for simulation elicitation, just as it is for narrative development. When analyzing the narrativization of a metaphor, perhaps the best way to begin is by isolating the sorts of emotion relevant to the source domain of that metaphor. We might then consider what enhances our engagement with this emotion and what sorts of nonnormal (narrative) event serve that enhancement. For example, research in emotion indicates that we are likely to value a goal more highly when it has been difficult to achieve (see Ortony, Clore, and Collins 73). It also appears that we are happier with a desired outcome when there is a sharp gradient of change from a preceding condition (e.g., a neutral state feels positive after fear and negative after hope—hence the feelings of relief and disappointment). This dynamic aspect of emotion crucially guides our narrative developments.

Consider again the key source domains for metaphorizing the nation—kinship, romance, and home. In each case, one crucial emotion is attachment. This suggests two things. First, the nationalist use of these metaphors is in part an attempt to recruit attachment to nationalist purposes. Second, the narrativization of these metaphors should serve to enhance our engagement with attachment. In keeping with emotion dynamics, we might therefore expect a recurring sequence of attachment, loss of the attachment object (e.g., a parent), and reunion with that attachment object. The loss should serve to enhance the reader's or viewer's empathic desire for the ultimate reunion and his or her joy in its occurrence. Three of the films I will consider constitute straightforward cases of this; the remaining films involve more complex reworkings of the pattern.

As with other cognitive processes, one narrativizes largely without thinking about it. As a result, the narrative development of a given metaphor and the relation of this development to nationalism may be guided by aspects of the source domain in ideologically problematic ways. Indeed, a dominant nationalist ideology (including elements of, say, xenophobia) will almost always be primed or partially activated in the context of nationalism, whether one is developing or interpreting a nationalist narrative. Just as the metaphorical source will in certain ways guide our understanding of the target, so too will this partially activated nationalist ideology simultaneously affect our understanding of the source, the target, and the ways in which the source maps onto the target.⁷ At the same time, however, each aspect of this process is open to monitoring.

Thus authors and filmmakers may always narrativize metaphors in ways that contradict problematic aspects of nationalist ideology. In the two remaining sections, I will consider examples of each sort of narrativization—ideological and counterideological—drawn from Indian film.

Narrativization and Dominant National Ideology

Given the general operation of nationalist ideology, it is unsurprising that the narrativization of national metaphors often fosters insularity in identification and reverence for national hierarchy. The point is particularly clear in the case of the (typically insular) home and (typically hierarchical) lineage relations, but it also occurs in the case of lovers.

An emphasis on the nation as home most obviously contributes to an exclusionary national attitude. After all, who wants strangers taking up residence in his or her home? (Contrast the implications of metaphorizing the nation as, say, a neighborhood.) Consider Shyam Benegal's *Trikal*, a film about Portuguese Goa just before the Indian invasion or, alternatively, liberation. I find it difficult to determine this film's politics, partly, I suspect, because of the way the film implicitly uses a particular family home as a metaphor for Goa more generally. Clearly, the Portuguese have no business searching and controlling this house, but the film seems ambivalent about the entry of a young revolutionary into the house. He is a member of the extended family—a point with rather transparent metaphorical significance. Nonetheless, he has to enter the house stealthily and not through a proper entrance—just as he has to enter Goa stealthily and not through a proper entrance when he returns from exile. He is tolerated in the family home for some time but then evicted. Beyond this, the film is perhaps mildly negative about the pending invasion of the Indian army. This attitude may simply be a sensible affirmation of the right to self-determination, but it is also possible that Benegal has been partially guided by the metaphor of the home, which may easily weight the alternatives toward insularity.

A focus on the nation as lineage tends to foster a different, if related, set of prejudices. One risk of this metaphor, even in work that is well meaning and democratic, is that it can, so to speak, spill over into literalism and thereby reinforce racialist or other narrow and exclusionary attitudes. This is a danger even in anticomunialist works, such as the Bombay blockbuster *Amar, Akbar, Anthony* (Desai). This film concerns three brothers separated in their youth through the criminal actions of

a sinister, wealthy Anglophile named Robert. Raised by separate families in separate faiths (Hindu, Muslim, and Christian, respectively), the three brothers represent India's national communities, children of the same forlorn mother. The film's plot recounts the separation of these brothers and their eventual reunion in the embrace of their rejuvenated mother, Bharati (whose name and familial position suggest Bharat Mātā, "Mother India"). The metaphorical characterization of the three religious communities as long-lost brothers, if trite, is nonetheless affecting. Yet it is striking that the heroes of the film are the blood relatives—the mother and her sons. The political message of the film is suggested in an early scene when, without knowing they are brothers, Amar, Akbar, and Anthony discover that they all have the same blood type as does a poor woman who needs a transfusion. We then see all three simultaneously giving their blood to their (unrecognized) mother. While the film is never explicit about this, it nonetheless suggests that the unity of the religious communities in India is a unity of "blood." By implication, it excludes those of different "blood," or lineage. (The point bears potentially on such national antagonists as the Chinese.) I suspect that, if faced with this interpretation, the filmmakers would reject it. I do not believe that they set out to communicate an ethnic account of nationality. But their metaphors tended to weight their ideas in certain ways and thus to bias their presentation—even if they had no awareness of this.

Of course, the most obvious use of the lineage metaphor, particularly in a colonial context, occurs in relation to hierarchy. As Ashis Nandy, among others, has shown, colonizers commonly metaphorize themselves as adults and colonized people as children. This serves not only to justify but to morally require colonial "parenting" and to recruit appropriate emotions—at least in the colonizers' feelings about themselves and their putative duties. In some cases, the metaphorization involves assimilating colonized people to elderly parents or grandparents rather than children. Nandy points out that India was sometimes characterized not as childlike but as aged. Here the family metaphor serves to put the colony in the position of a dependent parent rather than a dependent child. Note that in both cases the family domain is used to imagine a sort of national unity: India and England should not be separate nations, for they are part of the same family/empire. At the same time, the metaphors are used to establish a hierarchy within that national unit. As this indicates, metaphors of parent-child relations may serve not only to support colonial or national hierarchies but also to oppose national or subnational appeals for self-determination. If a nation is like a child,

then it is no more capable of self-determination than a child is. The same point holds for the metaphor of senility.

Even the romantic metaphor may be taken up in a way that opposes self-determination, despite the fact that the romantic plot in itself almost always opposes social hierarchies. Consider Mani Ratnam's *Roja*. The film is designed to support the Indian government's line on Kashmir and thus Indian governmental authority. More important, in this film, Kashmiri militants separate a young husband and wife (Rishi and Roja). As with *Trikal* and *Amar, Akbar, Anthony*, *Roja* does not develop source-target mappings with enough detail and consistency to make this a national allegory, but the broadly metaphorical connection between the couple and India—the partial derivation of the kidnapping plot from metaphor narrativization—is clear. Indeed, at one point the connection is made almost explicit in a song. As the kidnapped hero risks his life to prevent terrorists from burning the Indian flag, we hear the verses, “May our country never disintegrate. / May no one be allowed to separate us.” The separation of Kashmir from India, the film suggests, is just as wrong as the separation of this loving couple—and both are bound up with the subnational rebellion. The point is enhanced by the fact that the film takes up the paradigmatic case of romantic separation in the Hindu tradition—the *Rāmāyana*. In this sacred epic, the incarnate god Rāma is separated from his beloved Sītā when she is kidnapped by Rāvaṇa—a rākṣasa, or demon. Ratnam draws direct parallels between Rishi and Roja, on the one hand, and Rāma and Sītā, on the other. Even more important, he has Roja refer to the Kashmiri militants as rākṣasas. In this way, the narrativization of this metaphor is facilitated by (and modeled on) a prior narrativization that has already been put to considerable use in the Indian political imagination.

As the song and the development of a *Rāmāyana* parallel suggest, Ratnam was no doubt perfectly aware of what he was doing, so that this is not a case of unconsciously being guided by a standard metaphor. At the same time, it seems clear that the emotional impact of the film—above all else, its impact on viewers who are not necessarily inclined to accept the national government's claims about Kashmir—does result in part from the tacit operation of this (narrativized) metaphor.

Metaphors against Insular Nationalism and Xenophobia

Despite the preceding examples, there is nothing inherently constraining or conservative about familial metaphors for the nation. If monitored in

certain ways and integrated with information that works against dominant ideologies, the same metaphors can be used to promote novel and progressive views of nationhood, challenging received opinions. In these cases, the familial associations help us to question standard ideas and to envision alternatives.

In the case of lineage, we saw that even a metaphorical use of parent-child relations may push us toward imagining the nation in terms of literal kinship relations. Yash Chopra's *Dharmputra* undermines this tendency by confronting such literalization directly. The film develops the familial metaphor from the early scene in which Hindus and Muslims are called brothers in relation to the motherland. Familial metaphors of son, brother, sister, and mother recur throughout the film—particularly to bridge the Hindu/Muslim division. The central character in the film, Dilip, is the illegitimate child of two Muslims, but he is secretly adopted by a Hindu couple. He grows up to be a Hindu nationalist who almost kills his biological mother. For our purposes, two elements of this work are crucial. First, the film strongly affirms the familial metaphor in relation to the nation. Indeed, the film ends with Jawaharlal Nehru delivering a speech in which he insists that all Indians are children of the same mother. At the same time, the film explicitly addresses and criticizes the tendency toward literalizing the metaphor by showing that Dilip's obsessive assertion of his Hindu lineage is tragically mistaken. Thematically, the film suggests that the ethnocultural purity envisioned by Hindu nationalists is almost delusional in the context of a history that is anything but ethnoculturally pure. For example, at one point in the film, Dilip is delivering a speech and calls on his listeners to support Mother India by remembering their ancestors. Dilip clearly seems to have taken "ancestors" literally here. He is referring to the line of descent that, in his view, links Hindus but not Muslims with the place. (Elsewhere in the film, we are told that Dilip wants Muslims to go back where they came from.) The viewer's constant awareness of Dilip's actual parentage makes it painfully clear that any such appeal to ancestry is senseless. Dilip's subsequent violence toward his mother makes the appeal not only intellectually absurd but also emotionally repulsive.

Chopra's film avoids one problem of insularity—the literal identification of nationality with lineage—by directly addressing it and thus redirecting our cognitive employment of that metaphor. He purposefully provokes a sort of intensified monitoring of the source domain (the family) in relation to the literal plot so as to affect our use of that domain.

Another way of opposing insularity concerns the target domain (the

nation). This is what we find in V. Shantaram's narrativization of the romantic metaphor in *Undying Story of Dr. Kotnis*. In this film, an Indian doctor joins the anticolonial forces in China to care for the wounded. His marriage to a Chinese medical assistant metaphorizes the international union of India and China. Indeed, it is explicitly presented as such, for the wedding is described within the film as having "united two hearts . . . and two countries" and as representing "the Indo-China relationship." The ceremony itself involves the couple's exchanging rings that bear the images of their respective nations—thus Kotnis gives his bride a ring with a map of India, and she gives him a ring with a map of China.

International union works against insularity in an obvious way. Strikingly, however, the film manages to be simultaneously nationalist and internationalist. Specifically, China and India are seen as aiding each other in a shared struggle against external domination. In short, the film develops the romantic elements of the familial metaphor⁸ to support a position in keeping with that of the Non-Aligned Movement.⁹ It uses familial metaphors to suggest, and give emotional force to, the possibility of an alliance of colonized countries in which each preserves—or achieves—its own national integrity precisely by supporting the others. The film does this not so much by enhancing our monitoring as by changing the aspects of the target domain that are brought into prominence outside the metaphorical mapping. In other words, the suggestion of this possibility results primarily from the integration of extrinsic information into working memory. In this case, the crucial information concerns interests (such as national self-determination) and experiences (such as the suffering brought by war) that cross national boundaries.¹⁰

Beyond qualifying the source metaphor (through intensified monitoring) and reconfiguring its target (by narrative development drawing on information extrinsic to the source), one may go so far as to challenge a metaphorical mapping of a particular source and target. This is what happens in *Jagte Raho* (Mitra and Mitra), a film that takes up the metaphor of the nation as a home—in this case, a gated apartment building. Far from opposing the entry of strangers, and far from supporting social hierarchy, the film creates a nightmarish scenario in which the "intruder" is almost the only person who is not a criminal. Specifically, a stranger enters the grounds looking for water. The rumor spreads that a thief has broken in, and the residents form themselves into a band of semifascist vigilantes who burst into people's apartments and scatter their belongings in a self-righteous search for the thief.¹¹ The film tac-

itly exposes and critiques both xenophobic nationalism and the frantic paranoias that sometimes drive nations to persecute segments of their own populations.¹² Both are related to the idea that the nation is a gated home, a private house with closed doors. As one character puts it—in a scene that prominently features photographs of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru—“Doors must be opened to let the daylight in.” It is only when the hero leaves the building and makes his way to a space that is open to anyone—the garden of a temple—that he is finally able to find water. Implicitly, this garden suggests an alternative metaphor for the nation.¹³

In the preceding pages I sought to do several things. I hope to have indicated the prominence of familial metaphors—particularly, metaphors of lineage, romantic union, and the home—in thinking about the nation and to have indicated why such metaphors are likely to arise, given the nature of conflicting identity categories (here, national and ethnic). I hope also to have clarified the ideas of simulation elicitation and narrativization and to have indicated how national metaphors come to be narrativized in particular ways. I hope to have shown that, in some cases, our thought may be guided by these metaphors, even when they conflict with our own self-conscious intentions. We are not enslaved by these metaphors, however; indeed, we can use them in surprising and thought-provoking ways. I hope to have indicated how an information-transfer analysis of metaphor can account for both possibilities and to have suggested that account’s general explanatory value. Finally, I hope to have shed some light on the nationalist implications of the six films discussed, particularly the last three works. Though they seem to be less widely known and discussed than are the first three films, I judge them to be works of great political insight and aesthetic value. They deserve a prominent place in the cinematic canon not only of India but also of the world.

Notes

1. I should perhaps explain here that metaphors involve using some set of interrelated concepts to understand another set of interrelated concepts. The concepts we wish to understand constitute the *target* domain. The concepts that serve as a means of understanding the target constitute the *source* domain. Suppose I say that a citizen is a plant rooted in the soil of the nation. In that case, I am using the source domain of plants to understand or communicate something about the target domain of nations.

2. Mark Turner (252) has proposed a sensible but perhaps overly restrictive

constraint: that the structure of the target is not violated. By the lights of this account, metaphor may be viewed as less biasing than indicated even by the information-transfer account.

3. The point is particularly clear when we consider how we typically produce metaphors. We usually begin with some sort of experience or idea that we want to communicate and then choose the metaphor because it seems to express the experience well. For example, Jones works hard to get the highest promotion available to him. After ten years, he gets it, but then he has a strange feeling in subsequent months. He tries to explain this by saying that, since reaching the highest level of promotion, he feels as if he were on a ship that lost its compass. In saying this, he simply wants to communicate that he has no sense of a goal to direct his life in the way that the promotion had done previously. The metaphor of the compass does not lead him to think mistakenly that he really does have a goal but isn't sure how to reach it—though this is what the structure of the metaphorical domain might have “projected” onto the target of his career. (A compass provides not a goal but rather information that will help one reach a goal.) He is only using the metaphor loosely, in a way governed by the target domain, open to shallow processing, and that is how his addressee is likely to understand the metaphor as well. In this way, it seems clear that we are not determined by our metaphors. Such nondetermination, and even such shallow interpretation, is just what one would expect from the sort of information-transfer account sketched in this essay.

4. Actually, some monitoring goes on continually, but it is a minimal monitoring for some sorts of processing of contradictions. This monitoring is undertaken by the anterior cingulate cortex. When a contradiction has been isolated, the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is then activated, with resulting inhibition, and so forth (see, for example, MacDonald, Cohen, Stenger, and Carter; Lieberman and Eisenberger). I have collapsed these two stages for simplicity.

5. For readers familiar with Monika Fludernik's work, I should stress that my usage of the term *narrativization* should not be confused with her valuable but unrelated usage.

6. They also include looser suggestions without strict source-target mappings, what the Sanskrit tradition referred to as “dhvani.” However, I will leave aside the distinction between metaphor and dhvani to avoid unnecessarily complicating the discussion. For an overview of dhvani, see Pandit, “Dhvani and Rasa.”

7. Again, the information-transfer account posits a continual integration of a range of information extrinsic to the metaphor proper.

8. In a much more limited way, the film also draws on the lineage aspect of the familial metaphor. Here too it criticizes insularity, specifically when Kotnis is proclaimed not only a “son of India” but also a “son of China.” Moreover, in this case, too, the link between the nations is one of shared struggle and mutual support.

9. Of course, the Non-Aligned Movement did not develop until after the film. As Gopal points out, however, “the birth of the concept . . . is to be traced” to views expressed by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1946 (4), the same year as Shantaram's film.

10. In fact, this is particularly easy with the romantic metaphor, which is bound up with the romantic narrative prototype and the opposition of that prototype generally to insular group divisions. These divisions are precisely what inhibit the free choice of the lovers—as when the hero and heroine are prevented from uniting because they belong to opposed families, races—or nations.

11. In case it is unclear that the film has a national orientation, it is worth mentioning a few of the clues. In recruiting for the community watch group, one character calls on the youth of the building to join the defense force—a phrasing clearly designed to recall the nation. This “militia” proclaims, “We will give our lives,” which is what one would expect more from an army than from a community watch group. One character demands his “democratic right” from this group. Finally, at the end, when the main character successfully evades the militia and the associated mob, and when the real criminals are arrested, we see a series of portraits beginning with Gandhi and ending with Nehru.

12. Indeed, when watching the film, I cannot help but think of the United States after September 11, 2001.

13. In the context of Hindu nationalism, this is admittedly not an entirely unproblematic alternative. However, the problems arise not from the metaphor of the nation as a garden accessible to anyone but from the association of this particular garden with one (and only one) of the nation’s religious communities.

CHAPTER 10

Fear and Action: A Cognitive Approach to Teaching *Children of Men*

ARTURO J. ALDAMA

I teach in a predominantly white and affluent public university in a state that is quite diverse. The Republican domination on tax-revenue limits for higher education spending has caused a disproportionate amount of CU-Boulder's operating budget to be driven by out-of-state tuition, thus filling the campus with students drawn predominantly from affluent European American, or white, populations. Many of these students come from white-dominated suburbs or gated communities, where people of color are mostly the gardeners or maids who live in neighborhoods that they have learned to fear; when they admire hip-hop culture, they do so only from afar. As a faculty member in the Department of Ethnic Studies, I seek to use materials that question racial/ethnic, gender, and class privilege and that empower the voices of subaltern communities of color, especially women, in the United States, in the Western Hemisphere, and around the globe. In this regard I teach a seminar called "Screening Race, Class, and Gender in the Global Borderlands."

I like to end the class with Alfonso Cuarón's adaptation of P. D. James's *Children of Men* (1992), which has been enthusiastically received by critics, many of whom put it on their top-ten lists for 2006. More recently Michael J. Rowin made the following observations in *Cineaste*: "*Children of Men* employs stunning verisimilitude within its mise-en-scène" (60) and "tethers its esthetic designs to an eschatological realism rarely seen before from films of its box office clout" (61). I agree with Rowin's apt descriptors, even though I think Cuarón's political canvas is decidedly more complex, nuanced, and expansive than the violence of 9/11 that arguably drives Rowin's own anxieties throughout his essay. In fact, I use *Children of Men*'s visual language as a way for students to think about the normalization of fascism in contemporary political

culture and discourse; violations of the rule of law; the possible role of global warming and genetically modified foods in the systematic sterilization of women; anti-Mexican immigrant social hostility in American public discourse; Western European anti-immigrant hostility toward former colonies; the social and environmental factors behind refugees' flights from violence and impending death; and the erosion of rights for people in general and women and children (especially those who are neither white, European, nor Christian) in particular.

I ask students to write a theoretically nuanced interdisciplinary essay discussing how eventually it would be possible to challenge white and male supremacy in the United States and globally and how social and environmental justice should work in a healthy planet. I do this in part because I am genuinely interested to know how our students see their futures—or whether they are so caught up in the neural stimulation of short-term pleasure that ideas of the future fail to interest them. But I have other, more latent (maybe) or strategic reasons: to cause a cognitive jolt or a shift in their limbic and prefrontal systems,¹ and thus in their senses of subjectivity, and to help them develop a worldview sustained by an ethics of social responsibility—or at least an emotional investment in their futures and, if they decide to have children, their children's futures.

In doing so, I am competing with a slew of ideological, institutional, cultural, and cognitive factors. The first macro- and immediate factor (over which I do have some control, at least within the confines of the classroom) is what I term a “digitized solipsism” combined with an “institutionalized attention deficit disorder (ADD),” where students stay immersed in various devices, listening to their iPods, checking e-mail or Facebook comments, and compulsively text messaging. What would an fMRI or PET scan show us about their brains' cognitive processes when kids are both zoning out to music and multitasking? What would we see with respect to the activation of pleasure-seeking and reward centers; the stimulation of neurotransmitters and related hormones, with delicate interplays of dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin (so important for giving birth; having orgasms; bonding; enhancing social emotions, such as empathy; and inhibiting the amygdala), adrenaline, cortisol, and vasopressin; and general processing in the limbic system and frontal cortex? Would there be a masking or inhibition of emotional centers, especially those that cause empathy and compassion; of optimistic emotional responses to social stimuli; or of disciplined thoughts and well-founded decisions? Will digitized solipsism and institutional ADD lead students

to react to tragedies that, though horrific, do not touch them directly by remarking, “Wow, that’s messed up” and then within a few seconds switching back to their latest song download or IM flirt or whatever? In this regard I have banned the use of laptops in my classes, especially introductory ones, and have removed students from lecture classes if I caught them text messaging.

The other huge and decidedly more complex issue (if you are not from a community where skin color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender has factored into an otherized status that forces its members to deal with the vagaries and horrors of institutionalized and historical violence): what does it take to lead a (to use an essentialist stereotype) rich white kid—say, one whose parents will give him a BMW this Christmas if he gets a B average—to show empathy and compassion for the disfranchised and maybe even to act in conjunction with others, to use his white male privilege to challenge the institutionalized structures, precepts, and practices of oppression? And maybe closer to home for them, what does it take to challenge the ways in which men reward one another for degrading women, gays, and people of color in their own circles of friends and family? What needs to happen politically, intellectually, and cognitively to move out of a state of apathy and the self-absorption of living in a constant search for short-term superficial stimulation and into a state of empathy and ethical decision making based on empathy—a deliberate limitation of the amygdala’s activity triggered by evolutionarily archaic stimuli and a neuronal charge to the brain’s prefrontal areas, where most reasoning faculties reside? Investigations of the neurobiology of emotions have yielded important findings, for example, Joseph E. LeDoux’s compelling work on fear and possibly Antonio Damasio’s more ambitious and encompassing work covering many emotions and showing the role they play in the highest neural mechanisms of cognition, such as decision making.

Furthermore, how does one deal with the anger and defensiveness that some students enact once they are challenged on their privileges in a controlled space of otherness for almost three hours a week or, heavens forbid, made to feel what a Chicano student probably feels in mainstream classes? Why do some students stay in their emotional space of indignation and righteousness, with a pout that says, “How dare you challenge my comfort”? Why do others embrace this awkwardness, this anger, this fear, this indignation, and attempt to develop more empathy for the less privileged both in their daily interactions and in an engaged awareness of globalized structural race, class, and gender inequi-

ties? Cognitively, what is going on with these students? Why are female students generally quicker to move into states of empathy and more apt to feel outrage at the normalization of violence against the other? Are there neurobiological predispositions? Does the immediacy as such of sexist discourse and practice create empathy and solidarity for victims of violence, even if such a reaction is short-lived?

In *Understanding Indian Movies* (2008) Patrick Colm Hogan provides an interesting discussion of empathy and empathic anger grounded on the Sanskrit aesthetics of *rasa*; he argues that films that show injustice and barbarity, especially toward children, may elicit a sustained empathy that can vacillate from feelings of sorrow and pathos to a sense of deep anger. Among the films he analyzes is Kapur's *Bandit Queen*, based on the life of Phoolan Devi (1963–2001), a low-caste woman who, having been severely abused as a child, forced into a child marriage, and gang raped as a young woman, becomes a leader fighting for social justice and against abuses of power by high-caste families; today she is revered as a subaltern hero by low-caste communities in India. Hogan argues that Kapur uses empathic anger—or to borrow the Sanskrit term, “furious *rasa*”—in this film, hoping that the “viewer will carry that empathic anger outside of the theater and that it will motivate his or her actions in the real world” (134).

Trading on these ideas of emotions in film and actions in the real world, I use *Children of Men*'s visual language and have students recognize, take in, and, I hope, reflect on the overt political messages of Cuarón's *mise-en-scène* or Lubezki's striking cinematography as the film critiques the demagoguery involved with the invasion of Iraq, the consequences of torture, and the extremities of anti-immigrant hostility by portraying a world where even white Americans would be rounded up as enemy illegals and put in cages like rabid animals awaiting their internal displacement to the once idyllic southern England seaside town of Bexhill.

In thinking about Cuarón's overt schemas of political messaging, we can look at David Bordwell's *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (1989) and his model of the “bull's-eye schema” to consider how the interplay of the diegetic world of the character's narrative drive is enhanced by nondiegetic elements (e.g., camerawork, editing, and music) (170–186). I pause on several specific sequences: in the first, where Theo (played by Clive Owen) visits the refuge of the neohippie Jasper (played by Michael Caine), I focus on the *mise-en-scène*, using slow motion to highlight how the camera pans

across the newspaper clippings, trophies, and photos, how these objects carry a crucial narrative to the diegetic world that the characters inhabit in the film, and how this diegetic world intersects with the world of the viewer. My aim is to make sure students understand the story of Jasper's partner, Janice Palmer, a former journalist who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and languishes in a catatonic state as a result of having been tortured for speaking out against global fascism. There are clippings that state "Don't Attack Iraq" and "War Is Not the Answer," clippings of Janice Palmer (played by Philippa Urquhart) questioning Britain's response to mass migration and infertility, and a large clipping of an article titled "MI5 Deny Involvement in Torture of Photo-journalist"; the camera then pans to Janice in narrative time in a catatonic state. Cuarón makes his political message clear in the film, as he has done in interviews, too (see Roberts).

Once the students have cued into the mixed media subnarrative of the clippings and photos, I have them think about PTSD and the impacts of state-sponsored torture, with victims of water-boarding and other physical and psychological torture suffering the enduring consequences of those traumas. I ask them to consider the fact that water-boarding—a technique that the former vice-president Dick Cheney repeatedly endorsed as effective in an August 30, 2009, interview (McConnell)—was approved at the highest levels of the Bush administration with the demagogic justification that it makes Americans feel safe and secure. How has the Bush-Cheney regime exploited post-9/11 politics in an attempt to affect the cognitive and affective response patterns of American citizens, leading the president and vice-president of the United States to condone torture, a violation of civil rights, human rights, and international law, for what they claim to be the greater good?

Then I play, in slow motion, the bus journey into the government-controlled Bexhill Refugee Camp, where, paradoxically, Kee (played by Claire-Hope Ashitey) seeks to go on to freedom. Kee's water breaks as she and her companions ride into the inferno of unadulterated fascist state violence. Here Cuarón presents the obvious visual tableau of trained attack dogs—reminiscent not only of World War II but also of apartheid South Africa and 1960s civil rights protests in Birmingham, Alabama—and then the actual cages, striking because though the film is set in 2027, it immediately evokes Abu Ghraib,² Nazi death camps, Pinochet death squads, Argentinean dirty wars, and police brutality against ethnic others in the United States, the Guantánamo detention-cum-torture camp, Albania, Rwanda, and Darfur—all of them (like many,



Figure 10.1. Fugees stripped and imprisoned in Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men*

many others) places where subjects are hooded and taken against their will to be tortured mercilessly, beyond view or the rule of law. What impact will these scenes have on someone who is deeply threatened by immigration in the United States or Europe? Will it shock passive on-lookers into reconsidering their ideological positions? Will it reinforce their emotional righteousness in punishing immigrants for causing them unfounded fear?

For anyone thinking about these issues of cognitive and emotional response, Susan L. Feagin's "Time and Timing" provides a lucid way to consider a viewer's psychological heterogeneity by distinguishing between a person's "cognitive stock" and his or her dispositions and affective sensitivities. Although the author does not discuss issues of race, ethnicity, language, culture, and gender differences within audiences, Feagin explains that a person's cognitive stock consists of the "psychological states or conditions of a viewer, including beliefs, unasserted propositional thoughts, and ideas. . . . A cognitive stock functions like an acquired pool of beliefs, ideas, and thoughts" (173). Feagin then argues that scenes in a film can have a fleeting impact on a viewer's cognitive stock and argues that each viewer will have certain dispositional states and what she terms sensitivities (172–173). So in theory, these scenes will affect each viewer individually, perhaps causing some (e.g., those whose beliefs and thoughts cohere with the Homeland Security policies of the Bush-Cheney regime) to cheer state violence against the other because it makes them feel safe and protected. But could these scenes affect view-

ers' cognitive stocks in a way that leads individuals to question the use of state-sponsored violence or feel betrayed by the way the government constructs false feelings of safety and security literally at the expense of the other?

As we witness the tableau of state violence at Bexhill, a soldier walks onto the bus and arbitrarily, viciously, and quickly chooses people to punish, torture, and probably execute without due process. He yells, "You people disgust me" and then slaps the midwife, Miriam (played by Pam Ferris), who tries to distract him from grabbing Kee, the neo-African mother whose surprising mission is to give rebirth to civilization (in an interview by Roberts, Cuarón espouses the fact, confirmed by genetics, that an African woman was the mother of all human races). Miriam starts comforting Kee with the repetitive incantation of a prayer. (Does her language use and the tonal repetition of the prayer keep her cortex activated as she feels a sudden fear of death and the pain of physical violence?) Then she is escorted off, hooded, and executed. When someone is forced out of a bus or train and shot for no apparent reason, what impact does this have on everyone else who is on the bus? Do you shut down because the intensity, speed, and lack of protocol, the arbitrariness and finality of violence, have overwhelmed your cognitive systems? Do you become cowardly and self-protecting? Does your sympathetic system shut down because if you fight or flee you will be killed? What is the neurobiology of terror, the sudden adrenaline rush of violence? What are the cognitive impacts on viewers who are survi-



Figure 10.2. Acts of Police Brutality in Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men*

vors of violence, of genocidal campaigns, or who experience empathy for victims and disgust at extreme police brutality? Another question arises on a deeper level outside the specifics of the film: how does the threat of pain or death keep imprisoned populations submissive and docile in both an affective and behavioral sense?

As a professor of ethnic studies engaged in critiques of what Walter Mignolo and others have called the “coloniality of power” (Quijano and Ennis), I am always amazed and overwhelmed by the way a small minority can deploy threats of violence and punishment and manipulate hope for liberation and normalcy to keep large masses of oppressed peoples meek and compliant. For example, consider the horrors of the Soviet gulag-bound trains during the Stalinist purges or trains bound for the Nazi death camps; what prevented people from overwhelming their captors given that the ratios were sometimes over two hundred to one? The same question arises in other, similar cases—for example, the henequen plantations in the Yucatan prior to the Mexican Revolution of 1910, where one whip master and a few armed guards would keep four hundred families in a state of terror; the plantations of the Caribbean, the southern United States, and Brazil—all areas governed by colonial elites—where the few controlled the many; and Algeria or Rwanda. And the list can go on.

What happens on a cognitive level to keep people self-contained and willing to accept their subjugation rather than engage in the panic of a fight-or-flight response, where you lash out to protect your life and the lives of your loved ones at all costs or, alternatively, when you decide to pursue a more sustained strategy of resistance? What goes on at a cognitive level when someone from an enslaved or deeply oppressed population overcomes his or her fear of reprisal, violence, and death to take the guard’s gun or to speak out and try to mobilize mass resistance to these structures of oppression? Does the conviction of hope by one or a few cause a synaptic shift in the brains of others so that they rise against their own parasympathetic suppression and spring to action, inhibiting the amygdala’s fear and the paralysis that can result? The political construction of fear in the so-called drug war waged by Felipe Calderón’s administration has resulted in nearly thirty thousand civilian deaths in four years, and an important social casualty of this “war” in Mexico has been democracy. Yet many forms of popular resistance are visible. What about folks from the privileged classes who fight oppressive norms and face punishment and even death in their struggles in behalf of their oppressed social counterparts (as seen, e.g., in the Abolition movement or

in non-Jewish Germans willing to fight against the Nazi regime)? On a neurobiological level, what would one expect to see in populations controlled through violence and scaremongering policies? What types of endocrinological overloads would flood the brain to make it and the body shut down to become docile and submissive to terror? Conversely, how would an executive order through the frontal cortex override your body's induced parasympathetic posture, leading you to lash out against your oppressors and work to free yourself and others? Paraphrasing Hamlet, 'tis not conscience that "does make cowards of us all." Rather, it is conscience that can make us brave in the face of stifling fear.

As someone attempting to bring my training in poststructural and psychoanalytic theory to bear on cognitive theory, I am curious to see how these questions and observations could be treated at the cognitive and neurobiological levels. For example, in a deeply informative and interesting report titled "The Neurobiology of Love," Tobias Esch and George B. Stefano argue that the phenomenon of love "may be based on endogenous autoregulatory signaling molecules like endorphins and endocannabinoids, possibly originating in the limbic pathways" (181). But what would the "neurobiology of fascism" look like? If we did an fMRI scan of Dick Cheney's brain, would we see something unique to such beliefs and attitudes? How does state-driven fascism affect its subjects on a cognitive neurobiological level as it creates societywide states of anxiety and fear and applies a policy of persecution (and even genocide) of the other (thus continually activating the amygdala region and suppressing the decision-making cortex areas) while giving a false sense of security and comfort in the militarized violence triggered and maintained by the Ur-father or the Ur-state apparatus?

So the further questions that I ask myself when I teach this film are the following: Will the film's chosen sememes of a dystopic future in the immediate present function as a punctic Barthesian montage? What does it mean on a cognitive level when the terror of an image reaches into the prefrontal cortex and limbic system to calibrate outrage, concern, empathy, and decision-making processes leading the individual to fight for a socially just and healthy world? Or have we become so interpellated into the repetitive pursuit of pleasure or immediate satisfaction by the reward system in the brain (and the concomitant dopamine) that we just shrug, say, "Oh, well," and continue playing our Wii videogames or obsessing over an SUV with heated leather seats or some such thing? Is this the cognitive endpoint of the socioeconomic reification taking place in our society that Marx called "commodity fetishism" because



Figure 10.3. London Street in the year 2027 in Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men*

it concerns the transformation of social relations between people into objectified relations between things (above all else, money)?

So I end my essay with my own sense of hope. Hope that the verisimilitude of the opening smoggy city scenes in *Children of Men*—scenes that could be London today, Beijing, Mexico City, Bangkok, or any large city—will cause viewers to think about human-made environmental toxicity and unchecked carbon emissions. The film's smog-filled scenes of urban and ecological detritus include ubiquitous images of plasma screens transmitting the ideology of the British state apparatus that coerces through a two-pronged biopower: (1) If your sense of futility and despair gets too overwhelming, you can opt for a state-sanctioned euthanasia with the Tranquil suicide pills advertised with high-end spa music. (2) You can turn in anyone you consider to be an illegal immigrant, an option touted by the public plasma screens in a campaign evoking the state-induced paranoia of Stalin-, Hitler-, and McCarthy-era campaigns to turn in your neighbor, your friend, or your family member for being one sort of threat or another. Since Britain is the only country that “soldiers on” in the film, with all other countries having collapsed through ecological disaster, famine, genocide, or unmitigated political violence, anyone coming from anywhere who is not British-born is considered a “fugee,” or refugee. This is further reinforced by Cuarón's panning shots outside a subway train full of folks, including European-looking elderly women, being rounded up by military police and forced into cages, treated as if they were rabid animals.

Cuarón's political imprint is again apparent, for in showing the state using a high-definition medium to instill fascistic paranoia toward the immigrant or refugee other, the director critiques present-day anti-immigrant hostility and the resurgence of racial nativism. In the best-case scenario, the film's overt sememes and riffs on the timelessness of fascist state power can cause its viewers to pause, reflect, and make an executive order to resist the neural stimulations of fear, self-protectionism, and social entropy. In doing so, a viewer can embrace the empathic and sustained decision-making processes that are driven by the cognitive exhilaration of hope and the courage to take a stand for social justice.

Notes

1. Greg Smith offers an excellent definition of the limbic system: "The limbic system is a highly interconnected neurological center that receives information from a wide range of input systems. Its function is to evaluate that information, to provide an emotional coding based on this evaluation, to trigger an initial response, and to monitor the stream of emotional stimuli and responses (in conjunction with conscious processing). The limbic system (particularly the amygdala) is the common neural pathway traveled by emotional data" (108).

2. Cuarón re-creates the horrific 2004 image of the Abu Ghraib inmate Satar Jabar, who remained standing on a box because he had been told that he would be electrocuted if he stepped down; this case is discussed in the 2008 documentary *Standard Operating Procedure* (Morris), which highlights the context and the adjudication of the Abu Ghraib scandal. The official review ruled that this particular "stress technique" did not constitute torture or violate any criminal laws.

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PART III

COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS

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CHAPTER 11

The Postmodern Continuum of Canon and Kitsch: Narrative and Semiotic Strategies of Chicana High Culture and Chica Lit

ELLEN MCCRACKEN

Written in an Albuquerque Starbucks cafe in only six days, *The Dirty Girls Social Club* (2003) garnered Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez a \$500,000 advance from St. Martin's Press after a fierce bidding war. Sandra Cisneros, in contrast, spent nine years writing her long-awaited novel *Caramelo*, published by Knopf in 2002. While Cisneros's work occupies a well-deserved place in canonical U.S. literature, Valdes-Rodriguez is unabashed about her commercial goals as a practitioner of "chica lit." In the era of postmodernity, when the fixed borders between high and mass culture are said to have eroded, how can we still clearly distinguish between high art and best-sellers when the two often share themes, techniques, and ethnic motifs?

I will argue that these novels represent two distinct forms of postmodernist narrative that are shaped by either a strong or an attenuated form of commercialism. While Valdes-Rodriguez's chica lit corresponds in certain ways to Jameson's model of the literary text as a debased form of culture under late capitalism ("Postmodernism"), Cisneros's novel exemplifies the sophisticated genre of historiographic metafiction praised by Linda Hutcheon. Although both books aim to reach a large mainstream audience and use similar narrative and semiotic strategies to achieve this, commercialism more fully pervades Valdes-Rodriguez's kitsch text, whereas it more subtly underlies Cisneros's avant-garde novel—which was almost instantaneously accepted into the American literary canon. Despite these distinctions, however, the two kinds of writing exist on a continuum of an expanding definition of culture: various audiences are attracted to distinct postmodernist narratives, and as Lawrence Alloway pointed out in 1958, "rejection of the mass produced arts is not, as critics think, a defence of culture but an attack on it" (717), as definitions of culture are stretched beyond Renaissance notions of the

fine arts. We are trapped within elitist prejudices if we immediately dismiss *chica lit* as commercial debasement and fail to analyze its narrative strategies that attract hundreds of thousands of readers.

The roots of these two forms of postmodernist narrative can be traced to key political movements in which U.S. Latinos have engaged since the late 1960s. Two primary forms of multiculturalism developed in response to these militant social movements of ethnic minorities, which demanded an end to the myth of the melting pot in the 1960s and beyond. First, populist multiculturalism, or multiculturalism from below, involved grass-roots groups of disenfranchised ethnic and racial minorities who militantly rejected pressures to assimilate as the only path to attain the American dream. Governmental and academic institutions, among others, responded to this social unrest with what can be termed hegemonic multiculturalism, or multiculturalism from above. In an attempt to contain and even to profit financially from the large-scale protests of minorities, corporations and institutions sought ways to pacify and limit the social unrest. Universities, for example, established and funded departments, centers, and courses focusing on ethnic studies and multiculturalism. Mainstream publishing houses, many owned by large media conglomerates, also promoted multiculturalism from above primarily because they wished to make money from these social movements. One by one, they offered book contracts to selected Latino writers in the late 1980s and 1990s, aware that there was now a large audience of both minority and nonminority readers interested in ethnic fiction. They often marketed these writers and their works as postmodern ethnic commodities, visually romanticizing folkloric ethnicity on book covers.¹

If Cisneros represents the first group of U.S. Latina writers to break ground in the 1990s by publishing innovative fiction with mainstream commercial presses, Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez embodies the logical conclusion of this trajectory, in which the literary text is now almost completely structured by the demands of consumerism. While writers such as Julia Alvarez, Ana Castillo, Cristina García, and Denise Chávez negotiate and sometimes internalize the demands of mainstream publishers as they attempt to write works of art, *chica lit* writers such as Valdes-Rodriguez, Mary Castillo, Caridad Piñeiro, and Michele Serros aim for the widest audience possible and follow formulas for commercial success. Admitting that she set out to be a “Latina Terry MacMillan,” Valdes-Rodriguez has argued that she gives her publisher what it wants but does something more important at the end that transcends the publisher’s constraints. She argues that she should be seen as a “La-

tina Stephen Hawking” rather than a Terry MacMillan.² Nevertheless, despite occasional instances in which she asserts writerly independence, Valdes-Rodriguez strongly shapes her literary production according to market demands. While the gains achieved by multiculturalism from below underlie her novel, and while there are occasional references to and criticism of these political movements, hegemonic multiculturalism predominates. In contrast, the ethnicity Cisneros deploys functions as a hybrid of both forms of multiculturalism. Cisneros merges elements of ethnicity emphasized during the periods of Chicano nationalism in the 1970s and early 1980s with the commercial expectations of ethnic representation that emerged in the age of multiculturalism in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Performative Ethnicity as Commodity

Cisneros poses under a hot-pink parasol for a picture outside her purple house in San Antonio, wearing a flowered Mexican blouse, short black shorts, and a red rebozo. For other appearances she wears Virgin of Guadalupe earrings, an ornate antique Oaxacan skirt, or a *china poblana* costume. She wears a Mexican folkloric dress in a publicity photo for an appearance at the University of Southern California in 2002 and a rebozo for the back cover of the first edition of *Woman Hollering Creek*. She remakes herself as a Chicana vamp on earlier book covers, such as those for *My Wicked Wicked Ways* and *Loose Woman*, and for Angel Rodríguez-Díaz’s portrait of her housed in the Smithsonian Museum. In another photo, she lowers her rebozo to display the “Buddhalupe” tattoo she has on her upper arm. Her bright red truck has *zarape* seat covers and a license plate reading “AY TU.”³

These visual displays of ethnicity are part of a larger constellation of semiotic performance in which Cisneros deploys hundreds of ethnic signifiers to define and individualize herself. They function as second-degree signifiers of ethnicity, assemblages that creatively mix elements of a Mexican past denied to the children of immigrants who were shaped in the United States by the ideology of the melting pot. The individual signifiers in these displays of ethnicity are removed from their original sources and functions, becoming second-degree signs of ethnicity in the Chicana writer’s repertoire. The rebozo, or shawl, that covers, warms, protects, and carries objects for the Mexican poor is reconfigured as the central motif of *Caramelo* (2002), a metaphor of narrative, family his-

tory, and ethnic identity. Cisneros poses in the “caramelo” rebozo for the *New York Times* photographer in launching the book.⁴ Language, popular traditions, and cultural artifacts are critically rearticulated in hybrid literary images of second-degree ethnicity.

While some in the American mainstream are assuaged of their fear of the other and comforted by the images of second-degree ethnicity in her writing and public persona, Cisneros often creates what might be termed ethnic trouble through these hybrid motifs. Her transgressive poetry in *Loose Woman*, for example, challenges gender stereotypes of the passive, pure Mexican woman. The bright purple paint with which she “Mexicanized” her 1903 Victorian house in San Antonio’s historic King William district created a two-year standoff with city authorities that received national news coverage. In 1997 the city’s Historic Design and Review Commission charged that the color was not historically appropriate for the neighborhood, but Cisneros argued to the contrary: “The issue is bigger than my house. The issue is about historical inclusion. . . . Purple is historic to us. It only goes back a thousand years or so to the pyramids. It is present in the Nahuatl codices, book of the Aztecs, as is turquoise, the color I used for my house trim; the former color signifying royalty, the latter, water and rain.”⁵ The debate was widely covered in local and national media, including CNN, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the Associated Press. Some accused Cisneros of trying to sell more books through the controversy, but many of her neighbors tied purple ribbons on their trees in support of her. Finally, two years later the dispute was settled when the commission examined a sample of the paint and agreed that it had faded sufficiently to be acceptable.

While Cisneros celebrates her Latino ethnicity, Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez to some degree resents that she can make money only by performing as a Latina. She notes that her publisher rejected the second novel she submitted because it had an Irish American saxophonist as protagonist instead of Latina characters. This autobiographical novel emphasized her maternal Irish heritage—an ethnicity that today has less cultural capital than her Latino one does.⁶ Rodriguez wants to have it both ways, playing on stereotypes of Latina ethnicity yet also debunking them. She strives to “set the record straight” on who Latinas are, emphasizing their heterogeneity. She argued extensively with her publisher about an appropriate cover for *The Dirty Girls Social Club*, refusing to let them use images of donkeys, cactuses, and mantillas on a book about wealthy Latinas with high-powered careers. Both Rodriguez

and Cisneros engage in performative spectacles of Latino ethnicity that evoke the narrative alterity to which Monika Fludernik (“Identity”) alludes—desirable images that are particularly marketable to mainstream readers in contemporary society. Even for those readers who also claim as their own certain aspects of the ethnic culture displayed, Shklovsky’s concept of *ostranenie*, or “enstrangement,” comes into play to make the ordinary strange, taking readers more deeply into the constructedness of Latinaness. Although deployed in distinct modes, performative ethnicity is key to the commercial success of both Cisneros’s and Rodriguez’s books. Comparing these textual deployments of ethnicity reveals both the cultural continuum on which the two novels are situated and the distinctions that separate them.

Spectacles of ethnicity begin paratextually on the covers of each book. On the front and back covers of *The Dirty Girls Social Club*, drawings of faceless women with exaggerated hourglass figures stand in the stereotypic female pose Erving Goffman termed “the coy knee bend.” Toasting champagne glasses with childish bubbles floating above, the women wear horizontally striped dresses that blend them into the pastel stripes of the background. The women do not evoke the professional status of the Latina characters Rodriguez is striving to portray in the book. Instead of deploying the rejected images of donkeys, cactuses, and mantillas, the cover now uses stereotypic sexuality to market the book. The cover almost screams “Sex sells!” and suggests that ideal Latinas are slender, curvaceous, and coy and that they dress in bright colors.

The front cover of *Caramelo* introduces the spectacle of ethnicity with Edward Weston’s black-and-white photograph “Rose, Mexico” (1926) framed with a decorative flower motif from a Mexican *retablo*. Evoking variations of the Mexican flag’s red, white, and green, the artwork and Spanish word *Caramelo* overcode the female image in the photograph with Mexican ethnicity. Beyond the aesthetic pleasure of the photograph, the image of the young woman’s closed eyes and happy, smiling face might signify female docility to some and an unthreatening, safe image of Mexicanicity to others. Some might at first mistake the image for Sandra Cisneros herself, being accustomed to her frequent sartorial role playing in public venues.

But the photograph takes on additional meanings in the context of reading the novel. The image of the smiling young woman on the cover alludes as well to the way the grandmother, Soledad, might have looked in that time period. The novel attempts to tell what a photograph cannot: the complicated story of the long life of the “Awful Grandmother”

(34), a term belied by the beautiful image on the front cover and ultimately shown to be part of the grandmother's complicated constellation of both good and bad characteristics. Similarly, the first chapter visually describes a souvenir photograph taken during a visit to Acapulco when the children were young. The narrator corrects the ostensibly accurate image of the past by noting that she herself has been left out of the photo, like the photographer. What is to follow, the chapter suggests, is the story that the Acapulco photograph fails to tell, in which implicitly the author becomes a key character. Already on the first page Cisneros foreshadows the hidden family secret revealed at the end as if the book were a *telenovela*: "Here is Father squinting the same squint I always make when I'm photographed" (3). The foreshadowing advances to prolepsis on page 78 and finally to revelation on page 404.

Thus, the hybrid image of ethnicity on Cisneros's front cover is open to various interpretations and directs readers forward to several key elements of the novel that turn on the notion of the visual simulacrum. Ethnicity in the novel is linked to spectacle and to memory as its characters struggle to recover traces of the past. It is a particularly postmodern ethnicity on several levels, not only because of its instability, its inability to be entirely anchored or secured, but also because of its hybridity and the literary techniques through which that is invoked.

The implied authors of both Cisneros's and Valdes-Rodriguez's texts claim to present mainstream audiences with "insider" ethnographies about the culture of ethnic others. Both writers explain the nuances of their culture, attempting to teach more accurate views of Latino alterity. Valdes-Rodriguez's authorial persona Lauren addresses readers directly: "A lot of you probably don't speak Spanish, and so don't know what the hell a '*sucia*' is. That's okay. No, really. Some of us '*sucias*' can't speak Spanish, either—but don't tell my editors at the *Boston Gazette*, where I am increasingly certain I was hired only to be a red-hot-'n'-spicy clichéd, chili pepper-ish cross between Charro and Lois Lane, and where, thank God, they still haven't figured out what a fraud I am" (4–5). Chatty, colloquial language—designed to make readers feel part of a group of friends—takes a distance here from stereotypes of Latinas even as it invokes these motifs to flavor the novel.

Cisneros humorously explains to readers the standard rhetorical devices of Mexican *telenovelas*: "¿Qué intentas ocultar? ¿Por qué eres tan cruel conmigo? Te encanta hacerme sufrir. ¿Por qué me mortificas? Say any of the above, or say anything twice, slower and more dramatic the second time 'round, and it will sound like the dialogue of any *telenovela*"

(15).⁷ She combines insider ethnography with cultural analysis and the “recipe” for this popular cultural form, offering readers critical analysis of mass culture in a pleasant, humorous mode. Privileging bilingual readers, she does not translate the Spanish phrases, asserting the importance of the original Spanish utterances to her ethnicity. Valdes-Rodriguez, in contrast, translates often in the novel, with a few exceptions, and overly explains allusions that high culture would expect readers to recognize. Instead of assuming her readers’ cultural competence to grasp the intertext of the title she has chosen for her group of women, “The Buena *Sucia* Social Club,” she explains that *sucia* means “dirty girl”: “‘*Buena sucia*’ is actually pretty offensive to most Spanish-speaking people, akin to ‘big smelly ’ho.’ . . . It’s a pun, too, see, taken from the name of those old-as-dirt Cuban musicians who record with Ry Cooder and star in German documentaries” (5). Do any readers feel patronized because the author tells them that she employed a pun?

Both Cisneros and Valdes-Rodriguez deploy what might be termed “linguistic spectacles of ethnicity,” in which language playfully displays itself. Frances Aparicio terms one example of this literary technique “tropicalized English,” “a transformation and rewriting of Anglo signifiers from the Latino cultural vantage point” (796). Such techniques invite bilingual readers to recognize the Spanish subtexts beneath the English signifiers in Cisneros’s experiments using false or invented cognates. “It’s the hour of the nap” (39) may appear to be slightly drawn-out English for many readers, but bilingual readers recognize the Spanish syntax that tropicalizes the sentence. Even monolingual readers can enjoy some of the humor in bilingual puns such as “¿Estás deprimed?” or “What a barbarity!” (238, 256). Such linguistic spectacle allows Latino readers to reclaim memory and identity through hybrid, second-degree ethnicity, aesthetically reconfigured through inventive wordplay.

Cisneros engages in creative ethnography in one of the footnotes, the pretense of which is to explain the Spanish expression “Mi vida”: “*My life. That’s what Father calls Mother when he’s not mad. —My life, where did you hide my clean calzones?*” But the footnote almost uncontrollably expands to a discussion of the “incestuous confusion” of Spanish terms of affection:

Mijo, my son. What Mother calls him when she isn’t angry . . .

Mijo, even though she’s not his mother. Sometimes Father calls her mija, my daughter. —Mija, he shouts. Both Mother and I running and answering, —What?

To make things even more confusing everyone says ma-má, or ¡mama-cita! when some delightful she walks by . . .

If the delight is a he,—¡Ay, qué papacito! Or,—¡papasote! for the ones truly delicious to the eye.

A terrible incestuous confusion.

Worse, the insults aimed at the mother,—Tu mamá. While something charming and wonderful is—¡Qué padre!

What does this say about the Mexican?

I asked you first. (307)

Caramelo's ethnography is a site of humor, playfulness, and social critique. Explaining her recuperated culture to outsiders, Cisneros at the same time bonds with Latinos about the linguistic idiosyncrasies of their culture. The dual audiences she invokes allow her to participate at the same time in hegemonic and populist multiculturalism.

Valdes-Rodriguez employs tropicalized English in bilingual puns such as “*gente-fying* the neighborhood” (205). But in her attempt to counteract stereotypes and show the diversity of Latinas, she pokes fun at non-Cuban Latinos, especially Chicanos. Thus Valdes-Rodriguez notes that while Cubans consume the abundant rich dishes she ethnographically describes in detail, Chicanos like *menudo*, “a soup they voluntarily make with tripe, a line of little Mexican ladies rinsing corpse poop out of the pig intestines in the kitchen sink. Uh, no. Sorry not for me” (10). Without naming her, she makes fun of the Chicana writer Denise Chávez:

In reality, we *sucias* are all professionals. We're not meek maids. Or chacha-hookers. We're not silent little women praying to the Virgin of Guadalupe with lace mantillas on our heads. We're not even like those downtrodden chicks in the novels of those old-school Chicana writers, you know the ones; they wait tables and watch old Mexican movies in decrepit downtown theaters. . . . their Wal-Mart polyester pants smell like tamales and they *always* feel sad because some idiot in a plaid cowboy shirt is drunk again and singing José Alfredo Jiménez songs. (11)

Where she was careful to explain the pun on the intertext of *The Buena Vista Social Club*, here she assumes that readers will be familiar with the Chicana intertexts to which she alludes without naming them.

In another example of a linguistic spectacle of ethnicity, Valdes-Rodriguez again makes fun of Chicano culture, parodying the discourse of the character Amber, a California Chicana who changes her name to Cuicatl

and breaks into the mainstream music scene as a *Mexica* singer. Her utterance is dominated by common Spanish obscenities and insults:

After the first song, I grab the postcards and address the crowd in Spanish: “*Chingazos! Chingazos!*” They go crazy. “Listen to me *chingazos*. Did you see Shakira lately?” Everyone boos. “That’s right. She’s a *pinche* disgrace. Blond hair. She’s a disgrace to La Raza and La Causa.” . . . I throw the postcards out and they float down into the sea of brown hands. “They’re addressed to her manager, *bijos de puta!* We’re telling them we don’t want this kind of representation.” . . . Then they start to chant “*Que Shaki se joda, que Shaki se joda.*” . . . Cheers. “Love yourself. Love your brown Aztec self, Raza!” (95)

Here the Cuban American writer employs parody to create ethnic spectacularity at the expense of Chicanos. While Valdes-Rodriguez seeks to debunk stereotypes about Latinos, she sometimes employs them to create humor and to make the book a more desirable postmodern commodity.

Narrative Strategies of Historiographic Metafiction and Chica Lit

Clement Greenberg has argued that kitsch erases any discontinuity between art and life; people recognize images the way they would recognize them in the outside world, without estrangement. In kitsch, he contends, identifications are immediately self-evident to spectators, without any effort on their part. The work of art tells the story directly. The avant-garde, in contrast, demands reflection at a second remove; values are not immediately present in the artwork but must be projected into it by the spectator. If art is the process of imitation, kitsch is the effect of imitation. Greenberg argues against the value of kitsch in favor of multilayered culture with its infinity of aspects, its luxuriance, and its comprehension. I argue, in contrast, that *ostranenie* occurs in kitsch texts such as chica lit because of narrative descriptions that present reality at times with awe or distance. The parodic descriptions of Chicano nationalism cited above constitute one such example.

Without doubt, *The Dirty Girls Social Club* requires less effort from readers than does *Caramelo*. Chica lit writers point to their editors’ emphases on compression, directness, and a small number of characters so that readers can consume the book quickly. Writers must compress and

omit to enhance narrative flow; publishers hope consumers will rapidly read through one book and then buy another right away. Chica lit avoids the layering and nuance of more sophisticated postmodernist fiction. Greenberg points to the rise of universal literacy as a condition of possibility of the development of kitsch, along with people having more leisure time to read. In the advanced consumer society, seventy years after he offered these observations, the leisure time of the First World reading public has more demands than ever put upon it. A novel such as *Caramelo* might be expected to face a more restricted readership because of its length, complexity, and the time commitment necessary to consume it. Commercially, Valdes-Rodriguez's book, which had sold 430,000 copies as of late September 2007, may be more successful than Cisneros's because the latter does not constrain itself formally to market ends.⁸ Sales rankings on Amazon.com in October 2007 tell a different story, however. Valdes-Rodriguez's paperback ranked 30,834th, while Cisneros's was ahead at 21,090th. Apparently *Caramelo* at that time had more staying power in the market, at least for consumers at Amazon.⁹ Theorists such as Jameson and Greenberg may be correct about the richness, multilayering, infinity of aspects, and luxuriance of high culture.

The speed with which readers can consume *The Dirty Girls Social Club* parallels the book's diegetic flow, which transpires in six months. The novel cycles through successive first-person accounts by six college friends who get together twice every year after graduation. They offer readers advice drawn from life experiences that increasingly resemble those in soap operas. In changing order, their stories are serialized in three segments, bracketed at the beginning and end by two framing narratives from the authorial persona, Lauren. A successful journalist, Lauren writes feature newspaper columns, excerpts of which precede each character's story as sometimes lengthy epigraphs. Unlike such paratextual material in historiographic metafiction, these epigraphs do not function as what Linda Hutcheon calls "hermeneutic disruptions" (84) of the narrative. Written by the compiling narrator and representing the authorial voice, they seem to cause no more interruption than does glancing at an ad while reading a newspaper story. The internal serialization of the six women's stories creates desire to continue reading through all three segments to learn the outcomes. Most resolutions involve finding the right man or partner, marriage, or escaping an abusive relationship.

Valdes-Rodriguez's characters offer readers what Lisa Zunshine terms a variety of opportunities to try on mental states that seem potentially

available to them but different from their own. How would it be to lead the glamorous life of a columnist for a major city newspaper or to be a Chicana rock star? What mental processes might you go through if you were a talented professional writer and unexpectedly found yourself attracted to a Dominican drug dealer? Would you put the best face on your husband's brutal attack, as Sara does, arguing that her husband was trying to hug her when she fell down the stairs and did not in fact push her? The variety of vicarious identities available to readers lets them try out behaviors, lifestyles, and mental states without suffering the real consequences of such activities. As with free samples of food in a store, one can dabble in certain tastes without committing fully to them. In another instance of this phenomenon, the cover of Caridad Piñero's *South Beach Chicas Catch Their Man* shows the backs of four slender women in evening attire sitting on barstools, images readers can emulate so that they, too, can vicariously "catch their man" when reading the book.

As Suzanne Keen has argued, the creation of empathy for characters is one key strategy of attracting wider audiences to novels. She notes that "novels inviting empathy do better in the marketplace . . . [and] empathetic reading habits make up a core element of middlebrow readers' self-image" (*Empathy* 104). Both Valdes-Rodriguez and Cisneros create characters that evoke empathy, but Valdes-Rodriguez utilizes this strategy more frequently and with fewer stylistic elaborations that impede empathetic identification. Scenes of the hardships that the father in *Caramelo* experienced, such as needing to soak his hands in water while eating dinner after his hard work as an upholsterer, parallel classic examples of empathetic evocation in *The Dirty Girls Social Club*. The latter novel invites readers to empathize with figures such as the successful-yet-persecuted black Latina lesbian Elizabeth and the Dominican drug dealer Amaury, who struggles to support his family and, in contrast to expectations, is a well-read lover of literature. Because Elizabeth has visited Sara at home, Sara's lawyer husband, Roberto, kicks and beats her, causing a miscarriage and leaving her hospitalized with tubes connected to her body. Valdes-Rodriguez also develops many occasions for positive empathetic reaction to characters involving happiness, pleasure, and satisfaction. For example, even though the novel pokes fun at the character Amber, it allows readerly empathetic identification with her in various first-person passages: "Our bedroom is paradise. We have a king-sized futon on the floor covered with beautiful pillows from all over the world. . . . He is gentle with me, tender, open, loving. . . . Gato is the first man I have known who smiles while making love" (99).

The Dirty Girls Social Club deploys all three modes of empathy that Keen delineates: bounded strategic empathy, which involves in-group feelings of mutuality for familiar others; ambassadorial strategic empathy, which addresses out-group readers to evoke empathy for members of an in-group; and broadcast strategic empathy, which aims to draw every reader to feel empathy for a group by emphasizing common vulnerabilities and hopes. Frequently in the novel Valdes-Rodriguez addresses other Latinas as members of an in-group who share a common culture or who might be convinced to share her particular ideas about Latinos and Latino culture. At the same time, Valdes-Rodriguez is a Latina ambassador who tries to evoke empathy in non-Latino readers for her in-group of Latinas. The author also evokes broadcast strategic empathy by emphasizing the differences among the group of women, which allows a variety of points of identification for various readers; the desired result is a sense that all have common vulnerabilities and hopes.

Valdes-Rodriguez also aims to attract readers with the utopian theme of group friendship that withstands geographic and temporal distance, personality differences, and the vicissitudes of contemporary life. The members of the group are all economically successful Latina women in diverse careers and with several subethnic and racial backgrounds, offering readers from different economic and ethnic backgrounds utopian models with which to identify and through which to experience pleasure. Valdes-Rodriguez consciously markets this utopian theme of community as she breaks down the borders between life, fictional representation, and cyberspace. She notes that she uses cyberspace in an attempt to further the group-of-friends theme that worked so well in the novel. She has created an Internet group of “reader-friends” who in late 2007 numbered 600 and have sent over 80,000 e-mail messages. This Yahoo group of *sucias* converse with one another and even give the author advice on projected novels. She sent three prospective novel scenarios to the group, and they chose her least favorite one for her next novel. Market-driven, she will comply with the group’s preference.¹⁰ We can compare her attempt to erase the boundary between fiction and life in cyberspace to historiographic metafiction’s blurring of the boundary between fiction and the documentary.

Plagiarism, parody, and pastiche are noted narrative strategies of post-modernist fiction. Jameson argues that pastiche replaces parody in the commodified texts of late capitalism. While Valdes-Rodriguez engages in some parody in the novel, she also employs pastiche and even perhaps unconscious plagiarism. With her character “Usnavys,” so named be-

cause the woman's parents deeply esteemed the U.S. Navy, she in effect quotes without attribution the title of the Puerto Rican author Pedro Juan Soto's *Usmail*, in which the parents of the eponymous character name him after the U.S. mail truck that always had something important to deliver. She quotes Sandra Cisneros with the phrase "man-man" (207), again without attribution, and repeats the common instant-message phrase "laugh out loud" again and again as the novel ends. She does not engage in historiographic metafiction's technique of "metaplagiarism," in which the author deliberately plagiarizes and denounces him- or herself subtly to readers, inviting them to discover the stolen intertext (see McCracken, "Metaplagiarism").

In contrast to the entertaining, fast-flowing *Dirty Girls Social Club*, *Caramelo* combines the carefully honed language of Cisneros's earlier poems and short stories with the discursive length and vision of an epic saga. On one level, *Caramelo* is an expansion of Cisneros's earlier stories "Mericans" and "Tepeyac," about her paternal grandparents in Mexico City, from *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*, and "Papa Who Wakes up Tired in the Dark," from *The House on Mango Street*. The novel extends these snapshot narratives of her grandparents and father into longer biographical texts and intertwines them with the stories of three generations of the family on both sides of the border. Wishing to pay tribute to her father and his immigrant generation, Cisneros discovered that his story was interconnected with many others. Narrative tributaries and imbricated layers continued to evolve as she combined fiction, family lore, and historical research to imaginatively re-create the milieu of her father's generation. The multiple, complicated layers of the story and the sense that her audience is not well-versed in the history and customs of Mexico and Mexican Americans led Cisneros to innovative narrative techniques, such as lengthy footnotes in most chapters and even footnotes to footnotes. These narrative devices would not be tolerated in commercial chica lit.

The story of the Reyes clan, loosely based on Cisneros's own family history, is the excavation project of Celaya Reyes, who attempts to uncover the repressed secrets of both her family and the larger historical master narrative. The "awful grandmother," previously portrayed in *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* and now given the dignity of a name, Soledad Reyes, is a contradictory figure who takes a hand in telling the involved story of her life. The stories of Celaya's father, grandparents, and mother are situated within both the broad sweep and the everyday minutiae of Mexican and U.S. history. Cisneros recounts

poignant scenes of the father, Inocencio Reyes; in one, he soaks his hands in bowls of water while eating dinner after working all day as an upholsterer, and in another, involving an immigration raid, he is asked to prove his citizenship after having risked his life by fighting for the United States in World War II. Strong political and humanist images such as these are woven together with forgotten mass-cultural figures such as the Spanish ventriloquist Wenceslao Moreno, who appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show and who meets Inocencio in a Chicago police station holding tank. Although Celaya promises her dying father that she will not reveal the family secrets he has told her, she is compelled to tell the family story (both truthfully and fictitiously) in the novel *Caramelo*.

Among the novel's numerous postmodern strategies is the narrator's dialogue with the character representing her grandmother, Soledad, who participates in telling her story and sometimes complains about the way it is told. In Chapter 25 the power relationship briefly changes, and Soledad temporarily takes over telling her own story. Reminding readers that they are reading a fictive construct, not an unmediated version of reality, the narrator, Celaya, accepts a certain degree of participation from her character but insists on her own ultimate control of the narrative. Ethnicity often overlays these postmodern strategies. Beginning with childhood memories of her extended family's long summer drives to Mexico in a nationalistic caravan of red, white, and green cars, the nomad Celaya digs back into her family's history in an attempt to recapture the country for which she is homesick but that in fact never really existed: "A country I invented. Like all emigrants caught between here and there" (434). Named after a Mexican city, Celaya weaves thousands of elements of Mexican culture and history in this *caramelo*-colored rebozo of a story, the final unfinished knots of which are tied by the characters' tales. Like the rebozo, the *caramelo*-colored skin of the mysterious, exiled figure Candelaria is a key element of the spectacle of ethnicity that Celaya tries to recapture.

The double figure of Celaya/Cisneros is an ethnographer of her communities on both sides of the border, frequently presenting the images of ethnicity she deploys in telling the story as spectacles. Many of the over one hundred footnotes in the novel and the entries in the chronology are ethnographic counternarratives that correct mistakes and fill in the gaps in the master narratives of U.S. and Mexican history. Cisneros rescues little-known cultural, historical, and political facts in her alternative documentation. "The marvelous Café Tacuba on Tacuba, number 28, still operates today, serving traditional Mexican fare, includ-

ing Mexican candy desserts hard to find anywhere else in the capital, though I always ask for the same thing—the tamales and hot chocolate. Señor Jesús Sánchez, of Oscar Lewis fame, once worked there as a bus-boy” (275). The entry for 1994 in the chronology at the end of the novel reads: “Zapata is not dead, but rises up again in Chiapas” (438). These forms of documentary hybrid ethnicity directed both to insiders and to outsiders—although qualitatively different from the spectacular visual displays in Cisneros’s clothing, tattoos, and house color—function, as do the displays, to recover ethnic memory for the Mexican Americans whose parents and grandparents endured emigration and exile.

Cisneros’s use of scholarly devices—namely, footnotes and a chronology—to document elements of her narrative of ethnic memory and identity draws us once again into the postmodern nature of her fictional enterprise. Such techniques situate readers not only in the liminal space between genres but also in that between fiction and truth, invention and documentation. In postmodernist fashion, Cisneros breaks down the borders between genres by merging techniques of scholarly documentation with techniques of fiction. This collapse is central to the novel’s desire to call into question the stable distinction between fact and fiction. In so doing, however, Cisneros in effect undermines her ethnographic authority at the same time that she displays it.

One of the novel’s central epistemological issues consists in destabilizing the fixed dichotomy of truth and lies, or history as opposed to fiction. From the outset Cisneros disrupts these comfortable distinctions, telling readers in the “Disclaimer” in the front matter that the book is “puro cuento” (pure invention): “The truth is, these stories are nothing but story. . . . I have invented what I do not know and exaggerated what I do to continue the family tradition of telling healthy lies. If, in the course of my inventing, I have inadvertently stumbled on the truth, *perdónenme*” (n.p.). Cisneros celebrates the postmodern erosion of the border between fact and fiction and the questioning of fixed notions of truth.

Audiences who read *Caramelo* can never be certain whether they are reading facts about Cisneros and her family or imaginative inventions. Playfully insisting that we remain in this uncertain liminal space, Cisneros protects her family’s private lives from public exposure yet at the same time reveals and preserves their stories for posterity. She invites readers to question the ostensible objectivity and truth of historical documents by coming to terms with the subjectivity and fictionality of such records.

But just as Cisneros has it both ways with respect to her family's story—ostensibly recounting certain “truths” about their lives but also denying having done so beneath the disclaimer that the book is “puro cuento”—so too does she undermine her role as an ethnographer who tells the “truth” about a culture. Again she wishes to have it both ways: providing information about the culture she wishes to retrieve and spectacularly displaying it yet at the same time insisting that readers remain uncertain in postmodernist fashion about the reliability of the information she presents. Narrated within this liminal space between truth and fiction, second-degree ethnicity functions as ethnic trouble. “Authentic” ethnicity questions and destabilizes itself.

These two books constitute examples of postmodernist Latina fiction; one is shaped by a strong form of commercialism, and the other, by an attenuated one, but both must be understood as elements of a cultural continuum that has been evolving since the movements of ethnic and gender liberation emerged in the late 1960s. Both populist and hegemonic multiculturalism are negotiated to varying degrees in these novels as the writers engage in performative ethnicity and other semiotic strategies. Their narrative strategies reveal that although tropes, images, language, and audiences are sometimes shared, the border between high and mass culture has not been completely effaced. Each novel contributes in its own way to the innovative narrative production of Latinas in the “post-Chicano movement” period.

Notes

1. For further discussion of these two forms of multiculturalism and an analysis of some of the images on the covers of Latina fiction, see McCracken, *New Latina Narrative* 11–33.

2. Panel discussion with Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez, Santa Barbara Book and Author Festival, Sept. 29, 2007.

3. To view some of these images, see <http://images.google.com/images?q=sandra+cisneros&ie=ISO-8859-1&chl=en>. “Ay, tu” is an expression of love or longing for another, translated as “Oh, you.” Expressed with another intention, it can be a reprimand.

4. See the photo by Vincent Laforet accompanying Mireya Navarro's article “Telling a Tale of Immigrants Whose Stories Go Untold,” *New York Times*, Nov. 2, 2003.

5. Qtd. in “Literary San Antonio.” Many articles and documents about the controversy are reproduced in Feldman, Downs, and McManus 300–326.

6. Panel discussion with Valdes-Rodriguez, Sept. 29, 2007. In August 2008, however, the author announced on her blog that she was beginning revisions on

her upcoming novel “The Husband Habit,” calling it, “the first chick-lit novel I write where the ethnicity and/or race of the lead characters is ambiguous and unimportant to the story. . . . I’m not saying Vanessa *isn’t* Latina; I’m just not saying she *is*, either. She is just Vanessa, every-woman, an American chef. . . . I have doubts as to how much of Vanessa’s days would be filled with ponderous questions of ethnic identity, if indeed she even had one” (“Knee-Deep”). Here the author attempts to have it both ways with respect to ethnicity—the character could or could not be Latina—and through this ambiguity to extricate herself from her publisher’s insistence that she focus on Latina ethnicity because this formula sells well.

7. “What are you trying to hide? Why are you so cruel to me? You love to make me suffer. Why do you humiliate me?”

8. Valdes-Rodriguez provided these sales figures for the book at the Santa Barbara Book and Author Festival, Sept. 29, 2007.

9. This difference in sales rank on Amazon could be attributed to socioeconomic factors, because readers need access to a computer and a credit card to purchase books through Amazon.

10. Panel discussion with Valdes-Rodriguez, Sept. 29, 2007. In late August 2008, her webpage tally was 313,433 hits.

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CHAPTER 12

Initiating Dialogue: Narrative Beginnings in Multicultural Narratives

CATHERINE ROMAGNOLO

According to Edward Said in his seminal study *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, “we can regard a beginning as the point at which, in a given work, the writer departs from all other works.” Beginnings, he argues, “immediately establish relationships with works already existing, relationships of either continuity or antagonism or some mixture of both” (3). They “represent the first step in the intentional production of meaning” (5). Along with endings, beginnings, as Homi Bhabha states in *The Location of Culture*, have represented “the sustaining myths” of our culture (1).¹ Implicit in both these studies is an understanding of beginnings as integral to comprehending how narratives construct knowledge, history, subjectivity, and identity. Historically, beginnings have often evoked authority, tradition, and filiation, all ideas on which the narratives of patriarchy, racism, and nationalism have heavily relied. It is not surprising, then, that the concepts of beginnings and origins are often central to the theorization of cultural identity formation in critical as well as literary texts. This centrality compels us to explore the ways writers utilize both formal and conceptual beginnings as mechanisms through which to critique conventional constructions of cultural identity.

Although several critics have established the importance of beginnings, they have yet to excavate the links between the ways narratives *begin* (formal beginnings) and the ways they *address the concept of beginning* (conceptual beginnings). Edward Said examines beginnings as an ideological construct, but he does not consider narrative form. Other critics offer formalist readings while consistently overlooking the implications of beginnings in relation to race, gender, and cultural identity formation.² Interestingly, these critical elisions persist even though

many writers foreground both types of beginnings in their narratives. Texts such as Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, and Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, to name just a few, highlight the interwoven signification of conceptual and formal beginnings. Moreover, cultural nationalist, post-colonial, minority, and feminist discourses have all brought scholarly attention to the problems with and importance of conceptual beginnings in relation to discussions of subjectivity, identity, and nation formation. Theorists such as Lisa Lowe, Homi Bhabha, and Gloria Anzaldúa have examined how the centrality of beginnings and origins in the construction of national and individual identity can restrict us to exclusionary, indeed, racist conceptions of subjectivity. They stress the need to consider the conceptualization of beginnings and origins in narrative so we can "think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and . . . focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (Bhabha 3). This attention to the conceptualization of beginnings, common among scholars in ethnic studies, American studies, and the study of race theory, can productively be extended to the work on formal narrative beginnings undertaken by scholars of narrative theory.

Theorizing Beginnings: A New Model

Connecting formal and conceptual beginnings in narrative demands a theoretical framework. Theorists such as Gerald Prince, A. D. Nuttall, and James Phelan have defined narrative beginnings in various useful ways. Echoing Aristotle's definition, Prince, for example, defines beginnings as "the incident[s] initiating the process of change in a plot or action . . . not necessarily follow[ing] but . . . necessarily followed by other incidents" (*Dictionary* 10). Nuttall, however, narrowing his discussion to the opening lines and pages of a narrative text, investigates the "tensions which exist between the formal freedom to begin a work of fiction wherever one likes and an opposite sense that all good openings are somehow naturally rooted, are echoes, more or less remote, of an original creative act" (vii–viii). And Phelan identifies a beginning as "that which generates the progression of the narrative by introducing unstable relationships between characters . . . or between implied author and reader or narrator and reader" ("Beginnings and Endings" 97). Unlike other critics, Phelan points out that beginnings "involve more than

igniting the engine that drives the plot. They provide exposition about character and setting, they invite readers to move from the world outside the novel to the world of the novel, and they establish relationships among authors, narrators, and audience.” To account for these multiple functions, Phelan breaks his understanding of beginnings into four separate categories: exposition, initiation, launch, and entrance (97). These categories go far beyond other theories in their ability to encompass the functions of beginnings in narrative. And yet, no theory has been able to yield a discussion of the many ideological functions beginnings serve on different levels of narrative.³

In this essay, then, I attempt to identify more fully the many ideological and formal functions beginnings play. I hope to facilitate an exploration of the relationships among beginnings, chronology, causality, and theme and, most important, to foster a discussion of the many ideological functions beginnings can serve within narratives. For, as Meir Sternberg implies in his study of exposition, it is essential that we maintain an awareness of multiple textual levels when we are examining beginnings.

To this end, I will examine the category of *formal* beginnings (which I break into three subdivisions: discursive, chronological, and causal beginnings) as it connects to and overlaps with the category of *conceptual* beginnings. I will discuss three texts to exemplify the usefulness of my model as a lens through which to view narratives that explore beginnings as essential to the cultural work they perform. Specifically, I will refer briefly to Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*—a relatively linear narrative—in an effort to clarify and illustrate my categories and to Julia Alvarez’s *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* to suggest the usefulness of my model for understanding more complex formal strategies.

Formal Beginnings

Discursive Beginnings (Openings: The Beginning of a Text or a Chapter)

Discursive beginnings belong to the discourse level of narrative; therefore, they are determined by *how* the story is presented but are not part of the story itself. The category of discursive beginnings, most often referred to as “openings,” encompasses what Sternberg refers to as the “beginning of the subject,” or the opening lines or pages of a narrative text, which I call its primary opening. It also includes what I call second-

ary openings—the opening pages or lines of chapters and section breaks (Sternberg 10). The primary opening of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, for example, encompasses the well-known first line, “Ships at a distance have every man’s wish on board,” and the opening pages of the text in which, Hurston’s narrator tells us, “a woman [Janie] . . . had come back from burying the dead” (1). The secondary openings of *Their Eyes* include the beginning lines and pages of all twenty chapters.

Distinguishing this category of discursive beginnings from other beginnings provides us important terminology to discuss what can be called “opening strategies.” Specifically, this categorization helps facilitate a critical emphasis on opening narrative techniques such as frame stories (as we see in Hurston), repetition, deferral, and revisionist myth-making, which contribute to the cultural work of many multicultural narratives. For example, a critical focus on discursive beginnings allows us to see how Julia Alvarez strategically uses the primary opening of her text to undermine the cultural mythology that surrounds notions of home, family, and nation.

Narrative beginnings, especially *discursive beginnings*, evoke a sense of possibility. As Norman Springer and other critics suggest, however, beginnings seem to be intrinsically bound by limiting those possibilities. That is, once a text begins, each narrative step taken necessitates a closing-off, an end, to innumerable pathways. Further, J. Hillis Miller asserts that these possibilities are also limited by that which has come before: “The paradox of beginning is that one must have something solidly present and preexistent, some generative source or authority, on which the development of a new story may be based. That antecedent foundation needs in its turn some prior foundation, in an infinite regress” (57). This recessiveness, Miller implies, is inherent to the notion of beginning in narrative, making it “impossible” for one truly “to begin” and destabilizing notions of authority often adherent to beginnings (57).

In *Garcia Girls* Alvarez taps into and exploits this instability. By strategically utilizing the form of her narrative to foreground the recessive nature of beginnings and origins, Alvarez mirrors the struggle of her central character, Yolanda, as a “border woman.” Gloria Anzaldúa defines a border woman as one who straddles the “psychological . . . , sexual . . . , and spiritual” space where “two or more cultures edge each other” (v). Yolanda’s unstable “border-woman” status sparks her desire to recover an originary moment of stability that continually recedes from her grasp. Alvarez’s novel, however, does not merely “cover over” the “impossibility of getting started,” as Miller asserts all narratives do “in

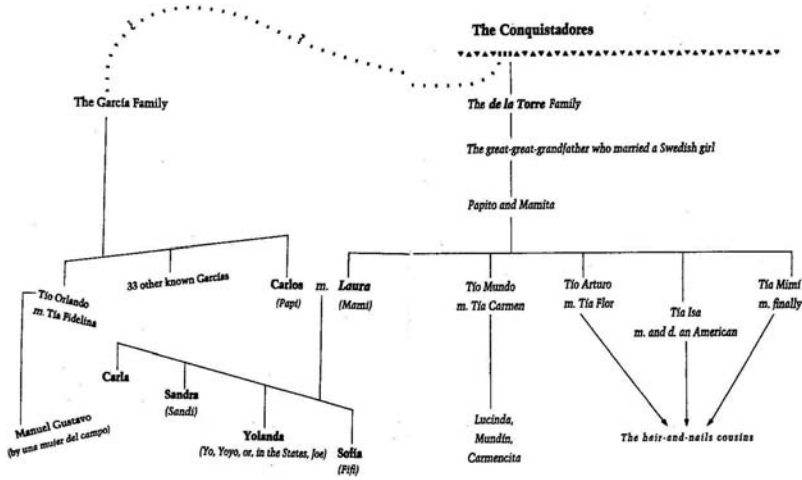


Figure 12.1. Garcia Family Tree (from Julia Alvarez, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*)

one way or another.” Through both form and content, Alvarez’s novel attempts to highlight rather than to cover this “gap, [this] absence at the origin” (Miller 58). In emphasizing the formal and conceptual instability of beginnings, Alvarez illustrates the specificity of her Dominican character’s relation to notions of origin and beginning. The depiction of Yolanda as a border woman is foregrounded by an image of a Garcia family tree, which acts as a synecdoche for the themes in the rest of the novel (see Fig. 12.1).

Classically, a family tree represents a quintessential symbol of a search for origins. But while this graphic might initially seem an attempt to pin down the definitive lineage of the four Garcia sisters, the tree is punctuated by question marks, a dotted line, and vague references to long-lost relatives. These elements begin to destabilize traditional immigration paradigms, which rely on notions of definitive cultural origins and concrete new beginnings. They begin interrogating the concept of an either/or identity, raising questions concerning how individual identity is constructed, how it is connected to familial and cultural origins, and whether these origins define who we are.

Through the structural positioning of this image, Alvarez begins to emphasize the instability of origins and identity. At the opening of her novel, where we might expect her to begin narrowing the scope of her characters through dichotomous choices, one finds instead an unstable

beginning that, instead of serving to better define her characters, places their histories and identities—their stories—into flux and raises as many questions as it answers. The family tree represents Yolanda's past, which she desperately seeks to recover and understand. But instead of clarifying who she is, it signifies the fragmentary, recessive nature of her origins and the polyvocality of Alvarez's beginnings.

Similarly, a focus on the discursive beginnings of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* facilitates an analysis of its complex circular structure, one that Morrison utilizes to indicate the multiperspectival, fragmented nature of history and storytelling. As Yvonne Atkinson points out, the opening line of the first chapter of *Beloved*, "124 was spiteful," is unindented. Interpreting this as Morrison's signal of a story already in progress, she traces *Beloved*'s roots to the oral tradition of storytelling (248). This opening also suggests the circularity of Morrison's writing in this novel: the opening line is merely a break in a circular story.

Morrison has said that she meant the opening of *Beloved* to be abrupt, to mimic the violent shifts in the middle-passage experience: "No native informant here. The reader is snatched, yanked, thrown into an environment completely foreign, and I want it as the first stroke of the shared experience that might be possible between the reader and the novel's population. Snatched just as the slaves were from one place to another . . . without preparation and without defense" ("Unspeakable Things" 229). This opening effect is perpetuated throughout the novel in a style of writing that can easily be described as disorienting. For example, the narrator offers the reader a piece of information from the past, a fragment of memory that represents a flashback for Sethe and foreshadowing for the reader: "and there it was again. The welcoming cool of unchiseled headstones; the one she selected to lean against on tiptoe, her knees wide open as any grave" (4). When we read this for the first time, we are in a sense lost. Morrison provides just enough to disorient us; a more fully elaborated, albeit fragmented, explanation of the way in which Sethe was forced to procure a headstone for her baby daughter's grave is spread over the next several pages and chapters. Morrison utilizes this style of narration repeatedly throughout *Beloved*. Continually reinvoking the sense of abruptness and disorientation of the novel's opening, she creates innumerable reopenings, places where the reader is once again thrown back to the beginning, back to a moment of ignorance about the narrative to be told. As unsettling as this style of narration is for the reader, so are the memories that Sethe and Paul D uncover throughout the novel. Morrison's style of storytelling reflects

not only the origins of the middle-passage slave trade but also the process of “rememory” that her characters must go through after slavery in order to find healing.

Chronological Beginnings (the Beginning of the Story)

Chronological beginnings are the earliest diegetic moments in a narrative (i.e., those existing on the story or fabula level of the text). This type of beginning is most closely aligned with what Sternberg calls the “beginning of the fabula” (10). As he implies, it is both useful and theoretically precise to distinguish this type of beginning from discursive beginnings, especially since often the two do not coincide. In *Their Eyes*, for example, the text *opens* with Janie returning to Eatonville from the Everglades after surviving a hurricane and the death of her third husband, Tea Cake. This is not, however, the *chronological beginning* of the narrative. In fact, the next chapter flashes back to Janie’s early childhood, when she lived with her grandmother in the backyard of her white employers. Janie identifies this as the moment when she discovered that she “wuzn’t white.” We might easily view this scene as the earliest diegetic moment, the chronological beginning of Hurston’s narrative. Our focus on beginnings, however, allows us also to note that Janie’s embedded narrative, the story she tells to her friend Phoebe, opens here as well. Therefore, this scene constitutes not only the chronological beginning of Hurston’s narrative but also both the primary discursive beginning and chronological beginning of Janie’s embedded narrative. This analysis ties the two narratives together in important formal ways. It notes the important connections between the two narratives while simultaneously stressing their distinctness, observations that are key to discussions of the development of Janie’s voice.

In any text, but especially in modern and postmodern narratives, chronological beginnings are particularly important to narrative negotiations with linear notions of history and time. For example, the circular temporal structure of Morrison’s *Beloved* allows multiple textual moments to represent plausible chronological beginnings. Although these multiple choices make it difficult to identify the earliest moment in the narrative, the complex presentation of chronological beginnings and temporality contributes to the work of the text by signifying an oppositional view of history that challenges authorized stories and deconstructs master narratives. On the first reading, one might be tempted to see 1855 as the story’s chronological beginning. Similarly, the scene

of the middle passage, narrated in *Beloved*'s soliloquy at the end of the text, might also be seen as the earliest narrated moment in the text:

I am always crouching the man on my face is dead his face is not mine his mouth smells sweet but his eyes are locked some who eat nasty themselves I do not eat the men without skin bring us their morning water to drink we have none at night I cannot see the dead man on my face daylight comes through the cracks and I can see his locked eyes I am not big small rats do not wait for us to sleep someone is thrashing but there is no room to do it in if we had more to drink we could make tears we cannot make sweat or morning water so the men without skin bring us theirs one time they bring us sweet rocks to suck we are all trying to leave our bodies behind the man on my face has done it. (210; Morrison's spacing)

But because of the way Morrison constructs *Beloved*'s character—as an amalgam of Sethe's dead child, a refugee slave, and a survivor of the middle passage, as well as a metaphor for all the “disremembered”—her death (the death of Sethe's baby), which takes place in 1855, and the middle-passage scenes occur simultaneously in the novel. As *Beloved*'s monologue illustrates, they are indistinguishable from each other. Both Sethe and Denver believe that *Beloved* is narrating her “afterlife” experience. The reader, however, will likely recognize that this passage also signifies the experience of the middle passage.

Further complicating a chronological analysis is the fact that Sethe's experiences at Sweet Home happen before the death of her baby, making their temporal relationship to the middle-passage scenes ambiguous. It is thus virtually impossible, according to the logic of the story, to reconstruct a linear timeline out of these events. This complexity might easily be read as a comment on the inaccessibility of the past, but we must not overlook the more significant point here: for Morrison, the impact of beginnings, of history, is “now”; as *Beloved*'s monologue states, “[a]ll of it is now It is always now” (210; author's spacing). Morrison's use of chronological beginnings, then, expresses a timelessness, a “no-time,” to use Sethe's words, that makes manifest the importance of the past, particularly slavery, to the present (191). At the same time, the novel stresses that living in the past is equally as destructive as forgetting it. Sethe vacillates between dwelling in the past (“But her brain was not interested in the future. Loaded with the past and hungry for more, it left her no room to imagine, let alone plan for, the next day”) and living

as if “wrapped in a timeless present” where she can completely forget her painful history (70, 184). Morrison, utilizing the chronological beginnings of her narrative, argues for an alternative to this binary. She asserts that the past must be reckoned with but not allowed to direct the future.

Similarly, by reversing the chronology of *Garcia Girls*, Alvarez places the chronological beginning of her narrative at the end of her text. This reversal breaks with traditional sequential narrative, undermining a sense of history as progress and implying a more complex understanding of the relationship between history and individual and cultural identities. Alvarez’s narrative is broken into three major sections that are organized in reverse chronology, each opening on a new period of time: section 1 runs from 1989 to 1972; section 2, from 1970 to 1960; and section 3, from 1960 to 1956. The text opens with Yolanda’s visit to the Dominican Republic after nearly three decades of living in the United States (the chronological ending) and recedes toward the closing, in which the four young sisters are preparing to immigrate to the United States from the Dominican Republic (the chronological beginning). Connecting this inversion, a common technique in modern and contemporary narratives, to the novel’s concern with individual and collective histories illuminates Alvarez’s understanding of the ways these histories, these origins, always escape our grasp, continually receding from the wholeness they are supposed to provide. This recession opens a space for a complex understanding of the relationships between events in our histories and the development of individual and cultural identities.

We may also view the fact that the narrative opens and closes at the geographic “origins” of the Garcia family—the Dominican Republic—as illustrative of a certain circularity to the process of immigration. This paradigm revises a narrative of linear progression from Dominican to American, where assimilation to the United States is the presumed goal. It undermines a popular myth surrounding immigration to “America,” where the United States necessarily implies individual and cultural progress. It opens the way for the novel to thematize how racialization and class structures in the United States prevent the full inclusion of Latina subjects. Additionally, this circular structure implies an unbreakable, nonhierarchical connection between Yolanda’s U.S. identity and her Dominican identity.

While a more linear narrative structure might imply a binary relationship between Yolanda’s cultural and national beginnings, *Garcia Girls* depicts a more indeterminate relation from which U.S. imperialism is

never absent. Neither nation, therefore, is allowed structurally to stand in as a goal or as an authentic cultural origin to which the characters return to reestablish wholeness. In this way, Alvarez reinscribes her critique of U.S. imperialism as well as her interrogation of Dominican class, racial, and gender inequalities in the form of her narrative. As the content of the novel critiques the social conditions of each culture, the form offers an alternative to the binary construction of U.S. versus Dominican identity; the circular structure forges an alternative subjectivity with connection to both cultures.

Causal Beginnings (the Beginning of the Plot)

Causal beginnings are catalytic narrative moments. Like Prince's "beginning," or Gustav Freytag's "exciting force," these beginnings belong to the aspect of narrative most often delineated as *plot*, a term Peter Brooks and others use to describe a causally connected series of narrative elements linked to but distinct from *story*, a term that seems most often to imply a purely chronological connection. As theorists have stressed, chronological sequence does not necessarily imply causal sequence; therefore, perhaps obviously, the chronological beginning of a narrative need not coincide with the causal beginning. Furthermore, it is equally important to stress that a causal beginning need not coincide with the opening pages of the text (primary discursive beginning), either.

As with discursive and chronological beginnings, the identification of a causal beginning is subject to reader interpretation. Consider again the example of Hurston's *Their Eyes*. We can easily determine that the moment when Janie realizes she is "not white" is the earliest narrated event, the chronological beginning of the text. However, a number of textual moments suggest themselves as the causal beginning. We might be tempted, for example, to read the causal beginning as one and the same as the chronological beginning, reasoning that Janie's recognition of her racial and social status sets into motion the driving conflict of the plot. Conversely, though, a similar argument might be made for the pear tree scene, in which Janie has her sexual awakening; her first marriage, to Logan Killicks; or the meeting of Janie and Tea Cake—each of which might validly be interpreted as the catalyst for the plot.

One might argue that the slipperiness inherent in this category makes its analytical use-value suspect. This characterization, however, elides the important role that causal beginnings inevitably play in the interpretive process. That is, the way one identifies the causal beginning of

Their Eyes reflects and perhaps even determines the way one reads the entire novel. It is, therefore, precisely the ambiguity of this category that makes it a productive critical tool.

In fact, in many oppositional texts causal beginnings have been essential to a critique of certain master narratives, such as the immigrant narrative, the marriage plot, or the slave narrative. For example, as *Be-loved*, which is often read as a slave narrative, reveals, the middle passage, whether or not it is depicted in a particular slave narrative, constitutes an implied causal beginning. The linear structure of the slave narrative—slavery, escape, freedom—is causally set into motion by a violent induction into slavery, which is symbolically embodied by the journey of the middle passage. And yet, despite its importance to the history of slavery, the horrors of the middle passage, as Morrison herself has noted, have historically resisted representation, creating a hole that Morrison seeks to fill with her own narrative about slavery:

[In *Be-loved*] the gap between Africa and Afro-America and the gap between the living and the dead and the gap between the past and the present does not exist. It's bridged for us by our assuming responsibility for people no one's ever assumed responsibility for. They are those that died en route. Nobody knows their names, and nobody thinks about them. In addition to that, they never survived the lore; there are no songs or dances or tales of these people. (*Conversations* 247)

Morrison takes these “unspeakable” moments from the middle passage and narrates them. Through the act of narration, she restores the middle passage to its important causal position in the historical narrative of slavery.

Revealed from the fragmented perspective of the character Beloved, the middle-passage scenes resist explication, intimating the historical difficulty of depicting the horrors of slavery. Significantly, only when a reader struggles through these scenes does it become possible to acknowledge the causal importance of the middle passage in Morrison's novel. The following scene, narrating how the middle-passage journey physically separated a mother from her child, suggests the corruption of familial bonds by the institution of slavery:

In the beginning I could see her I could not help her because the clouds were in the way in the beginning I could see her the shining in her ears she does not like the circle around her neck I know this I

look hard at her so she will know that the clouds are in the way I
 am sure she saw me I am looking at her see me she empties out her
 eyes. (211)

Not only does Morrison narrate a silenced historical moment here, but through that narration she indicates the way in which this horrific historical event affected the individual slave, highlighting the private effects of something often depicted only as a public atrocity.

Despite the causal importance of the middle-passage scenes, the multilayered nature of Morrison's text makes it difficult to trace a single causal narrative line. Like the character of Beloved, Morrison's story exists simultaneously on several causal levels, each level coinciding with a plane of the character Beloved's existence. This simultaneity suggests the complexity of history, the imperative to understand our past on several levels at once, and the fragmented process of creating meaning out of this past.

We can examine Alvarez's text in a similar manner. That is, if we identify the act of immigrating as the causal beginning, the catalyst, in a traditional immigrant narrative, it becomes clear that a text arranged as is *Garcia Girls* displaces this beginning. Gerald Prince, in his discussion of narrative beginnings, states that "students of narrative have emphasized that the beginning, which corresponds to the passage from quiescence, homogeneity, and indifference to irritation, heterogeneity and difference, provides narrative with a forward-looking intention" (*Dictionary* 10). Prince's sense of narrative beginning, similar to my definition of causal beginning, suggests that in a conventional immigrant narrative, the act of immigration itself might serve as the causal beginning—that is, the moment in the text when the characters pass into "heterogeneity and difference." Or, according to an alternative convention, the act of immigration might also serve as the resolution—the solution to conflicts experienced in the home country from which the characters emigrate. The Garcia family's move from the Dominican Republic to the United States, however, does not reside "naturally" (to use Sternberg's language) at the opening or even the closing of the novel; instead, Alvarez places it at the center of her text. Such a "deviation" from the "natural," "logical" presentation of narrative elements, Sternberg asserts, is "clearly an indication of artistic purpose" (33). In this case, it is also an indication of *ideological* purpose. That is, by displacing the causal beginning of a traditional immigrant narrative, Alvarez complicates typical notions of cultural origins and immigrant identity.

The first paradigm, in which the moment of immigration represents a causal beginning, might be read as a critique of U.S. racism and imperialism and as an idealization of a lost homeland, an origin that may or may not be recovered by the end of the story. The second paradigm, where the moment of immigration serves as conclusion, would likely include a period of hardship and adjustment, after which the characters would assimilate into the “melting pot” of the United States. The first situation would offer an idealized vision of the homeland, ignoring colonial and imperial domination as well as the gender, race, and class discrimination that has historically existed there. The second would be equally problematic, for it would promote an ahistorical view of U.S. imperialist involvement in the Caribbean and ignore the struggle for equality that racialized immigrants face in the United States. The novel addresses these conflicts by displacing the causal beginning of a typical immigrant story and preventing it from becoming, on the one hand, the point at which the text moves into “irritation, heterogeneity and difference” or, on the other, the point at which the text resolves these differences and irritations. Alvarez’s text asserts that this sense of difference, of alienation, is present not just in the United States but also in the Dominican Republic. It stresses the complex social conditions of both nations and questions the effects of imperial exploitation on the identities of the characters before and after they immigrate. Alvarez rejects the idea that an authentic origin is recoverable in the midst of years of imperial and colonial intervention.

The form of Alvarez’s text places the Garcia story in a more fluid global framework. The text forces recognition of the fact that, especially for female subjects, the “passage from quiescence, homogeneity, and indifference” is more complex and arduous than traditional paradigms allow. In recognizing the structural ambiguity signified by the location of the causal beginning at the center of the text, we become aware of the way *Garcia Girls* undermines a sense of the Dominican Republic as an idealized origin, of immigration to the United States as the origin of displacement and fragmentation, or of the United States as an idealized new beginning.

This immigration experience, then, instead of standing as a static origin, takes on the effect of simultaneity; that is, it proceeds in two narrative directions simultaneously. It flows from the structural center to the primary discursive beginning, narrating the time period from the family’s move to the United States to Yolanda’s return to the Dominican Republic. At the same time, it proceeds from the textual center to the

end, receding backward in time, narrating the period between the family's immigration and the sisters' childhood in the Dominican Republic. This Janus-faced narrative mirrors a borderland subjectivity—one that is simultaneously looking toward becoming “American” and continually turned away, forced to contemplate the “loss” of the title, which accompanies the cultural transition of Latin American immigration.

Conceptual Beginnings (Thematic Treatment of Beginnings)

Conceptual beginnings belong to the realm of theme, which functions on both the story and discourse levels of a narrative. That is, a theme may be conveyed equally by the way in which the story is presented and by the story itself. Conceptual beginnings, then, involve the thematic exploration, interrogation, or theorization of the concept of origins or beginnings. For example, a major theme of *Their Eyes* is the conflicted importance of origins (class, racial, familial) to individual subjectivity. This theme is primarily explored on the story level through Janie's desire both to recover an originary moment of freedom, independence, and self-possession and to escape the fatalism with which Nanny has imbued her life from its beginning. But arguably, it is explored by the novel's form, too. By opening the narrative with Janie's return to Eatonville—which might be described as her origins—Hurston structurally suggests the primacy of this concept to the cultural work she performs through her writing.

In many narratives this thematic exploration is facilitated by links between the categories of formal beginnings I have just delineated and the content of the story itself. Formal beginnings in *Garcia Girls*, for example, take on a distinctly thematic component when viewed through this lens. The story of the Garcia sisters' immigration to the United States unearths conflicts inherent in a reliance on national origins. These conflicts, however, are not only interrogated by the story itself; they are mirrored by Alvarez's strategic placement of her chronological beginning at the “end” of her text, a placement that forces the reader to rethink the implications of cultural and national identity.

Similarly, Morrison's ambivalence about beginnings is revealed not only formally, through the circular structure of plot, temporality, and discourse, but also thematically, in the content of her text. The character of Beloved illustrates perhaps most saliently the importance of the concept of beginnings to Morrison's literary negotiations with power, his-

tory, and identity. Beloved's appearance on the bank of the stream is described as a natural beginning, a birth, her body as unlined as a newborn baby's. And yet the beginning of her embodied self is conjured by the language of Sethe and Denver's séance. During an early scene in the narrative, Sethe and Denver, intent on communicating with the ghost baby, hold hands and issue an invitation for her to show herself. As if to illustrate the importance of their language, the words they utter—"Come on. Come on. You may as well just come on"—are reiterated by Beloved much later in the text: "'Now you. Come on,' said Beloved. 'You may as well just come on'" (4, 75). Beloved's entire self seems to be sustained by the language and memories of the other characters—"It became a way to feed her. Just as Denver discovered and relied on the delightful effect sweet things had on Beloved, Sethe learned the profound satisfaction Beloved got from storytelling"—and sustained by the discourse of Sethe's storytelling. These facts might be read in the light of Morrison's use of postmodern narrative techniques to suggest the mediation of all material existence, including the body, through language. And yet, as is revealed in the scene when the community convenes to cast out Beloved, Morrison also insists that there is something more primary than language, a something that can "break the back of words":

Ella hollered. Instantly the kneelers and the standers joined her. They stopped praying and took a step back to the beginning. In the beginning there were no words. In the beginning was the sound, and they all knew what that sound sounded like. . . . For Sethe it was as though the Clearing had come to her with all its heat and simmering leaves, where the voices of women searched for the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back of words. Building voice upon voice until they found it, and when they did it was a wave of sound wide enough to sound deep water and knock the pods off chestnut trees. It broke over Sethe and she trembled like the baptized in its wash. (259, 261)

Beloved is brought into existence by language, but she is exorcised by something that Morrison views as more basic, more originary than words. Morrison suggests, then, that although discourse can violently strip her characters' senses of self, they are endowed with the equal and subversive power to utilize language to construct their own senses of self, as well as the power to reach beyond or outside language, breaking its hold on them.

This combination of linguistic and prelinguistic power suggests the

origins of the power of Morrison's writing itself. Epitomizing a link between literary and oral storytelling modes, Toni Morrison's writing utilizes a circularity of form and a thematic focus on narrative beginnings to highlight the impact of narrative. As Morrison herself has said, "Narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created" ("Nobel Lecture").

As these examples illustrate, fully exploring the importance of beginnings to both reading and writing practices requires us to avoid maintaining a false dichotomy between form and content, especially since beginnings are both. The ideal critical use of the categories I have outlined here would involve a complex recognition and exploration of the ways in which the categories of formal and conceptual beginnings overlap, speak to one another, and together reveal the ideological, social, cultural, and political work of multicultural narrative texts. I hope to have begun this type of critical conversation about beginnings here.

Notes

1. Although Bhabha recognizes the ways beginnings have been important to knowledge production, he argues for a move away from this centrality.

2. See, for example, Nuttall; Kellman; and Springer—all of whom attempt to classify, delineate, and describe the functions of beginnings in narrative while overlooking their ideological functions. *Narrative Beginnings*, an anthology edited by Brian Richardson and due out from the University of Nebraska Press, promises to offer more fully fleshed-out readings.

3. Phelan's conception of narrative beginnings is limited to the material (of varying lengths) that is presented in the opening pages of a narrative. My conception attempts to more broadly account for beginnings on all levels of a narrative.

CHAPTER 13

“It’s Badly Done”: Redefining Craft **in *America Is in the Heart***

SUE-IM LEE

In my experience of teaching Carlos Bulosan’s *America Is in the Heart* (1946), a cornerstone of the Asian American literary canon, I have found that students repeatedly raise the following issues and questions. This fictional autobiography of a Filipino immigrant’s experiences in 1930s America inevitably provokes intense feelings about and a deep engagement with the history and politics of colonialism, imperialism, immigration, labor, and racial politics. Some students say they were moved to tears by the ceaseless hatred, violence, and destruction that the protagonist encounters in a deeply racist America. As the class discussion continues, however, a different evaluation gradually emerges: why is it so badly done? Why is the novel so unwieldy, with a frantic pacing that makes it hard to discern a sense of time and duration of events, a ballooning proliferation of new characters and incidents, and a mixture of realistic and unrealistic elements—all leading to the sense that the novel just isn’t *well-crafted*?

Most important, why does the narrator sound like a different person at different moments—by turns knowledgeable, reflective, and authoritative and unreflective, young, and naive? In this first-person narrative, the fluctuations in the narrator’s knowledge, attitude, and tone directly affect the solidity and the believability of his character. How can this character be so knowledgeable, tough-minded, and politically aware one moment, and so naive, immature, and optimistic at the next? How can he know something one moment and then *not* know it immediately afterward? How can he undergo some profound experience yet fail to learn from it? Don’t these inexplicable changes in the narrator mean that the author lacked craft and that the novel is badly written?

In the past, I haven’t had a satisfactory answer to this last, but most

important, question. I could have pointed to thinkers such as Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, Stephen Greenblatt, or Pierre Bourdieu, who have sought to denaturalize the category of “art” or the “literary” from its rarified, specialized status by revealing its construction through historical, material, and political concerns.¹ I could have pointed to the history of feminist and multiethnic scholarship, in which feminists and scholars of marginalized art argued that an implicitly canonical definition of “artistic excellence” has an exclusionary function with respect to works by marginalized subjects. But these answers seemed inadequate by themselves, for while they were a good basis for discussing the politics of art as it relates to ethnic minority works, they evaded an actual encounter with the question of form. Furthermore, it seemed pedagogically unproductive—if not ethically disingenuous—to advise students to avoid an analysis of form when reading ethnic minority works, especially if it leads to an unfavorable assessment. My reluctance to engage the question of form rose directly from the fact that I myself shared many of my students’ doubts about the novel’s form, leaving me unable to disagree with their assessment that this novel, though central to the Asian American literary canon, was “badly done.”

This essay is my attempt to answer some of these questions—especially the question about the novel’s “badly done” narratorial performance. For what began as a pedagogical concern, I found, directly intersected a key concern in the critical scholarship on this novel: how to understand the bewildering admixture of hope and indictment manifest in the novel’s declaration, “America is in the heart.” As E. San Juan, a leading scholar of Bulosan’s work, puts it: “How do we reconcile this stark discrepancy between reality and thought, between fact (the social wasteland called ‘United States’) and ideal (‘America,’ land of equality and prosperity)?” (“Searching” 259) The answer, I will suggest, might lie in precisely those “badly done” moments when the narrator suddenly fluctuates in knowledge, attitude, and tone.

To some extent, useful answers to the students’ questions about the novel’s unwieldy, bulky, inchoate form can be found in the works of the few scholars who have explicitly considered the issue.² Addressing the novel’s amalgam of realistic and unrealistic devices, San Juan sees a “crisis of hegemonic representation” in which the material reality facing the protagonist exceeds the representational means of any single genre convention, resulting in a mixture of “realistic style,” “picaresque naturalism,” “lyricized memories,” “memoir and autobiography,” “comic rhythm of repetition and uncanny resourcefulness,” and the “carni-

valesque" ("Searching" 263). Campomanes and Gernes similarly explain the "fractured surface" (23) of the form as directly reflecting the "ceaseless dislocation" (21) of the protagonist's experience in America. Wesling sees the improbable chance meetings of the characters and "confusing temporal framework" as "strategic" devices that highlight the discrepancy between ideal and real (71). What these critics usefully point out is that formal deviations from genre categories or literary conventions must not be automatically criticized as bad writing but instead should be analyzed in the larger context of the literary work's topical and thematic concerns.

Nevertheless, existing scholarship offers no pedagogically or theoretically satisfying explanation of the narrator's puzzling performance. The prevailing answer to the puzzle of the narrator's vagaries—sometimes historically and politically authoritative, sometimes not—is best characterized as a dramatic irony approach: that Bulosan and the readers know more than the protagonist knows. This approach is best represented in Marilyn Alquizola's essay "Subversion or Affirmation: The Text and the Subtext of *America Is in the Heart*." As her title suggests, she takes the puzzle to center on understanding the ideology of the novel; given the vastly different politics embodied in and dramatized by the first-person narrator, is the book subversive or affirming of the entity called "America"? Alquizola suggests drawing a distinction between "Bulosan, the analytical author, and Carlos, the bewildered narrator/protagonist. Bulosan, the author, is aware of glaring contradictions between American ideals and racist American reality; Carlos, the naive protagonist, expresses undying hope in an immigrant's American dream, the fulfillment of which is precluded by racism" (199). Consequent discussions about the irreconcilability of the novel's hope and criticism continue this divide, by and large. San Juan distinguishes the "naïve narrator" from the "subversive author" ("Searching" 259), and he locates the source of the divide in Bulosan's universalist and utopian tendency, evinced in "the didactic and moralizing sections where the assured authorial voice seems to compensate for the disorientation of the protagonist and the episodic plot" ("Searching" 261).³

What these approaches strive to correct is a literal understanding of the novel's title—that, in the final analysis, this is a novel of enduring hope and idealism that places America "in the heart." This assimilationist interpretation of the novel, dominant in the reviews when it appeared in 1946, continues its resonance, appearing in Elaine Kim's influential *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their*

Social Context. “*America is in the Heart* is in many ways part of that inclusive and characteristic Asian American genre of autobiography or personal history dedicated to the task of promoting good will and understanding” (47). Such an assimilationist interpretation provides the basis for scholarship that is critical of the novel’s ideology.⁴ The stakes involved in explaining the narrator’s fluctuating performance, then, are far more than formal. Scholars who identify a dramatic irony at work direct their arguments toward correcting and complicating the assimilationist interpretation of this canonical novel.

But the appeal to dramatic irony cannot answer my students’ questions: why does the first-person narrator vacillate in what he knows, how he thinks, and what he wants? Why does he seem to be a different person from one moment to the next? The appeal to dramatic irony fails because it relies on Bulosan’s biographical details and political commitments. First, Alquizola distinguishes the subversive author from the naive character/narrator because, she says, the life and writings (stories, essays, and letters) of the historical Bulosan (a socialist labor activist) refute such an affirmative vision of America: “That this [the capitalist economic apparatus] is basic knowledge to any socialist-oriented union organizer, such as Bulosan was, leads one to question the meaning and implications of the conclusion [of his novel]” (202). Second, Alquizola points to the lengthy dominance of critical passages in the novel: “Antithetical to the notion that the United States is or can be a land of equal opportunity are a plethora of textual examples of racist America, which far outnumber examples in the affirmative mode. This ratio perhaps indicates what the author’s true inclinations are” (207). Buttressed by these arguments, Alquizola suggests attributing “positive and negative responses to America” to the character/narrator and the author, respectively (208).

San Juan, too, insufficiently explains the novel’s apparent faults, for he bases his answer on matters entirely outside the novel. He points to, first, “the routine practice of authors submitting to the publisher’s market analysis of audience reception (wartime propaganda enhances a book’s salability) and, second, the convention of the romance genre in Philippine popular culture, which warrants such a formulaic closure” (“In Search” 227). Like Alquizola, he points to Bulosan’s extensive Marxist indictment of capital in his essays, editorials in labor-related publications, and letters, all of which, San Juan argues, constitute a more stable ground on which to locate the novel’s *real* political allegiance (227).

The pedagogical limitations of these answers lie in the fact that they

locate the rationale for their interpretation outside the form of the text—in the author's biographical information, the "ratio" of views put forth in the novel, or the political climate in which the novel appeared. Surely these are not principles of analysis that teachers, especially teachers of ethnic minority literature, should endorse as sustainable accounts of the way a literary text works. In basing the answer primarily on matters outside the text, the dramatic irony approach in a sense bypasses the question of craft entirely. That is, to the question of apparently "badly done" passages, the dramatic irony answer implies that the reader has to understand the narrator's "I" sometimes as the "I" of a naive character and sometimes as the "I" of the knowing, subversive historical author. Facing this explanation, students might legitimately ask, "How will I know? What are the criteria or signals for distinguishing the two?" To answer this question, we require a formal account showing how to make the distinction at the textual level—through the "how" of the text.

In the following pages I attempt to provide precisely such a formal analysis. I first explore the idea of craft, especially as it pertains to ethnic minority literature, by revisiting the well-known debate over the literary merit of one of the classics of the African American literary tradition: Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1939). In examining this debate, I highlight the strategies by which scholars of *Native Son* recuperate the novel from the evaluation that it, too, is badly done. Most important, I draw a theory of *self-generated craft*—the possibility that the literary work itself generates a system of craft—from Wright's own defense of his writing. This suggestion does not seem to be a surprising proposal when we remember that such an understanding is already well entrenched for other literary categories. The category of "experimental," or "avant-garde," literature relies on precisely this definition of self-generated craft, the claim that the excellence of a work lies in its ability to generate its own terms of craft. Why is inconsistency, haphazardness, disruptiveness, and unpredictability the basis for a new kind of craft in one category of writing while those same qualities elicit criticism in another category of writing? This discrepancy highlights the degree to which established conventions and normative literary practices function as top-down impositions of external criteria in the evaluation of ethnic minority literature. It also alerts us to the need to extend the possibility of self-generated craft to ethnic minority literature.

In the second section, I turn to narrative theory to suggest that what seems badly done in Bulosan's fluctuating treatment of the narrator's knowledge can in fact comprise instances of the author's self-generated

craft at work. Instead of appealing to dramatic irony, I suggest distinguishing between the experiencing self and the narrating self, a distinction most famously established by Franz Stanzel's study of first-person narratives. This early work on the poetics of the novel, which later critics both extended and criticized, has particular resonance for the question of *America's* fluctuating narrator, for Stanzel offers an account of narrative situations based centrally on the role of the narrator.⁵ Furthermore, as Monika Fludernik points out, the strength of Stanzel's seemingly simple schema of narrative situations rises from the fact that they are a "direct development from natural categories [of storytelling]. Fiction with a teller figure evokes situational real-life equivalents of telling. . . . [Narrators are envisioned] on the model of the standard communicational script" (*Towards a "Natural"* 34). Fludernik's and Stanzel's emphasis on the "teller figure" is particularly pertinent to *America*, for this fictional autobiography strives to achieve the effect of testimony, which Leona Toker, in her work on gulag literature, calls "an ethical urge on the part of the author—one usually testifies to crimes, atrocities, upheavals" (192).⁶ In such literatures of testimony, the teller's formal, ethical, political, and historical status takes on great significance. In addition to Stanzel's distinction between the experiencing self and narrating self, Dorrit Cohn's theory of consonant and dissonant narration helps to highlight the ideological ramifications of the distinct knowledge that each narratorial self exhibits (*Transparent Minds*).

In the third section I turn to an analysis of *America's* problematic passages, especially those that, curiously, have not appeared in any critical scholarship of the novel. Featuring a protagonist at his most obtuse—and therefore unrealistic—these passages hold confusing implications for the ideology of the protagonist and of the novel. Perhaps the absence of these passages from critical considerations of the novel suggests their irreconcilability to the dominant critical paradigm surrounding it. In incorporating them into one formal and ideological account of the novel, I argue that these "badly done" moments demonstrate Bulosan's self-generated craft in showing the *idealization* inherent in the declaration that "America is in the heart."

Self-Generated Craft

So what did we mean when my students and I talked about the lack of craft in *America*? We meant, I think, that it's *haphazardly* done. And

haphazardness seems the key issue here, for something that is done with craft is not done haphazardly. The term *haphazard* denotes the quality of randomness, something done without thought, qualities opposite to those we invoke when we say something is artistic. In fact, craft and art operate synonymously in this context, for they both denote *skill*, the capability of accomplishing something with *precision* through *careful consideration* and *full intention*.⁷

How does one locate the presence of skill in a literary text? Almost automatically, this question becomes an evaluative one. And as with any evaluative question, one cannot answer without implicitly or explicitly calling on an existing criterion, a normative standard, or a conventional practice by which to assess the literary work in question. How well does this particular work follow the conventions concerning genre, literary tradition, or properties of narrative? How well does this work consistently utilize figurative language, symbolism, or imagery?

These questions reveal that standards or criteria of evaluation are always external to the work in question. This externality of evaluative criteria has deeper repercussions for ethnic minority literature, because external criteria are particularly apt to turn into a top-down imposition in the evaluation of literature that is not quite deemed to be literature: the writing of the racially, economically, sexually, and politically marginalized that is instead classified as social documents, histories, records, testimonies, or propaganda.⁸ The exemplary model for such top-down evaluations will most likely be a canonical literary text or a long lineage of literary traditions. In such evaluative instances, an ethnic minority literature's differences or distances from existing standards and exemplary models become deviations that support the assessment: it's badly done. Thus, when reading for craft becomes reading for existing literary conventions and standards, the standard of craft is always external to the specific literary work under analysis.

In no small sense, external criteria of evaluation rule the negative assessments of Wright's *Native Son*, one of the best-known cases in which a work's stature in the canon of American literature is counterbalanced by questions about its artistic merit. From the moment of this novel's appearance, praise for its powerful depiction of racial trauma and oppression has been accompanied by detraction of its "numerous defects as a work of art," as one reviewer put it (Butler xxviii).⁹ Understandably, then, critical recuperations of Wright's artistry typically locate precisely those elements of craft—literary conventions, devices, and genres—that have hitherto been missed. Joyce Joyce's *Richard Wright's Art of Trag-*

edy is a leading example of this recuperative approach, for Joyce argues that Wright chooses his diction (such as alliterative sibilants), sentence construction, rhythm, and symbolism both consistently and deliberately. By demonstrating the presence of skill—the capability of accomplishing something with precision through careful consideration and full intention—in *Native Son*, Joyce concludes that Wright is a “scrupulous craftsman” (“Wright’s Craft” 51).¹⁰

Whereas Joyce and others recuperate *Native Son*’s craft by locating and confirming the standards of external criteria for evaluating form, I want to highlight a dramatically different method of evaluation that Wright himself offers—an evaluative method that is suggested by the artwork itself. In his 1940 essay “How Bigger Was Born,” written just months after the publication and great success of *Native Son*, Wright explains his inspiration, motivation, and even the writing strategies of his most famous novel. In no small sense, Wright offers his credentials as a writer by detailing his own history as a reader—a move that Bulosan, too, frequently makes—naming literary names, titles, and influences.¹¹ Most important, he emphasizes the *deliberate* nature and the carefully considered dimension of every aspect of his novel. Wright explains, “As I wrote I followed, almost unconsciously, main principles of the novel which my reading of the novels of other writers had made me feel were necessary for the building of *a well-constructed book*” (459; emphasis added). With this reminder, Wright revisits one of the most famous, or most infamous, scenes in *Native Son*, in which Bigger Thomas, in his jail cell, is visited by no fewer than twelve people. Basically all the characters of any relevance in the novel—the parents of the white girl he murdered, the prosecutor, the Marxist defender, Bigger’s family, his friends, and his minister—appear at once. That they should all appear at the same time and cram into a small cell is almost comically implausible. Nonetheless, in his essay Wright singles out this very scene to justify his technique. Wright explains:

[I]n the writing of scene after scene I was guided by but one criterion: to tell the truth as I saw it and felt it. That is, to objectify in words some insight derived from my living in the form of action, scene, and dialogue. If a scene seemed improbable to me, I’d not tear it up, but ask myself: “Does it reveal enough of what I feel to stand in spite of its unreality?” If I felt it did, it stood. If I felt that it did not, I ripped it out. The degree of morality in my writing depended upon the degree of felt life and truth I could put down upon the printed page. For example,

there is a scene in *Native Son* where Bigger stands in a cell with [twelve other characters]. While writing that scene, I knew that it was unlikely that so many people would ever be allowed to come into a murderer's cell. But I wanted those people in that cell to elicit a certain important emotional response from Bigger. And so the scene stood. I felt that what I wanted that scene to say to the reader was *more important than its surface reality or plausibility*. (458; original emphasis)

Wright's emphasis in the last sentence is asking for something other than evaluation according to existing standards, and it is the source of my proposal that ostensibly faulty moments in ethnic minority literary texts be allowed to generate their own criteria of craft. In such cases, we leave open the possibility that the literary work at hand generates its own paradigm of craft—that is, skill, the capability of accomplishing something with precision through careful consideration and full intention. Thus, just as we extend the possibility of self-generated craft to avant-garde, or "experimental," literary works, we should open the possibility that ethnic minority works generate their own terms of skill.

I want to open this possibility, but only to a point, because no work of literature can entirely self-determine the means of its meaning making, just as no single speaker can determine the means of his or her language use. Just as language use and communication, whether analyzed as language games or speech acts, is a fundamental engagement in conventions, literary texts are engagements in literary conventions, traditions, and practices. To suggest that ethnic minority works operate independently of existing literary conventions, genres, forms, and canonical traditions is not only false but reactionary and dangerously limiting, potentially returning ethnic minority literature to the category of sociological documents. As we can see from Wright's and Bulosan's lengthy attestations of their literary credentials—what authors and literary works they read, enjoyed, and critiqued, as well what literary traits they admired and to which they aspired—a theory of self-generated craft that excludes the concerns of literary conventions would directly conflict with those two writers' own aims.

What I suggest, rather, is a complementary practice in analyzing the operation of craft in ethnic minority literature. In addition to looking at existing literary conventions, genres, forms, and canonic literary works that a specific ethnic minority work engages, we should also allow the literary work at hand to generate its own terms of making meaning. With this crucial reminder in mind, let me turn to those scenes in *America* in

which the narrator's authority seems to fluctuate haphazardly at random moments. While "dramatic irony" approaches to these problematic moments have consistently returned to the author's biographical information as the litmus test of interpretation, a study of the way Bulosan strategically employs different narrative situations at different times leads to a more useful formal account—a method of discerning, at the level of the text's surface, Bulosan's deployment of the experiencing I and the narrating I that has formal and ideological consequences.

The Historical Attitude of the Narrating Self

As a way of illustrating the narrator's value system in his performance as a teller of the tale, let me call attention to his self-avowed aim as a Filipino migrant and literary representative. Repeatedly, and with growing conviction as the narrative progresses, the narrator asserts that his prime objective is to correct the "misconception" about Filipinos in America by exercising a "historical attitude." Early in his travails in America, he explains the crucial importance of this historical attitude:

I was still unaware of the vast social implications of the discrimination against Filipinos, and my ignorance had innocently brought me to the attention of white Americans. I put the blame on certain Filipinos who had behaved badly in America, who had instigated hate and discontent among their friends and followers. This misconception was generated by a confused personal reaction to dynamic social forces, but my hunger for the truth had inevitably led me to take an historical attitude. I was to understand and interpret this chaos from a collective point of view, because it [the chaos] was pervasive and universal. (143–144)

Thus, a historical attitude is a worldview constituted by a knowledge of history, social forces, political movements, and racial injustices. Furthermore, a historical attitude requires a perennial awareness of one's involvement in the collective. Only such an attitude affords the interpretive framework for exceeding—and correcting—the "misconception," the "confused personal reaction," that entirely privatizes one's experiences, such as the narrator's perception that the Filipino immigrants invited punitive treatment by their own behavior. Only such a historical attitude will allow the narrator to explain the inequities of American reality and the consequent degradation of Filipino immigrants: "It was not easy to

understand why the Filipinos were brutal yet tender, nor was it easy to believe that they had been made this way by the reality of America. I still lacked the knowledge to synthesize the heart-breaking tragedies I had seen, and to project myself into their core so that I would be able to interpret them objectively" (152).

We can understand the difference between a "historical attitude" and a "confused personal reaction" via the formal differences among narrative situations. In his work on narrative theory, Stanzel uses the notion of narrative situations to describe the "degree of the explicit presence of the dramatized authorial presence" (25). Stanzel approaches this "mediacy of narration" in the first-person novel by focusing on the difference between the "Experiencing I" and the "Narrating I," a difference that manifests itself through "the peculiar double appearance of the 'I' in the novel. This 'I' or 'self' reveals itself to the reader as a figure experiencing the events of the plot—a figure which ultimately becomes the narrator of those events" (60–61). The separation between the experiencing self and the narrating self marks the "narrative distance," "the interval between narrating and experiencing self." This distance is a matter not just of temporal distance, the time between the experiencing process and the narrating process, but also of knowledge difference, the knowledge accumulated by the narrating self since undergoing the experiencing process.

As such it [narrative distance] indicates the degree of alienation and tension between these two manifestations of the self. In changing from actor to author the self undergoes a development, a maturing process, a change of interest, which often comes to the fore in the novel. In interpreting a work it is therefore useful to proceed from the determination of the narrative distance; we can fix the mental perspective in which the time of the experiencing self is observed from the point of view of the older, more mature, self-possessed, narrating self. (66)

For example, "The prostitute, the thief, 'the gentlewoman' Moll Flanders is the experiencing self; the Moll Flanders who narrates her adventurous past with that peculiar mixture of repentance and retrospective gusto is the narrating self in Defoe's novel" (61). In most other cases, however, "the narrative process is indicated either indirectly or not at all. In such a case it is naturally impossible to distinguish the narrating self from the experiencing self" (67). Nonetheless, Stanzel points out some explicit markers that indicate who acts as the "primary source of infor-

mation.” When the narrator reveals information that the experiencing self could not possibly know—such as “references to past and future” (67), statements that prefigure the future (82), or statements that contextualize the experiencing self within a temporal and experiential duration that he or she could not possibly know—the narrating self dominates the narration.

This narratological distinction between narrating self and experiencing self provides a useful platform for theorizing the fluctuating authority of the narrator in *America*. In this first-person narrative, the narrative distance—the exact temporal and experiential space between the experiencing process and the narrating process—is not explicitly identified. Nevertheless, the narrating I is clearly neither the thirteen-year-old boy in the Philippines nor the teenager who arrives in America. On the contrary, the narrating I most closely approximates the experiencing I in the later stage of the narrative—after much physical toil and suffering, a political awakening, and most important, the acquisition of fluent English literacy. Bulosan generally manages this vast gulf by utilizing the older, wiser, more knowledgeable narrating self as the normative site of telling. When he *deviates* from this general practice, then, the appearance of the young, immature, naive experiencing self seems abrupt and startling.

While Stanzel’s theory is useful for highlighting the different kinds of *information* provided by experiencing self and narrating self, Dorrit Cohn’s distinction between dissonant narration and consonant narration is useful for highlighting the *ideological* dimension of those different kinds of information. That is, Cohn’s emphasis on the explanatory endeavor of dissonant narration helps us understand the political dimension inherent in Bulosan’s deployment of a narrating self and an experiencing self. Cohn points to Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past* as the “source-book for the type of self-narration in which the benighted past self is ‘lit up’ by a sovereignly cognizant narrator” (*Transparent* 147). In dissonant narration, the narrator draws attention to the narrating present by actively searching “for a law, or at least for a pattern” (156), that can explain both the story events and the experiencing self being narrated. In this explanatory endeavor, dissonant narrative “underline[s] the clear (though unspecified) temporal distance that separates the narrating from the experiencing self”; narration of “past consciousness is essentially one of elucidation and interpretation” (151). In dissonant narration, then, the experiencing self becomes the object that must be explained by the narrating self—the subject.

This explanatory endeavor of dissonant narration parallels the contex-

tualizing work performed by the historical attitude crucial to Bulosan's narrator—an attitude that the narrator expresses by explicitly providing information on the history of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines, the feudalism of the modern Philippines, the absentee landlordism that starves the peasants, the history of Filipino immigration to America, and the labor injustices and legalized discrimination they suffer. Just as this narrating self strives to exercise a politically, historically, and socially informed "interpretation" of the injustices he undergoes, dissonant narration strives to provide an "elucidation and interpretation" of the events being narrated.

This interpretive maneuver is apparent from the beginning of the narrative. The novel opens with the protagonist at age five, as his peasant family struggle to feed themselves on a diminishing patch of land. Immediately, within the first three pages, an authoritative narrating self dominates the telling, situating the struggles of the experiencing self within the larger historical context of the modern Philippines:

But the Philippines was undergoing a radical social change; all over the archipelago, the younger generation was stirring and adapting new attitudes. And although for years the agitation for national independence had been growing, the government was actually in the hands of powerful native leaders. It was such a juicy issue that obscure men with ample education exploited it to their own advantage, thus slowly but inevitably plunging the nation into a great, economic catastrophe that tore the islands from their roots, and obfuscated the people's resurgence toward a broad national unity.

For a time it seemed that the younger generation, influenced by false American ideals and modes of living, had become total strangers to the older generation. In the provinces where the poor peasants lived and toiled for the rich *hacenderos*, or landlords, the young men were stirring and rebelling against their heritage. Those who could no longer tolerate existing conditions adventured into the new land, for the opening of the United States to them was one of the gratifying provisions of the peace treaty that culminated the Spanish-American War. (5)

So the experience of the five-year-old protagonist is buttressed, explained, and situated within a context of postcolonialism, neocolonialism, a corrupt system of political and economic governance, and absentee landlordism—all of which lead to the young peasant males' rebellion and flight to America. As one of those "who could no longer tolerate

existing conditions,” the protagonist eventually immigrates to America, an act obtaining its necessity when situated within the historical, political, and legal information provided by this dissonant narration.

Another powerful ideological effect of historical knowledge is the translation of the *individual* experience of the protagonist into the *collective* experience of the peasant class. Increasingly, the “I” of the narrator collapses into “the peasant” as the subject of the sentence and of experience. The protagonist feels the ever-increasing squeeze of absentee landlordism, in which his family, like other peasants, find themselves selling what little land they have as a desperate measure to stay alive, thus losing their means of survival. As the protagonist and his father lend their labors to cultivate an arid plot of land owned by the local Catholic church, the narrating self contextualizes the tragic, collective fate of the peasants forced to become hired labor in this economic and political system.

[T]he peasants in a province to the south of us had revolted against their landlords. There the peasants had been the victims of ruthless exploitation for years, dating back to the eighteenth century when Spanish colonizers instituted severe restrictive measures in order to impoverish the natives. So from then on the peasants became poorer each year and the landlords became richer at every harvest time. And the better part of it was that the landlord was always away, sometimes merely a name on a piece of paper.

The peasants did not know to whom they should present their grievances or whom to fight when the cancer of exploitation became intolerable. They became cynical about the national government and the few powerful Filipinos of foreign extraction who were squeezing a fat livelihood out of it. (23)

The primary source of information, then, is a narrating self armed with the knowledge of past and future and thus vastly removed from the little boy experiencing the effects of neocolonialism and absentee landlordism. Furthermore, the narrative distance that yields this historical knowledge enables the narrating self to assume a collective subject position of “the peasant.”

So far I have concentrated on two main avenues by which Bulosan uses dissonant narration to exercise the historical attitude: explaining and contextualizing the protagonist’s experiences and coalescing those experiences into the collective fate of the peasant. Bulosan further uses

dissonant narration through the perennial tone of indictment that informs his narrating self. The narrating I's analysis of absentee landlordism continues for many pages, making no bones about the fact that the telling is simultaneously an indictment: "These conditions could not continue forever. In every house and hut in the far-flung *barrrios* where the common man or *tao* was dehumanized by absentee landlordism, where a peasant had a son who went to school through the sacrifice of his family and who came back with invigorating ideas of social equality, there grew a great conflict that threatened to plunge the Philippines into one of its bloodiest revolutions" (24). Directly reflecting the language of the protagonist, who will later become a labor activist, leader, and writer, the narrating self envisions a teleology in which the worker—the peasant—will lead the revolution for equality.¹²

Bulosan thus fully utilizes the ideological dimension of dissonant narration to achieve a literary effect of testimony. As Toker points out, the literature of testimony can be understood as "eyewitness accounts," whether or not the author intends "to give evidence for or against specific people or situations. . . . Literature[s] of testimony are not based on historical documents so much as they *constitute* them by recording, 'documenting,' testifying to what their authors have witnessed" (192). Likewise, in this fictionalized autobiography, the historical attitude exercised through the narrating self reflects that ethical urge to testify and to be a *record* of that testimony. Certainly this effect of "giving witness" is central to the novel's canonical place in Asian American literary history, for it enables the rich, multiple historical perspectives and realities that scholars locate in the novel, an exemplary testimony of postcolonialism, Third World labor, immigration, race, class, gender, and sexuality.

The Ahistorical Attitude of the Experiencing Self

It is all the more startling, then, when Bulosan withholds a historical attitude in narrating certain passages of the novel. These are the "badly done" passages that my students criticized, when the prevailing mode of dissonant narration suddenly shifts into consonant narration dominated by a naive experiencing self. As Cohn explains, the narrator of consonant narration does not "draw attention to his present, narrating self by adding information, opinions, or judgments that were not his during his past experience" (*Transparent* 155); the consonant narrator "never draws attention to his hindsight: neither analyzing nor generalizing, he sim-

ply records the inner happenings, juxtaposing them in incongruous succession, without searching for causal links” (156). Consonant narration, then, makes no attempt to explain, contextualize, justify, or rationalize. On the contrary, Cohn identifies the central aim of consonant narration as the maintenance of *incongruities* without any attempt at “corrective insight” (157). Highlighting the narrator’s refusal to translate the past through the filter of the narrating self, Cohn’s theory of consonant narration helps to explain the oddity of those problematic moments when instances of injustices and atrocities are narrated without a historical attitude, when the protagonist’s responses and interpretations are entirely privatized. Shifting from dissonant narration to consonant narration affects more than the construction of the character; the narrator himself seems to be an entirely different entity—a different person—embodying life experiences, political knowledge, historical awareness, and a worldview drastically different from those appearing just a few sentences before. This shift in form has immediate ideological consequences, for the reliability of the narrator is directly linked to the realism of the character, and both contribute to the testimonial dimension of the novel.

An instance of this sudden shift into consonant narration appears early in the novel when the thirteen-year-old protagonist moves to the town of Baguio in search of employment. Finding none, he lives in a public marketplace and subsists on castoff food.

One day an American lady tourist asked me to undress before her camera, and gave me ten centavos for doing it. I had found a simple way to make a living. Whenever I saw a white person in the market with a camera, I made myself conspicuously ugly, hoping to earn ten centavos. But what interested the tourists most were the naked Igorot women and their children. Sometimes they took pictures of the old men with their G-strings. They were not interested in Christian Filipinos like me. They seemed to take a particular delight in photographing young Igorot girls with large breasts and robust mountain men whose genitals were nearly exposed, their G-strings bulging large and alive (67).

As a scene in which the protagonist undergoes his first encounter with Orientalism, racism, and the hypersexualization of “the native,” this passage is well known to readers and scholars of this novel.¹³

However, when one notes the exclusively consonant form of narration—the experiencing I who is not accompanied by the explicit presence of an older, wiser, more knowledgeable narrating I—the *absence*

of that narrating I becomes a mystery. Why does Bulosan withhold the historical attitude that attended other instances of injustice and oppression? Where are the explanatory, contextualizing endeavor and collective vision that elsewhere come together to render authoritative condemnation of injustice? Without the authoritative narrating I, this scene confines the protagonist's experience with racism, exoticism, and dehumanization of the other into simply a bewildering yet profitable experience for a thirteen-year-old boy.

The ideological potential of this scene becomes more visible when compared to another treatment of a similar scene by Bulosan. In "The Story of a Letter," an earlier short story containing the key plot points of *America*, Bulosan offers a dramatically different narration of a similar incident. The protagonist of the story, like the protagonist of the novel, poses nude for American tourists in Baguio and later for an American woman painter. The narration of these experiences, however, takes on a dissonant form dominated by an older narrating self: "I had never dreamed of making my living by exposing my body to a stranger. That experience made me roar with laughter for many years" ("Story" 42). This dissonant narration shifts "the presentational center of gravity" (Stanzel 62) to the older narrating self and especially to this self's derision over the event. The same event that produced wide-eyed wonder in the novel's experiencing self causes *mirth* in the story's narrating self. In the story, then, the American tourists' interest in capturing images of naked Filipinos takes on a ludicrous cast. Thus, while omitting the historical contextualization and condemnation that accompany topics of Spanish colonialism, neoimperialism, and absentee landlordism in the novel, this instance of dissonant narration in "The Story of a Letter" manages to effect an implicit critique of American voyeurism and exoticism of "the natives." For example, in analyzing the short story, Campomanes and Gernes locate Bulosan's critique in the "the objectification" and "the definition of Pinoys as racial and historical other, exploitable and stripped of the habiliments of dignity" (21).

The significantly different ideological consequences of using consonant versus dissonant narration to present the scene raises the following questions: Why, in *America*, which was written later and whose prevailing form is dissonant narration, does Bulosan choose consonant narration, which emphasizes the experiencing self without any historical attitude? How can the seemingly arbitrary shift into consonant narration in *America* respond to the critique that the novel is lacking in craft? The answer to both questions might lie in the *pattern* of consonant narra-

tion that attends the protagonist's encounters with the idea of America, with Bulosan consistently utilizing the "misconceptions" of the experiencing self—manifest through consonant narration lacking in the historical attitude—to demonstrate the protagonist's ideal of America as an *idealization*. That is, Bulosan specifically utilizes the striking discord between the two narrative situations to undermine the optimism, hope, and desire that the protagonist cultivates in his vision of America.

When the novel's protagonist first arrives in Baguio, he notes the houses of the wealthy: "Europeans of affluence, Americans with big businesses in the islands, and rich Filipinos lived in Baguio. Their beautiful white houses dotted the hills" (67). The consonant narration of this encounter with wealth sets the form and the tone of bemusement that the protagonist will continually exhibit toward the idea of America. He soon becomes a houseboy to an American woman who works as a librarian in this city, and through her he learns about Abraham Lincoln: "From that day onward this poor boy who became president filled my thoughts. . . . I was slowly becoming acquainted with the intricacies of a library. Names of authors flashed in my mind and reverberated in a strange song in my consciousness. A whole new world was opened to me" (70). Significantly, this knowledge of "a whole new world" of American democracy, idealism, and literary tradition is interwoven with his first active encounter with wealth:

I used to make the deliveries [to the wealthy library patrons], hugging the books and running joyfully in the sun. How beautiful their homes were! I would stand outside the door and hand over the books to a white-liveried servant. On my way back, I would remember our grass hut in the village of Mangusmana and compare it with the magnificent mansion I had just left. I would remember many things in my childhood: my father and his land, my mother and her salted fish, my brother Luciano, slowly dying of tuberculosis, and my two other brothers who had gone away (70–71; ellipses in the original)

What's going on here? Where is the historical contextualization that accompanied the severe class discrepancy of the modern Philippines, the condemnation of Spanish neoimperialists and the corrupt system of absentee landlordism? In this instance of consonant narration, we find only the thirteen-year-old protagonist's marvel and adoration of wealth—precisely the wealth that lives on the back of "the peasants." The imperialist wealth that had hitherto been objectionable and condemnable is now the source of beauty and plentitude. In the experiencing self's tone

of wonderment and appreciation of the beautiful, magnificent mansions, the protagonist's recollection of his family's abject poverty and suffering does not exert a critical force. Instead, immediately following his open appreciation of wealth, his family's poverty—a synecdoche for millions of other peasants' poverty—is recalled in a tone of sadness and resignation. In a scene that seems to call out for a historical attitude, we find instead an *ahistorical* attitude in the thirteen-year-old experiencing self.

These startling moments of ahistorical consonant narration, however, are *not* haphazard or arbitrary, as becomes increasingly clear. They consistently take place in the protagonist's encounters with the idea of America, which means that the narrative situation of ahistorical consonant narration performs a specific ideological task—the form *enables* the basis for the title and thematic crux of the novel: America is in the heart. This vision of America as the land of plenty, of kind and generous people, of literary beauty and geniuses, even of intellectual and political enlightenment—this ideal emerges consistently through the form of ahistorical consonant narration. And in a novel that valorizes a historical attitude above all else, such a condition of telling has the effect of undercutting itself as the response of "misconception" or "confused personal reaction." The fact that this ideal of America can emerge only from the experiencing self unattended by a historical attitude means that Bulosan leaves visible the *making* of this ideal—that is, the idealization of America—with the attendant connotation of a romantic, wishful, fanciful construction of a desirable entity.

As the following analysis will show, Bulosan undermines this idealization through a historical attitude enabled by dissonant narration. Once we allow for Bulosan's critical awareness of the artificiality of the ideal America, we see that the puzzlingly placed hope and optimism in this novel indicate something other than "badly done" moments. Rather than understand "America is in the heart" as an expression of naïveté and optimism that is irreconcilable to the novel's critical, historical attitude, we must allow the ideal of America to function as the inspiration *as well as* the object of critique. Through a complex interplay of authoritative narrating self and ahistorical experiencing self, Bulosan demonstrates the interdependency of the ideal and the idealization.

Bulosan's dismantling of the ideal of America begins immediately after the protagonist leaves the Philippines, in a scene where the protagonist and a companion enjoy a brief moment on the deck of the ship:

I turned and saw a young white girl wearing a brief bathing suit walking toward us with a young man. They stopped some distance away from us;

then as though the girl's moral conscience had been provoked, she put her small hand on her mouth and said in a frightened voice:

"Look at those half-naked savages from the Philippines, Roger! Haven't they any idea of decency?" . . .

I was to hear that girl's voice in many ways afterward in the United States. It became no longer her voice, but an angry chorus shouting:

"Why don't they ship those monkeys back where they came from?"
(98–99)

In a situation that evokes the earlier hypersexualizing of the "natives" by American tourists, the critical, authoritative narrating self that was curiously absent from the earlier scene is in full display here. In this dissonant narration, the presentational center of gravity is unmistakably the narrating self, as the description of the girl's actions takes on a subtly derisive tone ("as though the girl's moral conscience had been provoked"). Her exaggerated repulsion and moral distaste are immediately framed in a historical attitude ("I was to hear . . ."). Thus, while the American tourist scene stands only as one incident—representative of nothing—Bulosan's dissonant treatment of the scene renders the girl's racism into a synecdoche for the racism that Filipino immigrants ("those monkeys") encounter in America.

Once the protagonist has arrived in America, the authoritative narrating self continues to contextualize, explain, and assess the events encountered by the protagonist. At a dizzying pace, the protagonist traverses the West Coast looking for work, from Alaskan fisheries to agricultural fields in the northwestern states to urban centers. In all these travels, racism and labor oppression remain consistent. The protagonist experiences labor exploitation, segregation, discrimination, and violent beatings at the hands of ordinary citizens as well as the police. He learns that, being a Filipino, his movements are severely restricted—to Asian-owned and -operated restaurants, pool halls, and prostitution houses. He learns that his employment choices are limited to agricultural migrant labor, restaurant service, or cannery work; he knows that he cannot own property, consort with white women, or even be *visible* to those who need no provocation to beat him. The narrating self offers ample contextualization of these scenes, with explicit explanations of the racial, labor, and economic contexts of the times; for example, he explains, "At that time, there was ruthless persecution of the Filipinos throughout the Pacific Coast, instigated by orchardists who feared the unity of white and Filipino workers" (107).

I came to know afterward that in many ways it was a crime to be a Filipino in California. I came to know that the public streets were not free to my people: we were stopped each time these vigilant patrolmen saw us driving a car. We were suspect each time we were seen with a white woman. And perhaps it was this narrowing of our life into an island, into a filthy segment of American society, that had driven Filipinos like Doro inward, hating everyone and despising all positive urgencies towards freedom. (121)

These contextualizations and condemnations by the narrating self are not the only means by which Bulosan exercises a historical attitude in his exploration of the Filipino's plight in America. In some instances, Bulosan integrates the critical capacity, usually offered directly by the narrating I, into the narration of the scene, thereby offering historical critique through authorial narrative. Early in his life in America, the protagonist runs into his brother Macario, who had immigrated earlier. When he is introduced to Macario's friends, the protagonist states:

"I went to Alaska first, then came down to Los Angeles. I think I like it here. I will buy a house here someday." "Buy a house?" a man near me said, his face breaking into a smile. But when he noticed that my brother was looking hard at him, he suddenly changed his tone and offered me a glass. "Good, good!" he said. "Buy all the houses you want. And if you need a janitor—" he turned around to hide his cynical twist of his mouth. (130–131)

Despite the first-person narration of this scene, there is a vast difference in knowledge between the protagonist, the Carlos who says that he would like to buy a house in Los Angeles, and the narrator, the voice who correctly interprets the man's bitterness at Carlos's naïveté. Thus, despite the first-person narration, the vast distance between the protagonist and the narrating self operates like the vast distance between a protagonist and a third-person narrator (Stanzel 89; Cohn, *Transparent* 143). That is, Bulosan integrates the critical capacity of the narrating self into authorial narrative to *correct* the protagonist's idealization of America. The protagonist's hope, desire, and optimism, born of "personal reaction," are crucially countered by the historical attitude, whereby the narrator knows the impossibility of such hopes.

More important for my analysis is the way Bulosan emphasizes the ahistorical nature of the protagonist's idealization—an idealization

that continues the young protagonist's fixation with "beautiful white houses" and material desire. As the protagonist articulates idealizations, optimism, and hope, these moments of ahistorical consonant narration suggest an experiencing self that is without history, political awareness, or even memory, for this self does not seem to remember racial trauma.

One relevant scene appears halfway through the novel. The protagonist knows enough about racial violence to realize that he should hide from white passengers when he takes the bus, that he should sleep with a knife for self-protection, that he should be wary of police brutality, and that he can go only into hotels, stores, and restaurants with "Oriental" signs on them. He's eating at one such restaurant in Washington state when two policemen appear at his side. They ask only one question:

"Are you Filipino?"

"Yes."

Crack!

It was that quick and simple. (156)

He is beaten until he loses consciousness and taken to the local jail, where he is beaten for the two dollars in his shoes. The next morning he is marched to the border of California with the police car jostling him from behind. When he finally crosses into California with bloody feet, he is beaten some more, and as the policemen leave, they say, "That will teach you not to come to this town again." The protagonist reflects on the experience: "I fell on my knees. I heard them laughing. There was a sadistic note in their voices. Was it possible that these men enjoyed cruelty? The brutality in the gambling houses was over money; it was over women among Filipinos. But the brutality of these policemen—what was it?" (157). The historical attitude evident here—the attempt to see individual experience within a wider historical, philosophical, or ethical perspective—*usually* accompanies the protagonist's experience of racial violence.

The conclusion to this scene, however, wipes out any sense of trauma, outrage, or confusion generated by the preceding event, and this abrupt appearance of an experiencing self without political, historical memory leads to one of the most unrealistic moments of the novel. As the protagonist leaves this horrific scene on a freight train, he muses: "[I] watched the beautiful land passing by. I saw places where I thought I would someday like to build a home" (157). This wishful thinking is entirely at odds with the political, historical, philosophical inquiries that

the protagonist just voiced and is entirely inadequate as the response of a man who experiences unchecked xenophobia.

Rather than dismiss this odd, bewildering moment as an aberration, we could attend to its out-of-place nature as self-generated craft. Like the consonant narration moments in which the thirteen-year-old protagonist exhibits an unabashed idealization of "beautiful homes" and "mansions," the older protagonist who dreams of his own home in the California countryside is constructed through carefully constrained formal circumstances: an experiencing self who is an entirely privatized self—a self without memory, history, or politics, basically a self in a vacuum. This unique set of circumstances produces a unique ideological product: a subject who asserts hope, desire, and optimism *despite* the fact that his concrete experiences in America overwhelmingly crush optimism. Thus, like the young protagonist's *ideal* of America that was fostered in the absence of the *actual* America, the older protagonist's hopeless dreams of material plentitude in America emerge as an idealization unsupported by material reality. The impossibility of this desire is directly connected to Bulosan's subtle critique of the ideal of America *as* an idealization.

Bulosan again deploys this ahistorical experiencing self in my next and final example. Near the end of the novel, the protagonist is now an established Filipino labor-rights organizer, activist, and speaker and has moved far toward fully realizing a historical attitude so that he may "interpret" the fate of Filipinos in America "objectively" (152). That is, the experiencing self has fully "caught up" with the narrating self, and there is no longer a distance between the two in historical attitude. Historical information, political analysis, and outright protest appear unmediated in the narrative, as is evinced in the following passage, in which the protagonist attends a meeting of Filipino laborers. The protagonist acts as the secretary of the meeting, whose minutes are directly incorporated into the narrative:

"How come we Filipinos in California can't buy or lease real estate?" a man asked.

"Why are we denied civil service jobs?" asked another.

"Why can't we marry women of the Caucasian race? And why are we not allowed to marry in this state?"

"Why can't we practice law?"

"Why are we denied the right of becoming naturalized American citizens?"

"Why are we discriminated against in relief agencies?"

“Why are we denied better housing conditions?”

“Why can’t we stop the police from handling us like criminals?”

“Why are we denied recreational facilities in public parks and other such public places?” (268–269)

This sharing of “the social strangulation of our people,” the protagonist states, was “the beginning of a statewide campaign for the recognition of Filipino rights and privileges” (269).

Nonetheless, a “badly done” moment occurs when, many pages after this scene, the protagonist appears again without memory, history, or political awareness. That is, in these final pages of the narrative, the protagonist *reverts* to being an ahistorical experiencing self, no different from the thirteen-year-old boy who idolized “beautiful houses.” In this scene, the protagonist gives speeches to the middle-class Americans in hopes of securing their aid for Filipino labor rights. After one such speech to the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, an American woman invites him to her home, which, he observes, is “a white house.” The first thing he notices inside her house is the white rug: “The rug in the living room was as white as the clouds in the skies of Mangusmana. When she went to the icebox, I bent over and felt the soft strands of white hair that were woven into the rug. How luxurious this woman lived! Was this the reason that made me hate her class? Was my lack of comfort the mainspring of my dark fear?” (286).

Certainly, the fixation over the white rug is bizarre, and the final question can be offensive to the reader as well as, one would think, to the character. After the protagonist has detailed the “social strangulation of [his] people” for hundreds of pages, how can the reader be expected to believe in a character who equates social strangulation with lack of material comfort, a character who seems to have forgotten his own life’s history? Suddenly, a visitor rings at the front door, and the woman is greatly disturbed, hiding the protagonist in the kitchen while she deals with the visitor. He is offended, for her actions confirm his suspicion that this white, middle-class American woman with the luxuries that he covets is just another face of racist America. She returns and agrees to host a party for the Filipino organization. The protagonist leaves with this final thought: “But it was strange that when I emerged from the house, I thought of the white rug in the living room with yearning. There was a comforting, delicious feeling in me. As I walked farther from it, I was possessed by a strong desire to buy a rug like it someday” (287). How can we make sense of this scene, in which the protagonist’s

desire for a soft, plush white rug seems stronger than his sense of history, experience, or memory?

Rather than dismiss this passage as a weird aberration, we must make sense of it by connecting it to all those other moments of aberration, the ones my students criticized. We note that like those, this scene takes the form of consonant narration uniquely informed by an ahistorical experiencing self. Amid the sea of authoritative dissonant narration, which exerts a historical attitude, contextualization, and the condemnation of the "social strangulation" of the Filipino people, these aberrant articulations stand out for being without memory, political awareness, or history. Precisely in their separation from a historical attitude and from "the reality of America" (152), these hopes, dreams, and optimistic moments identify themselves as wishful idealization. What I am pointing to is the subtle capacity for critique inherent in these scenes, a critique of the idealization that has no basis in the reality of America.

What I hope to have provided is a formally informed answer to two interrelated questions: my students' question, "Why is this novel so badly done?"; and the question central to the critical scholarship of the novel—how can a novel so overwhelmingly critical of America declare that "America is in the heart"? The answer to both questions, I suggest, must begin with the possibility of self-generated craft. By acknowledging an innovative and consistent interplay between dissonant and consonant narration, between an authoritative narrating self and an ahistorical experiencing self, we can translate the "badly done" moments as self-negating moments of hope and optimism. Furthermore, this formal account of different narrative situations enables a pedagogically and theoretically more useful demonstration, at the level of the text, of dramatic irony at work in the novel. Rather than point to Bulosan's biography or politics to show that the novel does not really *mean* it when it says "America is in the heart," we can look to Bulosan's deployment of distinct narrative situations to achieve different ends. Together, the two narrative situations continually unbalance each other, demonstrating the chaotic energy, the carefully circumscribed critique, and the equally moderated optimism that makes this novel so complex.

Notes

1. See, for instance, Williams; Eagleton; Greenblatt, "What Is the History of Literature?"; and Bourdieu.
2. Because the novel is a key work in the Asian American literary tradition,

historical, political, and ideological considerations of it are numerous—as an indictment of Spanish and American colonialism, capital’s global exploitation of labor, or racism manifest through class and gender or as an expression of socialism, Third World labor, antifascism, Third World literature, and transnationalism. In contrast, noticeably few critical analyses substantively consider the novel’s form.

3. Here, San Juan continues his observation of Bulosan’s tendency toward utopianism, an observation he first made in his introduction to the special issue of *Amerasia Journal* devoted to Bulosan (1979).

4. Alquizola offers a useful overview of the assimilationist receptions by enthusiastic book reviewers. For a critique of the novel’s assimilationist ideology, see Mostern.

5. In general, Stanzel’s enumeration of “schemas” of narrative situations as authorial, first-person, and figural has been criticized for being too crude and inadequate to experimental, especially second-person, narratives; see Cohn, “The Encirclement of Narrative.” See also Genette (*Narrative Discourse Revisited*), who argues that Stanzel’s three narrative situations do not distinguish between “who sees” (focalization) and “who speaks” (person, voice).

6. The testimonial aspect is unmistakable in the novel’s reception in the popular press as well as in critical scholarship. The testimonial reception takes the words of the novel’s subtitle (“A Personal History”) and dedication page (“let it be the testament of one who longed to become part of America”) literally. For early reviews, see Trudeau. For instance, the *Christian Science Monitor* review of the novel states: “he certainly persuades his readers that he is a sincere and truthful witness of the terrible events he portrays” (Trudeau 1). Even as recently as 1988, on the occasion of the novel’s seventh printing in 1986, a reviewer wrote: “the sense of ‘rightness’ that surrounds the book can be explained [when one understands that] *America is in the Heart* is an emotionally and esthetically true account of the immigration, spiritual and physical, of the pinoy. . . . It is the quintessential experience of the pinoy migrant worker. . . . There are few other records that speak as truly to what it meant to be Filipino in temptress America” (Solberg 14). In critical scholarship, the novel is overwhelmingly called a “memoir,” “a massive documentation,” and an “ethnobiography” (San Juan, “Searching” 259) or a “collective biography” of an oppressed minority (Campomanes and Gernes 23).

7. My usage of *craft* and *art* as synonymous seems continuous with the way the two words are often used interchangeably in general parlance, as best exemplified in writing manuals and “how-to” books on creative fiction. See, e.g., Citino or Oates.

8. For example, see Barbara Foley’s discussion of the “art” and “propaganda” debate as it affects proletarian literature of early twentieth century.

9. See R. Butler for early reviews commenting on the novel’s poor form. For example, one review calls the novel “dull propaganda” (28), and another states: “Sanely considered, it is impossible for me to conceive of a novel being worse” (xxvii).

10. Mitchell provides a collection of essays that perform precisely such evaluative recuperations of Wright’s use of imagery, allusion, and archetypes.

11. See Bulosan, "My Education." Bulosan expresses his admiration of Wright in this essay, just as the protagonist of *America* frequently invokes Wright as a literary inspiration. Critics such as Campomanes and Gernes have noted the similarities between *Native Son* and *America*.

12. In highlighting the historical attitude demonstrated in the narration of the young protagonist's life in the Philippines, I am contesting Wesling's observation that "the novel builds in teleological fashion, marking the conflicts of Carlos's early years as the latent seeds that, once in the US, will flower into a new, expansive consciousness" (62). According to this teleological model, Wesling sees the early episodes in the Philippines as being marked by "incomprehension" (61). On the contrary, I contend that comprehension—a historical attitude—so thoroughly characterizes the early stage of the narrative that when the narrative deviates from it, the "badly done" assessment emerges.

13. This scene features centrally in Slotkin's analysis of racial hierarchy and politics in the novel.

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CHAPTER 14

Nobody Knows: *Invisible Man* and John Okada's *No-No Boy*

JOSEPHINE NOCK-HEE PARK

“I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from No-where make love to your wife. Well, if that’s the idea you can count me out. . . . Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and institutions, and next they’ll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white” (Fitzgerald). So says Tom Buchanan upon realizing that Jay Gatsby has infiltrated his family; Tom suggests that to let in this nobody is to open the floodgates to a darker contingent. Fitzgerald’s elegy to the American outsider made a mystery out of a perfectly dull young man, but *The Great Gatsby* shows us glimpses of other, unembellished nobodies in figures who inhabit a no-man’s-land dubbed the “valley of ashes.” While Gatsby dreams of high society, the denizens of this wasteland are coated in “spasms of bleak dust” (20); these nobodies are doomed to stay nowhere.

In a celebrated essay on American ethnicity, Ralph Ellison turned to *The Great Gatsby* to consider a figure from its valley of ashes. In “The Little Man at Chehaw Station,” Ellison argues that the artist must attend to “the little man,” initially figured in his essay as the stove tender at a train station. The essay discusses an example of this “little underground-outsider” (502) in Fitzgerald’s figure of a “pale, well-dressed negro” (Fitzgerald 114): “How ironic it was that in the world of *The Great Gatsby* the witness who could have identified the driver of the death car that led to Gatsby’s murder was a black man whose ability to communicate (and communication implies moral judgment) was of no more consequence to the action than that of an ox that might have observed Icarus’s sad plunge into the sea” (Ellison, “Little Man” 503). Ellison champions the “little man” in the figure of the black observer who “would make the subtle symbolic connections among Gatsby’s ill-

fated social climbing, the wealthy wastrels whose manners and morals are the focus of the action, the tragic ironies echoing so faintly from the Civil War (that seedbed of so many Northern fortunes), and his own social condition" (502). The raced witness knits together "subtle symbolic connections" among the actors of the story to create a historicized understanding of his own social condition.

In her 2003 essay "The Little Man at Chehaw Station' Today," Hortense J. Spillers explains that the "little man' is a type of 'invisible man'" who possesses "unexpected knowledge" (9, 14). Citing scholarly disputes over essentialism and identity, Spiller states that she would "like to offer the 'little man' as a resource" because this figure forces us to "attempt to understand culture in its *layered presents*" (15, 18). My analysis follows Spillers's in returning to Ellison's 1952 *Invisible Man* as a "resource": I propose to apply Ellison's famous template of raced outsidership to another literary portrayal of a nobody of the postwar era, John Okada's 1957 novel *No-No Boy*. I argue that *Invisible Man* provides a structure for understanding Okada's uneven and seemingly contradictory text: by reading *No-No Boy* through the lens of *Invisible Man*, we may uncover both the conundrum of Okada's protagonist and a glimpse into a significant moment in the history of U.S. racial formation.

I thus aim to demonstrate that Ellison's lens of invisibility permits us to understand the literal and metaphorical prisons that encase Okada's protagonist, a figure whose tortured vacillations simultaneously threaten his identity and unveil his social and political world. In mining *Invisible Man* as a theory of nonentity and a historicized presentation of American racism, I follow Charles W. Mills's crucial positing of Ellison's protagonist as a paradigm for the experience of racial subjection: Mills contrasts "two kinds of selves or *sums*, the Cartesian self with which we are all familiar and an Ellisonian one," a "subperson" who is "relational, not monadic; dialogic, not monologic: one is a subperson precisely because *others*—persons—have categorized one as such and have the power to enforce their categorization" (7–8, 9; Mills's subperson builds on work by Patterson). Ellison's subperson reveals enforced, racialized categories, and I intend to consider Okada's protagonist as a subperson to discover the kinds of categories that must operate to keep him a nobody and, to echo *Invisible Man*, keep him running.

Recent scholarship in minority literature has explored the deep ties binding the African American experience to that of the Asian American.¹ The following pages' particular instantiation of ideas about this cross-racial connection owe a debt to the Asian American activists who first

championed Okada's forgotten novel. In the introduction to *No-No Boy*, Lawson Inada relates its (re)discovery: "Jeff Chan discovered it in some J-town San Francisco bookstore in 1970. The book had been published in 1957 and gone practically unnoticed. We 'discovered' it, then, and were passing it on" (Okada iii). Inada and Chan were core members of a coalition of radical Asian American artists whose melding of aesthetics and politics in the 1970s closely followed the standard set by African American cultural nationalism.² Led by Frank Chin—whose essay "In Search of John Okada" is appended as the afterword in *No-No Boy*—the Asian American literary movement looked to African American models to establish a literary canon, and they installed Okada's novel as a foundational text.³ In reading *Invisible Man* as a model for *No-No Boy*, my analysis thus follows the formation of the Asian American movement by arguing that African American models of racial subjection can guide us in our understanding of Asian American subjectivity⁴—a familiar claim in theories of racial formation, but one whose literary application has not yet been attempted for the foundational novels canonized by the Asian American movement.⁵

Ellison's comprehensive portrait of African American racial invisibility revealed dangerous worlds of racial abjection, and he skewered both ends of the political spectrum along the way. The politics of *Invisible Man* continues to vex scholars—yet this fact makes Ellison's classic singularly useful for understanding *No-No Boy*: in both cases, the main character's self-proclaimed invisibility and nothingness instigate a range of political readings, because these empty centers at the heart of both texts are uniquely capable of revealing political categories and formations. This essay posits *Invisible Man* as an explanatory model with all its mysteries intact; my aim is not to explain or resituate Ellison but to consider what his model has to offer for another significant exploration of racial outsidership in American literature. Hence, I do not compare these two texts; instead, I read one as a theory for the other in the hopes of discovering the particular postwar constraints imposed on racial identity that Okada's text reveals.

I first establish Ellison's protagonist as a nobody positioned to reveal uniquely social knowledge in order to read Okada's protagonist against this model. I next identify two key, opposing strategies for resistance in *Invisible Man* and trace a similar set of options in *No-No Boy*. Finally, I turn to the contentious worlds revealed by the nobodies of these texts. *Invisible Man* reveals a state of unending war, and *No-No Boy* depicts an America turned into a military zone. I conclude by considering the

larger political forces that determine identity in the Japanese American case to argue that this specific instance has transformed Asian American subject formation in the United States. My argument thus moves from a key American paradigm of nonentity to a claim for the specificity of the Japanese American experience by tying *No-No Boy* to the American canon while attending to the historical particularity of Japanese American experience the novel presents. This analysis ultimately aims to suggest a new frame for understanding Asian American literature, one deeply informed by a crucial African American precedent.

Nobody

Invisible Man's famous opening paragraph introduces a substantial yet unseen hero:

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me. (3)

This body cloaked in glass is doomed to mirror his surroundings, and in each unfolding episode of the narrative, every character who comes into contact with the protagonist is furnished with a true reflection of him- or herself.⁶ The space around the protagonist arrays itself as though untouched by his presence, and in this peculiar absence, the reader is privy to startling glimpses of social worlds.

Because the protagonist's invisibility is a problem of being seen by others, the puzzle of his identity reflects a social practice. Ellison's opening paragraph rapidly establishes the terrain of the book as a whole; a wild array of episodes unfolds, but even the most fantastic flights—and perhaps especially those moments—are firmly anchored in social perception. With *Invisible Man*, Ellison took apart the modern novel in order to dissect American social dynamics. Ellison's singular hero must ultimately realize that he is himself nothing more than a "little man";

the text charts the unraveling of a promising young man, but his devolution leads to a social awakening.

This nobody's unique vantage point thus affords him social knowledge, for his invisibility marks a standpoint that opens a window onto the workings of his world. This knowledge, which comes at the expense of identity, is reminiscent of Lukács's discussion of the proletariat, a subject who is little more than an object but whose wretched commodification is itself the key to understanding the system as a whole.⁷

Fredric Jameson championed this paradoxical subject position in a discussion of standpoint theory, an epistemology according to which, "owing to its structural situation in the social order and the specific forms of oppression and exploitation unique to that situation, each group lives the world in a phenomenologically specific way that allows it to see, or better still, that makes it unavoidable for that group to see and to know, features of the world that remain obscure, invisible, or merely occasional and secondary for other groups" (Jameson, "History" 144). In its phenomenological specificity, the marked body perpetually shapes the subject's horizon.⁸ Standpoint theory has been advanced most significantly by feminist epistemologists who insist that "all knowledge is located and situated" (Hekman 227).⁹ The raced body of Ellison's hero presents a situated epistemology that unveils the processes of racial formation at the same time that his invisibility ensures his social death.

Like *Invisible Man*, *No-No Boy* presents a protagonist whose lack of development permits him to see a totality. Okada's protagonist is Ichiro Yamada, a "no-no boy," a Japanese American who refused both to serve in the military and to swear unqualified allegiance to the nation.¹⁰ The story begins with Ichiro just released from serving time in two different prisons:

Two weeks after his twenty-fifth birthday, Ichiro got off a bus at Second and Main in Seattle. He had been gone four years, two in camp and two in prison.

Walking down the street that autumn morning with a small, black suitcase, he felt like an intruder in a world to which he had no claim. It was just enough that he should feel this way, for, of his own free will, he had stood before the judge and said that he would not go into the army. At the time there was no other choice for him. That was when he was twenty-three, a man of twenty-three. Now, two years older, he was even more of a man.

Christ, he thought to himself, just a goddamn kid is all I was. Didn't

know enough to wipe my own nose. What the hell have I done? What am I doing back here? Best thing I can do would be to kill some son of a bitch and head back to prison. (1)

This opening weighs Ichiro's twenty-five years against the four years spent evenly divided between camp and prison. Ichiro has been locked away for the length of the U.S. involvement in World War II, and the narrative queries whether these four years nullify the twenty-one that preceded them. Ichiro was relocated and interned at the age when he ought to have claimed the full rights of American citizenship, and as a result he emerges from the four years of incarceration "a goddamn kid."

Significantly, Ichiro's story opens by invoking the age twenty-three, not twenty-one. The text dwells on his moment before the judge, when, after two years of forced removal, Ichiro refused to accept being drafted into military service. With this introduction, the text presents its central dilemma: whether Ichiro acted "of his own free will" or "there was no other choice for him." This conundrum of choice lies at the juncture between Ichiro's two stints in captivity and reveals two vastly different frames of reference; whether he chose depends on whether we read his act in the context of his first incarceration.¹¹ The mirrors of "hard, distorting glass" that encase the invisible man reappear in Ichiro's dilemma, with the prisoner punished for acknowledging his imprisonment presenting an image of justice seen through a warping circus mirror.

When Ichiro imagines killing "some son of a bitch" in order to return to prison, he proposes a just incarceration against his own "crime"—and the incommensurability of these two acts ultimately lays bare a state of exception in which the rule of law has been suspended (see Agamben).¹² *No-No Boy* returns again and again to this originary moment of a prisoner stripped of his rights as a citizen yet burdened with the duties of citizenship because the no-no boy perpetually indicts the state; just as the invisible man is condemned to reflect his surroundings, the no-no boy is a constant reminder of injustice by the state—a truth that post-war America would rather forget.

Sitting with Nisei veterans in a bar in Chinatown, Ichiro proclaims, "Me, I'm not even a son of a bitch. I'm nobody, nothing. Just plain nothing" (76). This nobody is a special affront to Japanese Americans who fought in World War II because he unmasks their shared status as nobodies in the eyes of the state. The no-no boy casts into doubt choices that the Nisei themselves champion as heroic ones; indeed, the novel undermines military heroism in favor of an antihero who can only say

no. Ichiro repeatedly refuses attempts to enroll him into an apparatus of the state; he rejects every offer made to him and unveils the ideological underpinnings of every failed interpellation. As Ichiro moves from scene to scene and encounters characters who espouse differing perceptions of the state, *No-No Boy* echoes in miniature the exhaustive American portrait of Ellison's *Invisible Man*, which imagined North and South, left and right, in an epic that transformed a young man into a vengeful shadow. The totality of the invisible man's journey, in which he hits virtually every popular site of the postwar African American literary imagination, is matched by a different kind of whole in Okada's text. The no-no boy perpetually exposes a state of exception in which a person whose citizenship has been nullified can be punished for treason.

Yes and No

Ellison's prologue presents a scene of descent in which the invisible man witnesses two options for resistance, explained by an "old woman singing a spiritual as full of Weltschmerz as flamenco" (9). She describes her deadly love for her white master, the father of her sons: "I loved him and give him the poison and he withered away like a frost-bit apple. Them boys woulda tore him to pieces with they homemade knives" (11). We meet one of her angry sons, who burns with hatred. The description of the old woman's master as a "frost-bit apple," with its evocation of the tree of knowledge, makes evident that her choice reveals a terrible insight—and between her love and her sons' hate lies the drama of the novel. Ellison poses dark compliance against bitter revolt, and the book as a whole weighs these options: whether to destroy the master by saying yes or no.

The invisible man is pursued by these options as he continues his descent; hearing footsteps behind him, he cries out, "Hey Ras. . . . Is it you, Destroyer? Rinehart?" (12). The ghosts of Ras and Rinehart align themselves with the options provided by the old woman and her sons: Ras the Destroyer incites his people to lash out; Rinehart is a shape-shifting lover who conforms to every situation. These two options anchor the wide range of actions Ellison depicts in *Invisible Man*, which presents multiple variations of this conundrum of Ras or Rinehart, and the protagonist tries out both ends in the course of the book. In the prologue, the invisible man ultimately cannot choose and instead falls deeper underground, thus echoing his climactic fall into the street on

the chaotic night of the riot. Yet he continues to pursue these options in his underground lair. The prologue reveals that these options retain their structural force, and we may imagine that another fall deeper underground would reveal only another iteration of Ras and Rinehart.

Ichiro, too, is caught between two strategies. *No-No Boy* reads the double negation of the “no-no boy” as a refusal of both Japan and the United States. As Ichiro says in one of many long monologues, “I am not Japanese and I am not American” (16). The divisive logic of the war fractures his family, for his parents side with the Japanese empire and his brother breaks from them to join the U.S. Army. As he looks from one faction to the other, Ichiro locates himself: “he was the emptiness between the one and the other and could see flashes of the truth that was true for his parents and the truth that was true for his brother” (19). In registering “the truth that was true” for each side, Ichiro identifies situated truths; each truth is hitched to its standpoint, and Ichiro provides a glimpse into two warring epistemologies.

The most significant proponents of these positions are Ichiro’s mother, whose loyalty to Japan unhinges her mind, and his friend Kenji, a Nisei veteran whose ferocity in battle has irretrievably damaged his body. Both figures are doomed to death—indeed, they die at the same time. They perish locked in battle, but just as the invisible man is unable to shake the two options that mark the limits of his conduct, Ichiro must understand both situated truths to identify his own position between them. Ichiro remains trapped between these two options for the length of the novel, but it is within this double bind that he is forced to address the state that incarcerated all of them.

Ichiro’s mother is the enemy, pure and simple. In her blind loyalty to her native land, she refuses to believe in the spectacular evidence of Japan’s loss in World War II. Toughened into an unyielding figure, she welcomes Ichiro back from federal prison as a general welcoming back a favored soldier: “I am proud that you are back. . . . I am proud to call you my son” (11). The war has not ended for her—because she does not believe Japan has been defeated, she awaits orders from the emperor—and as a result, she clings to her enemy stance. She retains her loyalty at the expense of her sanity, and on the night of her death, we see her reduced to a machine gone haywire. Given irrefutable proof that Japan has lost the war, she responds by stacking cans one by one in the family store, only to “reach out suddenly with her arms and [sweep] the cans to the floor” (137), rebuilding and destroying over and over.

Ichiro, too, is unable to make a logical pattern out of the confused

muddle of his thoughts, as can be seen in a passage in which “his heart mercifully stacked the blocks of hope into a pattern of an America which would someday hold an unquestioned place for him” (52) only to have those blocks fall apart. His mother’s robotic stacking and striking reveals a literalization of Ichiro’s cogitations, in which we witness both the rigorous order of her pattern and its dangerous fragility. She cannot process the new information that undermines her very existence, and in her final moments, she retains her loyalty. She has long awaited the ship from Japan, and she determines to return; having packed her suitcase, she makes a symbolic voyage across the water by drowning in the bathtub. When she first triumphantly revealed to Ichiro that Japan’s ship would be coming for them, his response was categorical: “Nobody’s going to Japan” (13). Mother and son were both right: she would return, but in a state of utter abjection.

The novel figures her death as an image of Japan’s defeat, and as she drowns, her son and husband simultaneously focus on the same picture. Drunk inside the store, Ichiro’s father stares up at a poster on the wall: “he found himself trying to focus on the Lucky Strike poster which was stapled above the shelves of canned goods. The colors kept running together and the big red circle he knew was there refused to stay still or single” (180). Outside, in Kenji’s car, Ichiro curiously contemplates the same image: “He looked at the Lucky Strike sign and felt somewhat bothered when he couldn’t quite make out what he knew were the words ‘It’s toasted’” (180). The red circle of the poster suggests the Rising Sun as a figure for this disappearing mother; father and son both recognize the flag and miss the chance to save her. Ichiro’s mother cannot survive because imperial Japan no longer does.

Kenji, a decorated Nisei soldier, is the sworn enemy of Ichiro’s mother: “‘Ahh,’ she said shrilly and distastefully, ‘that one who lost a leg. How can you be friends with such a one? He is no good’” (103). Ichiro’s mother draws the battle lines, and Ichiro’s seeming alliance with “no good” Kenji seals his mother’s death. Ichiro’s mother and Kenji present a study in contrasts—woman and man, Issei and Nisei, Japanese and American—yet share a key similarity, for both are warriors. Kenji is deemed “kill-crazy” by his peers, who say that in combat he was “just like a madman. Couldn’t kill enough krauts” (80). And like Ichiro’s mother, Kenji has sustained mortal wounds: an infection from his amputated leg kills him. *No-No Boy* presents Kenji’s death as the price for American inclusion. Ichiro’s mother was destroyed by the rigid pattern she adhered to, and Kenji’s own pattern is no less dangerous. Kenji

calculates his loss to be offset by the gains his family made as a result of his military service: “If, in the course of things, the pattern called for a stump of a leg that wouldn’t stay healed, he wasn’t going to decry that fact, for that would mean another pattern with attendant changes which might not be as perfectly desirable as the one he cherished” (123). Kenji understands that he must be sacrificed for the pattern he desires.

On his deathbed, Kenji recalls shooting a German soldier in the war and expresses a fear that he must fight on in the afterlife: “if I’m still a Jap there and this guy’s still a German, I’ll have to shoot him again” (165). Soldiers cannot return to civilian life, however, and though Kenji is portrayed as having the material advantages of the postwar boom, he cannot enjoy them because he is frozen into a wartime stance (see Nguyen 61–86 on Ichiro’s postwar desires). Just as Ichiro’s mother conducts her life as though she is in a permanent war, Kenji’s father laments that his son’s “terrible wound paid no heed to the cessation of hostilities” (124). Ichiro ultimately comes to understand the contrasting “truths that are true” for both these fighters, who cannot imagine a world without combat.

These fighting poses reveal the narrow patterns available to this minority group in wartime America. World War II was a transforming event for Asians in the United States. As the war reordered the globe, it shifted the standing of a racialized minority on the domestic stage. In a discussion of the war’s crucial significance, Mae Ngai explains that

the foregrounding of state relations in midcentury Asian immigration and race policy was a change from the past. From the late nineteenth century until World War II, Chinese and then Asian exclusion was driven not principally by foreign policy but by the politics of domestic racism and economic competition. . . . A half-century of exclusion policy had already legally and culturally construed Asian Americans as unalterably foreign; war, hot and cold, imbued that foreignness with political implications of an unprecedented nature. (169)

The war established the precedence of interstate relations in the determination of Asian subjects within the United States, putting the status of these racial minorities at the mercy of foreign relations.

Ichiro’s mother and Kenji stake out political positions because their lives are inseparable from U.S. perceptions of Japan. The revelatory power of *No-No Boy* lies in its presentation of this ordering political binary: they must be either enemies or allies. Scholars of race and culture cannot conceive of identities divorced from political considerations, but

these selves reveal a brute politicization that ultimately stifles their existence. We may read Ichiro's continuing refusal to adopt an identity in the light of this dilemma: when he chooses not to take a side, he loses his claim to identity because Japanese Americans have been forced to identify with or against Japan. Ichiro is first a nobody because he is a no-no boy, but as he continues to say "no" after the war has ended, he reveals both the perpetuation of the wartime ordering structure and his impossible attempt to elude this determining force. Precisely because he does not embrace either enemy or ally position, he survives the divisive events of the novel—but at the expense of identity.

State of War

The social world revealed by the invisible man is a battlefield. The protagonist's grandfather first unveils this truth in a famous deathbed scene that haunts the entirety of *Invisible Man*. The protagonist recalls,

On his death-bed he called my father to him and said, "Son, after I'm gone I want you to keep up the good fight. I never told you, but our life is a war and I have been a traitor all my born days, a spy in the enemy's country ever since I give up my gun back in Reconstruction. Live with your head in the lion's mouth. I want you to overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open." (16)¹³

The grandfather's dying words seem to shift from Ras to Rinehart, warrior to traitor. By understanding that their lives are a war, the grandfather reverses the order of things put in place since Reconstruction: the "good fight" belongs to a traitor, and seeming acquiescence is coated in bile. The invisible man's grandfather twists his deathbed confession into an indictment and a continuing battle; the grandfather's words lay bare the bellicose world that determines the opposing figures of resistance the narrator repeatedly confronts. This unending war attaches the "good fight" to the traitor.

Okada, too, lays out a world turned upside-down by war; the preface to *No-No Boy* opens with Pearl Harbor to describe a swift transformation: "As of that moment, the Japanese in the United States became, by virtue of their ineradicable brownness and the slant eyes which, on close inspection, will seldom appear slanty, animals of a different breed" (vii). We may read Okada's preface as a necessary frame for the story

that follows. His fictional characters simply cannot free themselves from this overdetermining context and instead serve to magnify the force of wartime designations on their postwar lives. In requiring this preamble, *No-No Boy's* preface functions in a manner analogous to *Invisible Man's* underground frame, in which Ellison presents the voice of someone who has awakened from his aboveground existence to contemplate his identity. Just as the voice that opens *Invisible Man* proclaims the narrator's invisibility, Okada's preface states that Japanese Americans have undergone a metamorphosis, becoming "animals of a different breed."

The preface recounts the process of internment and then presents an individual Japanese American, "a good Japanese-American who had volunteered for the army" (x). This Nisei soldier attempts to describe internment to his lieutenant, a "blond giant from Nebraska" (xi), who responds in disbelief: "'Hell's bells,' he exclaimed, 'if they'd done that to me, I wouldn't be sitting in the belly of a broken-down B-24 going back to Guam for a reconnaissance mission in Japan'" (xi). The lieutenant from Nebraska expresses a sentiment that the Japanese American soldier cannot. Indeed, the "blond giant" undermines the "good Japanese-American" and puts his virtue into question: like the traitor's "good fight" in *Invisible Man*, the revelation of U.S. injustice—symbolized by the "broken-down B-24"—casts the good Japanese American in a distinctly un-American light.

The good Japanese American, however, has a bad Japanese American in mind. In response to the Nebraskan's indignation, he recalls to himself the plight of a friend who refused the draft and thus "was in a different kind of uniform" (xi). This bad Japanese American pays a steep price for acting on the outrage freely expressed by the white American. In fact, the suggestive link between the blond giant and the bad Nisei in the preface is preserved in the novel: when Ichiro returns home to the family store, he expresses his disgust by saying, "Hell's bells" (11), echoing the Nebraskan. If we consider the matching sentiments of the white American soldier and the Nisei draft resister, we may read Ichiro's no to the judge as a futile attempt to speak as a free American. Ichiro is compelled to repeat this inaugural no, an impulse we may read against the grandfather's exhortation to "overcome 'em with yeses," for they are the only responses available to those who understand that they must survive "in the lion's mouth."

In a series of convoluted ruminations, the novel presents Ichiro's running confession for having resisted the draft, but he is unable to expiate his crime because it emerges from a larger crime on the part of the state. Ichiro's tortured thoughts inevitably return to the wartime logic

of internment, in which the chief executive ceded his authority to military commanders. In 1942, President Roosevelt deemed a swath of the nation a “military zone,” which facilitated the removal of the Japanese community under the guise of military necessity.¹⁴ These disappearing bodies correspond to a profound shift in FDR’s presidency; with major Democratic losses in the 1942 congressional elections, “the New Deal was dead, to be replaced by ‘Dr. Win the War,’ as FDR himself phrased it” (LaFeber 224). The War Relocation Authority (WRA), the agency formed to manage the internment, stood at the cusp of two different regimes; though it bore an acronym and the organizational structure typical of New Deal institutions, it was part of a new direction for a war president. The incarceration of Japanese Americans thus marks a crucial transformation from progressive domestic policies born in the 1930s to the transcendence of security concerns. In the tortured tale of the no-no boy who cannot share in the liberatory rhetoric of World War II, we discover a glimpse of the unending war to come.

As Ichiro thinks back to the origins of his no, he rewinds back to his two years of incarceration in the camps. Ichiro relates his only account of his internment in the story of Tommy, a Bible-thumping friend who convinces Ichiro to attend church with him while they are on furlough from the camps to work in the sugar-beet fields. Though they are not welcome in one church, they find a friendly one, only to discover that though this church will accept Japanese Americans, it simply ignores “the white-haired Negro standing in the back” (230). Ichiro’s memory of wartime incarceration thus leads to a critique of American racism, with the African American in the back of the church revealing an American structure of racial abjection. Thus, when *No-No Boy* returns to the camps, it necessarily calls to mind racist logic, the central ideology that created the camps, and hence a key link between the seemingly extraordinary fact of wartime incarceration and the quotidian truth of racism bracingly revealed by the grandfather in *Invisible Man*.

Okada hints at cross-racial solidarity as missed opportunities in the text, from an early confrontation between Ichiro and “a bunch of Negroes . . . horsing around raucously in front of a pool parlor” (5) who hurl racist slurs at Ichiro to a later instance in which we hear about a friendship between Gary, another no-no boy, and an African American named Birdie that results in a near-tragic accident. In the final chapter, Rabbit, a black shoe shiner, approves of Ichiro: “Good boy. If they had come for me, I would of told them where to shove their stinking uniforms too” (238). Rabbit’s radical perspective, which turns a no-no boy into a good boy, curiously recalls the blond giant from the preface—but

with a crucial difference: though the Japanese American does not have the right to voice the sentiments of the white soldier, he may be able to go underground.

The no-no boy cannot imagine a black-yellow coalition, but Okada suggests an underground for his protagonist in which he could “keep up the good fight.” By the book’s end, Ichiro wanders alone: “He walked along, thinking, searching, thinking and probing, and, in the darkness of the alley of that community that was a tiny bit of America, he chased that faint and elusive insinuation of promise as it continued to take shape in mind and heart” (251). The novel finally demonstrates that his is not an individual problem but one that involves a larger community. Ichiro has done nothing but walk and think over the course of the novel, but the sentence suggests an emergent group identity, “that community that was a tiny bit of America.” This dark alley is Seattle’s Chinatown, first introduced in the novel as “the ugly street with the ugly buildings among the ugly people which was a part of America and, at the same time, would never be wholly America” (71). The transformation of the “ugly street [that] would never be wholly America” to “the alley of that community that was a tiny bit of America” is the fruit of Ichiro’s incessant thinking. When Ichiro focuses on the racist injustice of internment, he finds a new subject: Asian America.¹⁵

This inchoate radicalism, however, does little to ease the ugliness that overwhelms Ichiro. During his first walk home from prison, Ichiro notes that “the war had wrought violent changes upon the people” (5), and the closing suggestion of a racialized coalition definitively closes off a fantasy of America whose loss Ichiro mourns throughout the text. As he starts to doubt the existence of this imagined nation, Ichiro wonders, “Where is that place with the clean, white cottages surrounding the new, red-brick church, with the clean, white steeple, where the families all have two children, one boy and one girl, and a shiny new car in the garage and a dog and a cat and life is like living in the land of the happily-ever-after? Surely it must be around here someplace, someplace in America” (159). This dream has been shattered by the war, and no return to a prewar existence is possible. The final promise that Ichiro traces does not have recourse to this fantasy and instead hints at an ongoing battle. In fact, the “mind and heart” that conclude the book are unable to extricate themselves from wartime logic: the phrase echoes the familiar refrain of “hearts and minds” that often accompanies the military maneuvers of the national security state.¹⁶ The continuing war makes “the land of the happily-ever-after” impossible for the no-no boy, who inhabits an obscure alley.

Japan as enemy conferred on Japanese Americans a new political identity, and this new status cut the roots of a population that had literally worked the American soil for three generations. Just as their labors within the United States could not halt the wholesale nullification of their citizenship, their expressions of loyalty during the war were insufficient to reinstate their rights. The celebrated Nisei veterans of World War II proved their worth as soldiers, not as civilians, and their heroics had little prospect of penetrating into the domestic sphere.¹⁷ Indeed, the cold war redemption of Japanese Americans in the United States was less an achievement by the Nisei than the result of the rehabilitation of Japan in the postwar era, when it was fashioned into a crucial American foothold in a region threatened by Stalin and Mao.¹⁸

The about-face of American perceptions of Japan, which switched from sworn enemy to devoted ally, marks a larger shift in notions of war and peace in the United States. In reading Japan's changing significance for the United States, Akira Iriye suggests a seismic shift in American conceptions of war and peace, with the previously antithetical relation between war and peace in the prewar era giving way to interlocking understandings of the terms.¹⁹ After 1941, "war was necessary to enjoy the fruits of peace" and "appeasement, connoting peace at any price, was considered a greater sin than war" (Iriye 195). Wartime became a permanent state of affairs after 1941; in marked contrast to the interwar years, the postwar era quickly lapsed into a cold war.

Peace itself was a casualty of World War II, and we may register the far-reaching implications of this new world order in Asian American communities. Japanese Americans became model minorities when Japan became an American ally²⁰—achieving a level of incorporation impossible in the prewar exclusion era—but their gains were perpetually tied to international relations, so that their perilous position could be reversed with a single overseas blow. In a domestic arena newly determined by distant wars, America's periodic bellicose intrusions in Asia unsettled Asian Americans. The fiercest battles of World War II were fought against Japan, and the hot wars of the cold war flared up in Japan's former imperial hinterlands. Japan became America's military base in the postwar era, and the subsequent conflict on the Korean Peninsula, never resolved, caught new fire in Vietnam.

The wartime treatment of Japanese Americans and their subsequent recuperation set a pattern for minority subjectivity overdetermined by interstate relations. Cold war liberalism dusted off the concept of the melting pot, but Asians in the United States had never been permitted to integrate in the process, famously sketched by the sociologist Robert

Park, that shepherded the outsider into the nation. Park's final stage of assimilation required a separation from the old country that was simply unavailable to Japanese Americans.²¹ American racism kept Asians from integrating along the lines of the ethnicity model, a fact that became unavoidable during World War II. The unequal treatment of groups from the Axis powers within the United States—a source of bitterness noted in virtually every Japanese American account of internment—permitted Germans and Italians to follow a model of incorporation, while Lt. General DeWitt, the military commander who administered the evacuation, famously insisted that “a Jap’s a Jap.”²²

The political identifications born of U.S.-Japan relations continue to hold significant sway in Asian American subjectivity. Neutrality—like peace—became cause for suspicion in the cold war, and Asian American subjects were overlaid with divisive political identities: enemy or ally. This Manichean political overdetermination, however, has the potential to link Asian Americans to other American subjects shaped by ongoing war. Thus, at the same time that wartime subjectivities enforce specific transnational frames,²³ the binary of enemy or ally carries within it a potential for solidarity with a disenfranchised group that has not stopped fighting since Reconstruction. By the end of *No-No Boy*, Ichiro must walk alone in the dark, but the disappearing path he finally discovers is a well-trodden one.

The privilege of being nobody has long been enshrined in literary works, from Odysseus's escape from the cave of the Cyclops—a scene Ellison restaged in *Invisible Man*²⁴—to Gatsby, Fitzgerald's bid to immortalize the modern American nobody. In “The Little Man at Chehaw Station,” Ellison evinced his discontent with the nobody who looks on in the manner of the ox mutely observing Icarus's fall; instead, *Invisible Man* builds toward a calamitous fall for the raced witness. *Invisible Man* and *No-No Boy* are part of a curious genre. Kenneth Burke christened *Invisible Man* a bildungsroman, but Burke's reading of the education of Ellison's protagonist—from “apprenticeship” to “mastery” (67)—tempts us to reverse the progression and classify *Invisible Man* as a sort of bildungsroman in reverse. There is no shortage of literary works that portray a disintegrating protagonist, but Ellison's nobody famously threatened the form of the novel. In “Brave Words for a Startling Occasion,” his 1953 address at the National Book Award ceremony, Ellison explained that “the forms of so many of the works which impressed me were too restricted to contain the experience which I knew”; neither Jamesian realism nor a lesser genre like the “‘hard-boiled’ novel” would

suffice (151, 152). Instead, he created a fiction “with all the bright magic of a fairy tale” (153), and Okada’s improbable fiction, another tale of a young man who rejects higher education to meander through an urban nightmare, shares in Ellison’s desire to weave a grim fable around an empty center. These dark fairy tales annihilate a young man and force him to keep wandering in order to reveal an American scene contorted by perpetual war.

Notes

1. We may categorize this scholarship into two types: those that stem from W. E. B. Du Bois’s foundational evocation of the color line and present a genealogy of racial solidarity and those that analyze friction between African American and Asian American groups, as in accounts of the 1992 Los Angeles riots. Both Mullen and Prashad offer recent examples of racial solidarity, as does *The Afro-Asian Century*. Both J. Lee and Song provide recent examinations of racial discord.

2. See Espiritu for an account of the radical coalition and its cultural borrowings.

3. See Chin, “Come All,” for his polemical stance on Asian American literature. For a literary evocation of Asian American reliance on African American culture, see Chin, *Chickencoop*.

4. See Daniel Kim’s *Writing* for an illuminating discussion of political intersections in aesthetic renderings of African American and Asian American experience.

5. Readings of literary works by Asian American cultural nationalists often discuss these artists’ valorization of African American aesthetics and politics, but this cultural link has only recently been extended to the pre-1970s texts promoted by the cultural nationalists. In scholarship on *No-No Boy* in particular, African American literature and experience have rarely been discussed as a frame or influence.

6. See Harper for a reading of the protagonist’s mirroring effects (116–144).

7. Ellison’s abhorrence of social science may seem at odds with this linkage, but as Ferguson points out, *Invisible Man* is indebted to a social vision significantly influenced by Marx. Ellison’s 1944 review of *An American Dilemma* interestingly critiques Myrdal because “he has felt it necessary to carry on a running battle with Marxism” and argues that the “Negro problem” resides in “the blind spot in our knowledge of society where Marx cries out for Freud and Freud cries out for Marx” (335). *Invisible Man*, of course, skewers Marx and Freud in its portrayal of the Brotherhood and the effete white man’s *Totem and Taboo*.

8. Alcoff offers a phenomenological reading that refutes theories of interpellation in an attempt to imagine subject formation without negation.

9. The significance of Marx—in particular, the relationship between gender and class difference—is a matter of major debate within feminist epistemology, as is the question of race. See Collins for an example of a raced variant of the

theory that does not rely on Marx but turns instead to Simmel's stranger to argue that the raced outsider is able "to see patterns that may be more difficult for those immersed in the situation to see" (104).

10. "No-no boy" was the popular name within the Japanese American community for those who answered "no" to two questions on a divisive loyalty questionnaire administered by the War Relocation Authority in 1943.

11. See Ngai for a discussion of citizenship renunciation in the camps.

12. See also Sakai for an application of Agamben's state of exception to the Japanese American case presented in *No-No Boy*.

13. Warren provides a historical analysis of these lines: "This sentence economically references three distinct historical moments, the first being the armed struggle during the Civil War; the second marking the failed direct political struggle of the Reconstruction era; and the third indicating the period of 'everyday' politics of resistance" (33).

14. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 reads in part, "I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of War . . . to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any and all persons may be excluded."

15. Ling reads the radical potential of the novel: "Ichiro's ongoing confusion about his predicament also marks the political potentials of Okada's novel in the 1950s; it kept alive a marginal sensibility replete with Okada's moral anguish about racial oppression against Japanese Americans during World War II and with his yearning for social change which had not yet found its agents" (375).

16. See Daniel Y. Kim, "Once More," for a reading of this phrase.

17. T. Fujitani reconsiders "the belief that military heroism earned Japanese Americans their equal rights as U.S. citizens" (242), pointing out instead that "the prominence of Japanese American military valor in the postwar U.S. war memory must be seen as having been enabled, at least in part, by the postwar and cold war position of Japan" (253).

18. LaFeber discusses the necessity of Japan for Truman: by 1946, "the key to Asia was becoming Japan" (259).

19. Iriye notes that in the 1930s Japan was consistently described as "warlike" (191); "within a few years of Japan's defeat, however, the country was being described in very different terms. Almost as soon as he got to Tokyo, General Douglas MacArthur decided that the Japanese were capable of becoming a peace-loving people" (192).

20. Fujitani notes that Japanese Americans became a model minority because modernization "remade Japan into . . . the 'global model minority'" (253).

21. See Simpson (43-75) for a reading of Park's assimilation cycle in the camps. Yu examines the Asian American sociologists mentored by Park.

22. Dower contrasts this slogan to accounts of the German enemy: "The implications of perceiving the enemy as 'Nazis' on the one hand and 'Japs' on the other were enormous, for this left space for the recognition of the 'good German,' but scant comparable place for 'good Japanese'" (78).

23. See Chuh for a discussion of *No-No Boy's* "Nikkei transnation."

24. See Benston for a reading of unnamings in Ellison that takes note of "Homer's *Odyssey*, whose hero calls himself 'no name' (or 'no man') whenever he wishes to exercise the shattering power of surprise" (153).

Intertextuality, Translation, and Postcolonial Misrecognition in Aimé Césaire

PAUL BRESLIN

In this essay I attempt to work out the implications—for general propositions about “postcolonial” literature—of the divergent reception histories of two plays by the late Martiniquan man of letters Aimé Césaire. In American and British universities, *Une Tempête* (*A Tempest*) is by far the most taught and discussed of Césaire’s four plays (counting the dramatic poem *Et les chiens se taisaient* [*And the Dogs Were Silent*]). There have been three English translations of *Une Tempête*, two of which are in print and readily available. *La Tragédie du roi Christophe* (*The Tragedy of King Christophe*) has been translated only once, in a long out-of-print version by Ralph Manheim that, as Rodney E. Harris pointed out, “corresponds neither to the first edition of 1963 nor the revision of 1970” (“English” 33) and, as Femi Ojo-Ade has observed, “lacks a great deal of the spirit exhibited in the original” (14). The *MLA International Bibliography* lists forty-four articles on *Une Tempête*, twenty-nine in English, fourteen in French, and one in Italian. For *La Tragédie*, the situation is almost exactly reversed: of forty-three articles, fifteen are in English and the rest mostly in French, with a few in Italian, Spanish, or German.

And yet, according to Nick Nesbitt (127), *La Tragédie du roi Christophe* is by critical consensus Césaire’s greatest play. Raphaël Confiant, in his sharply critical *Aimé Césaire: Une Traversée paradoxale du siècle*, regards *Christophe* and *Cahier d’un retour au pays natale* as the two works that will ensure Césaire’s reputation in posterity. He rates *Une Tempête* dead last among the plays (157, 170). David Bradby, in *Modern French Drama 1940–1990*, treats *Christophe* and *Une Saison au Congo* as “major plays,” relegating *Une Tempête* to a single paragraph (145). Admiration for *Christophe* has driven me to undertake a new version, with my co-translator—and my French tutor for most of 2007—Rachel Ney.

Once I could actually read—not just laboriously decipher—the play in French, I realized what I had been missing. Since many American and British academicians can read French well enough, the prominence of *Une Tempête* and the relative obscurity of *Christophe* began to seem odd. What does this disparity reveal about our perception of Césaire, and in what ways might it exemplify a larger tendency toward misrecognition or self-imposed blindness in our attention to postcolonial texts? Why have we English speakers allowed this remarkable play to be completely upstaged?

Robert Eric Livingstone gives one obvious answer: “thanks to its canonical source, *A Tempest* remains Césaire’s best-known play, and the one most accessible to a literary pedagogy” (192). *Christophe*, in contrast, alludes to historical events from the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, which remains, despite the increased attention of historians since the 1980s, an underreported story. We can place *Une Tempête* in a series of other Caribbean and Latin American rewritings of *The Tempest*, from José Enrique Rodó through George Lamming, Roberto Fernández-Retamar, and Kamau Brathwaite. More broadly, we can understand all these New World tempests as instances of the “Empire writes back” frame proposed by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, according to which rewritings of metropolitan canonical works from the periphery reverse the dominant discourse of the “other.” This approach has the fatal attraction of convenience. As Lisa McNee remarked in her article on teaching *Une Tempête*: “Nonspecialists can effectively teach such texts in conjunction with the European texts they know well without doing a great deal of background research” (198).

But there is one further reason for the greater success of *Une Tempête* in crossing the language barrier: its conformability to the genre David Scott called “anti-colonial romance” (7–8), which narrates the triumphant overcoming of colonial oppression. Scott still thought it necessary, in 2004, to challenge the persistent assumption that anticolonial romance was the inevitable structure of postcolonial narrative, even though neocolonial vicissitudes of independence have foreclosed its vision of a triumphal future. This narrative template is above all *allegorical*. The story takes its significance from being mapped onto either a larger, generalized myth of anticolonial resistance or an existent narrative that can be reframed as a fable of anticolonial resistance. *Une Tempête* is an instance of anticolonial romance to the degree that it reads *The Tempest* as a colonialist allegory that it reframes as an anticolonialist counter-allegory. As Jonathan Goldberg found as recently as 2004, “prevailing

views of the play” still take it “as simply a reversal and refusal of the colonialist plot of *The Tempest*” (94).

Une Tempête, in all the ways just described, is more accessible and seemingly transparent than *Christophe* (though, as I will show, appearances can be deceiving). That is probably so even for a French reader. A. James Arnold comments on the reduction of Shakespeare’s rich linguistic palette in Césaire’s rendering and adds that *Christophe*, in contrast, is Shakespearian in its wide range of linguistic registers (“D’Haïti” 133). *Christophe*, then, because of its extraordinarily wide range of diction and idiom, is harder to read and much harder to translate than is *Une Tempête*.

And yet *Une Tempête* is a more complex play than most critics have acknowledged. Its very accessibility lulls us into thinking that its allegory is univocal and obvious, that all the relevant maps are clearly spread out before us. There is more to it than meets the eye, however, although what emerges is not so much a deeper coherence as an energetic collision of multiple and sometimes incompatible allusive contexts.

The point is that we who approach postcolonial texts as cultural outsiders need to respect what Édouard Glissant called “opaqueness—that is, the irreducible density of the other” (133). It means doing more homework before venturing sweeping generalizations. After all, learning a language takes a long time. I want, to twist a phrase from Wallace Stevens, to make the postcolonial a little hard to see.

Translation versus Allegory

What if we took translation as a central metaphor for our engagements with postcolonial texts instead of expecting them to be some version of anticolonial allegory? In that case, the genre and the relevant contexts of the text in question would have to be inferred from our engagement with it—and with whatever we can recover of the specific situation in which it was written—rather than assumed in advance.

Using the translation metaphor yields several beneficial consequences. First, it unsettles the distinction between that which belongs to “the metropole” and its literary canon and that which belongs to “the periphery,” on the outside of the canon looking in. A language, even one that was once imposed by coercion, belongs to whoever can use it. If you are, say, a white native speaker of French, then in a nontrivial sense Césaire belongs to you more than to a black Jamaican who doesn’t

speak French. Conversely, an educated Martiniquan is likely to read Paul Valéry with more discernment than will an uneducated Parisian. And an illiterate Haitian familiar with *voudou* will know some things highly relevant to *La Tragédie du roi Christophe* of which an educated Parisian would most likely be ignorant. One starts from somewhere, with one's own linguistic and cultural equipment, and enters a text that is in part familiar and in part strange—and differently strange, differently familiar, according to one's point of departure.

Second, the metaphor prompts an awareness that many acts of interpretation and encounter resemble translation in that they map complex systems of signification onto other complex systems of signification, negotiating not only between languages but between local variants within a language and between the customs or manners of one place and another. Translation is messier, more constrained by the local and contingent, than allegory. One language never quite maps onto another. Within each language, multiple discursive sets of signification converge on a phrase or even a single word and then part ways again. Translation can try to create an analogous texture, but only in other terms—it can be an analogue but never a copy.

Third, the metaphor of translation instills respect for the complexity, difficulty, and subtlety in language, thought, and cultural codes that we encounter as “other.” It may make us less glib in generalizing about “otherness” or “the other,” more inclined to do homework before breaking into theory.

Finally, with dramatic texts, the metaphor of translation calls attention to the role of performance: the decisions made in the theater by the director, the stage and set designers, and the actors mediate the text on the page. In Césaire's case, these intermediaries play an especially crucial role. Césaire believed, as did his director, Jean-Marie Serreau, that the text should be modified with each performance. Both preferred productions that risked a baroque incoherence to those that stressed tight formal unity. Performances included extensive improvisation by the actors, and Serreau, a white Frenchman, gave his predominantly black actors the initiative in suggesting styles of gesture, movement, dance, and song. Both *Une Tempête* and *Christophe* exist in more than one published version, and there were variant unpublished versions, too (see J. Miller; Laville). To avoid confusion, I have stuck to the 1969 Éditions du Seuil text of *Une Tempête* and the 1970 Présence Africaine text of *La Tragédie du roi Christophe*, the author's last extant versions of each work.

The Mappings and Mismappings of *Une Tempête*

If we consider the origin and initial productions of *Une Tempête*, we realize that the play maps itself onto several additional intertexts beyond Shakespeare's play. Césaire recalled that he had been planning to write something about the situation of blacks in the United States when Serreau asked him to write an adaptation of *The Tempest* (Mbom 88). Perhaps in deference to Césaire's American preoccupation, Serreau's production set the play in the American West of frontier times, and the first performances were planned for a festival in Tunisia—which brings in the continent of Africa as well as, more specifically, the court party's embarkation point in *The Tempest*. So we have a play written to express something about the situation of blacks in the United States yet set not in the plantation South or the ghettos of the northern cities but in the frontier West and to be performed in the Maghreb. Caliban's first word is "Uhuru" (Swahili for "freedom"), thus moving the frame of reference to sub-Saharan Kenya and South Africa. Moreover, Césaire's tripartite racial scheme of a white Prospero, mulatto Ariel, and black Caliban evokes a Caribbean conception of race as a continuum rather than the sharply binary construction prevalent in the United States. All these reference points converge through a play of multiple analogies more complex—and more problematic—than the conventional summary of the play as an inversion of Shakespeare's suggests.

The performance history of *Une Tempête* complicates matters further. Several critics have remarked that Césaire's use of masks exposes race as a socially constructed category (see Livingston; Sarnecki; Porter.) The opening scene presents a "Meneur de Jeu"¹ to distribute masks, seemingly at random, to the actors. Césaire calls the play an adaptation "pour un théâtre nègre" ("for a black theater"); all the actors were to be black, even though all the characters except Caliban, Ariel, and Eshu are racially "white." But in the early performances of the play, Prospero was played by a white actor, Michel Lonsdale. What might an audience have concluded from this exception? Possibly that Prospero, who functions in both Shakespeare's *Tempest* and Césaire's as a surrogate playwright, manipulating the comings and goings of the other characters, is the source of racial whiteness; he is the original represented in the masks worn by the others. Caliban derides Ariel's hope that even Prospero will eventually emerge from his racism, but if Prospero's whiteness is represented by a removable mask, this outcome does not seem wholly implausible.

Without the mask, what the audience sees endorses Caliban's argument. Here, the director's "translation" matters.

One striking but, I believe, hitherto unremarked difference between the two plays lies in the *frequency* of the word *nègre* in *Christophe* and its surprising, near-total absence in *Une Tempête*. Given the prominence of the word in Césaire's oeuvre, its centrality to the conception of *négritude*, one might have expected to hear Prospero flinging it at Caliban and Caliban ironically flinging it back. Although Caliban is explicitly described in the cast of characters as "*nègre*," the word reappears neither in Prospero's abuse of Caliban nor in Caliban's ripostes but only in Ariel's final song, when the spirit imagines himself as a thrush whistling its call of "*pioche nègre, pioche nègre*," or "black navy, black navy" (Césaire, *Une Tempête* [hereinafter *UT*] 84, my trans.)² to rekindle the slave's yearning for freedom. Prospero, Trinculo, and Stephano all heap abuse on Caliban: he is called a savage, a beast, a "*Zindien*" (rendered by Crispin as "Nindian"),³ a monster, and once (by Prospero) an ape (*singe*), but never once *un nègre*.

One possible reason for this omission is the ambiguous provenance of the name "Caliban," explored by Joan Dayan in "Playing Caliban: Césaire's *Tempest*." Caliban's name, she points out, when read as an anagram of "can(n)ibal," takes us back to the annihilated pre-Columbian past, to the allegedly cannibalistic Kalinago ("Caribs"). The word *cannibal*, says Dayan, stands "for what had been destroyed" (136). Shakespeare "delocalizes" the name, thus discouraging literal identification with either blacks or native Caribbeans, so that Caliban's indeterminacy performs his mobility, his resistance to discursive reduction and mastery.

According to Peter Hulme, Shakespeare did not "delocalize" Caliban unassisted. He inherited a translation problem, compounded by geographical and historical errors, from Columbus himself. "Canibales," says Hulme, was Columbus's transcription of the word the Taino used to designate their enemies—or so, with six weeks' practice in the language, he took it to mean. From it comes the word *Carib*, and from *Carib* comes *cannibal*, since Columbus believed (without having witnessed it) that the Caribs ate human flesh. Then, in his journal, Columbus gradually conflated the word *Canibales* with the word *Can* (the Khan he expected to find upon reaching China, unaware that the Mongol dynasty had fallen in 1368). The "*Canibales*" came to mean for him the soldiers of the Khan, who he supposed must be near at hand (Hulme 22). Thus the word *cannibal* and its anagram *Caliban* are traces of the

New World's opacity to its first European visitors, twin snarls of linguistic and geographical misprision.

By the time Césaire took up the name, there had been further mappings of the Afro-Caribbean onto the Native Caribbean, most notably by Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who rechristened Saint-Domingue with the old Taino name for the island, Haïti. In so doing, he signified that the Haitian Revolution was a negation “not only of French colonialism, but of the entire history of European empire in the Americas” (Dubois 299). Césaire's avoidance of the racially specific term *nègre* confers a similar breadth of reference on Caliban's struggle with Prospero.

Dayan remarks that *Une Tempête* should be thought of not as supplemental to *The Tempest* but rather in “reciprocal” relation to it (152). One consequence of a reciprocal approach is the recognition that the way one reads Césaire's play depends in part on the way one reads Shakespeare's. In 1968, *The Tempest* was usually still taught as an allegory of providence, with Prospero as the benevolent providential agent. It was unambiguously a comedy, with the strong closure of general reconciliation and a dynastic marriage. Caliban's revolt was the stuff of low comedy, an antimasque to be answered by Prospero's masque of spirits, not a formidable or politically legitimate threat.

Rereading *The Tempest* as he began work on his adaptation, Césaire bridled at the conception of Prospero as a beneficent mage. “En relisant la pièce, j'ai été frappé par le totalitarisme de Prospéro. . . . Je m'insurge lorsque l'on dit que c'est l'homme du pardon. Ce qui est essentiel chez lui, c'est la volonté de puissance” (qtd. in Mbom 90 [“In rereading the play, I was struck by Prospero's totalitarianism. I objected when he was described as a man of forgiveness. What is essential in him is the will to power”])).

Between the time when Césaire reread the play and the emergence of the “writing back” framework in postcolonial studies, British and American Shakespeare scholarship had begun to reach similar conclusions. This new consensus arose partly, perhaps, because of a growing awareness of Caribbean rewritings of the play such as Césaire's but more largely, as the foreword to the first edition of the influential collection *Political Shakespeare* (1985) put it, because of “a break-up of political consensus” in Britain beginning in the 1970s and a concomitant “break-up of traditional assumptions about the values and goals of literary criticism” (Dollimore and Sinfield vii)—a change that had its counterpart in the United States. Instead of regarding *The Tempest* as an allegory

transcending its historical context, critics began to read it as a response to early British colonialism. The New World travel narratives alluded to in *The Tempest* were no longer taken as mere source material but now viewed as keys to the political meaning of the play, which represents, as Paul Brown's essay in *Political Shakespeare* maintains, "a moment of *historical* crisis. The crisis is the struggle to produce a coherent discourse adequate to the complex requirements of British colonialism in its initial stage" (48). Once the play is read in relation to the legitimation of the colonialist venture, Prospero loses his ethereal benignity. "[W]e may look askance at Prospero's providential or benevolently magical actions. Recent criticism has encouraged such suspicions," wrote Robin Kirkpatrick in 2000, presenting instead a Machiavellian Prospero, "the product, simultaneously, of Renaissance learning and of Milanese power-politics" (88). And, as Stephen Greenblatt argues, the "troubling questions" the play raises about the legitimacy of Prospero's authority center, "for a modern audience, . . . on the figure of Caliban, whose claim to the legitimate possession of the island" is "never really answered, or rather is answered . . . only with hatred, torture, and enslavement" ("*Tempest*" 232).

The newer, "suspicious" readings give us a Shakespearian *Tempest* that has begun to make Césaire's case for him. One may then begin to read Césaire's version not as inverting Shakespeare's but as bringing forward latent meanings or making visible its internal ambiguities and misgivings.

Perhaps most important, these new readings revise even our sense of *The Tempest*'s genre. Once Prospero falls off his pedestal, his role as surrogate playwright is weakened, for we no longer conflate the play Shakespeare wrote and the play Prospero attempts to write within it. Caliban's counterplot, no longer merely the stuff of low comedy, begins to look more like a legitimate challenge crushed by unjust power, and Caliban becomes Prospero's rival for the role of surrogate playwright. *The Tempest* begins to look less like a comedy, with strong, unambiguous closure, and more like a late addition to the generically ambiguous "problem plays," with Prospero reprising the role of another unlikable manipulator, *Measure for Measure*'s Vincentio, the "Duke of dark corners." One needs to stop reading *Une Tempête* as a simple inversion of Shakespeare's colonialist plot because doing so oversimplifies not just Césaire but also Shakespeare.

Having recognized the uneasy accommodation of *The Tempest* to the comic conventions it employs, we might ask about the genre of *Une*

Tempête as well. The play seems, almost until its end, to be building toward a decisive confrontation between Caliban and Prospero. The first word Caliban voices is “Uhuru!” (*A Tempest* [hereinafter *AT*], Crispin trans., 18), and he loses no opportunity to challenge Prospero’s claims to dominance. But when, in the play’s penultimate scene (3.4), he advances toward Prospero with sword drawn, he turns suddenly, Hamlet-like, and cannot do the deed. Prospero refuses to defend himself, and Caliban refuses to be a “murderer” (*AT*, Crispin trans., 52; Césaire uses *assassin* [*UT* 79]). So Prospero takes him prisoner. When he gives Prospero a grand telling-off toward the end of Act 3, capped with a song to the war god Shango, one may feel, with Raphaël Confiant, that the play is all talk and no action, a conflict that goes nowhere: Prospero, Caliban, and Ariel, says Confiant, “vont s’affronter dans des dialogues grinçants, sardoniques par endroits, qui ne laissent place à aucun message final d’espoir” (“confront one another in scathing, sometimes sardonic dialogues that leave no place for any final message of hope”). The play’s vision is “plus nihiliste qu’humaniste” (179–179 [“more nihilist than humanist”]), summed up in Caliban’s readiness to blow up himself and the island if that is required to destroy Prospero—a scenario that recalls the fate of Louis Delgrès, the Martiniquan revolutionary who in 1802 detonated his powder supply and blew up Fort Matouba on Guadeloupe rather than surrender to the French; his desperate act of resistance is praised in Césaire’s poem “Mémorial de Louis Delgrès” (Césaire, *Collected* 330–337).

Yet the play does not end with Prospero’s recapture of Caliban. There is a brief epilogue set in the distant future. We see Prospero grown old, his gestures “automatiques et étriqués” (*UT* 91 [“automatic and stiff”]), his speech becoming “appauvri et stéréotypé” (*UT* 91 [“weak and conventional”]). Caliban has given him the slip and disappeared into the interior of the island. Prospero fires randomly in his general direction, which for an English-speaking audience might evoke the steamer firing blindly into Africa in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Invisible to the audience, Caliban shouts not the Swahili *Uhuru* but the French “*La Liberté*” mingled with the presemantic cry “Ohé.”

Some critics—Rob Nixon, Clément Mbom, and Judith Holland Sarnecki among them—have read this final scene if not as Caliban’s victory then as the harbinger of victory, if only because, in Sarnecki’s words, “it is Caliban, not Prospero, who controls the ending, an ending left open for future generations to write” (284). Others, such as Dayan, Steve Alquist, and Philippe Basabose, read it either as a hopeless impasse, as

does Confiant, or as utterly inconclusive. Basabose claims that the play “se refuse à toute clôture” (404 [“refuses closure altogether”]). If one remembers that Serreau had directed *En attendant Godot*, it is not too much of a stretch to imagine Caliban and Prospero as Beckett’s Vladimir and Estragon, who, despite their quarrels and repeated declarations of “I’m going,” remain tied to each other and to the same spot.

Caliban’s situation is recognizable in a Caribbean context as *marronage*: that of slaves who, having escaped their master, lived in a protected space in the interior, relying on their wits, their mutual support, and their knowledge of the terrain to remain free. (Césaire used *marronage* as a metaphor for escape from European culture in his poem “Le verbe marronner—à René Depestre, poète haïtien” [*Collected* 368–371]). But maroons were hunted and often captured; theirs was a provisional freedom that might end at any time. Prospero, though weakened in body and mind and deprived of Ariel’s surveillance services, is still the stronger: he still has the gun. If he finds Caliban, that is the end of Caliban’s *marronage*.

Reading within the context of the Caribbean of 1968, one might see an analogy to Césaire’s Martinique, which in 1946 became a *département* of France—with Césaire himself as one of its deputies to the National Assembly. At the time, Césaire supported this incorporation into the former master’s nation, though he later regretted doing so (see Arnold, *Modernism*). As a *département*, Martinique was no longer a colony, but neither was it anything like independent. One might see in the impasse of Caliban and Prospero an implicit self-criticism—much as E. Anthony Hurley finds an implied self-portrait in Césaire’s book about Toussaint Louverture, who led the Haitian fight against slavery but could not take the final step toward independence.

If we read the play in the context of Africa at the end of the 1960s, the map becomes blurry. There were by then many newly independent states, few of them stable or democratic. Senegal, led by Césaire’s friend Léopold Sédar Senghor, was faring well, but many—such as Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Sudan, Algeria, and Mali—were either under single-party rule or unstable, caught up in a series of coups d’état. Guinea’s leader, Sékou Touré, whom Césaire had at first supported, had become a repressive dictator. In these new states, the problems were no longer exactly those of Prospero and Caliban. Only in Rhodesia and South Africa, where blacks struggled against apartheid regimes, did the parable still fit. Caliban’s cry of “Uhuru,” though first raised in Kenya, had been adopted in South Africa as well.

In the context of the United States and Europe at the end of the

1960s, the play is harder to map. The year 1968 was a watershed, bringing student strikes at both the Sorbonne and Columbia University, the “Prague Spring”, and Lyndon Johnson’s withdrawal from his reelection campaign in the face of mounting opposition to the war in Vietnam. It was also the year when Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were assassinated and when the police beat demonstrators outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Malcolm X had been assassinated in 1965. It is hard to connect all this uproar with Césaire’s frozen standoff between Prospero and Caliban.

One critic, Serge Bourjea, proposes Ariel, instead of Caliban, as the play’s central protagonist. He points out that the initial confrontational exchange between Caliban and Ariel, in Act 2, Scene 1 (*UT* 35–38; *AT*, Crispin trans., 26–28), ends in mutual respect, even brotherhood. He acknowledges that Ariel is suspect as a collaborator with Prospero: “Il a «passé la ligne» en se faisant l’allié, le suppôt au moins objectif du Maître” (56 [“He has ‘crossed the line’ in making himself the ally, the agent, at least outwardly, of the Master”]). But Bourjea endorses Ariel’s argument that, for now, Prospero is too strong to be overthrown. In a manner that recalls not only Martin Luther King but also Mahatma Gandhi, Ariel advocates nonviolent resistance. Nor does he fear to criticize Prospero openly. When he gains his release at the end of the play, he sings—to Prospero’s consternation—of becoming a bird singing to quicken the slave’s longing for freedom. For Bourjea, Ariel, despite being an “individu non spontanément recommandable” (56 [“someone you wouldn’t necessarily approve of at first”]), is the necessary third term of a dialectic of which Prospero and Caliban are thesis and antithesis. Ariel is the mediator and the one who, by moving the action forward, creates the possibility of change. If Caliban’s element is earth, Ariel’s is not air so much as water: he is “celui qui sait la mer” (60 [“the one who knows the sea”]). If Caliban is all assertion, Ariel is all questioning and indirection, the figure of the poet, who does not so much write history as unwrite or unread it (59 [“la désécrire ou . . . la dé-lire”]). While Caliban and Prospero remain gridlocked in mutual defiance, Ariel circulates freely and invisibly.

This argument is attractive yet hard to accept entirely. Just after Caliban is recaptured by Prospero, Ariel vanishes. One might claim that by persuading Prospero to release him, Ariel has indeed changed Prospero and taken a first step toward the freedom of all. Or one might say that Prospero releases him only because he no longer needs him, that Prospero’s conduct toward Caliban shows that he has not really changed, and that to secure one’s own release while abandoning a “brother” is an

act of opportunism rather than resistance. Still, Bourjea shows that Ariel is not dismissable as a stock figure of craven assimilation.

In any event, Ariel's songs have a certain power. Arnold remarks that they are "patterned on a neosymbolist model" and speculates that they may implicitly be self-critique ("Césaire" 244–245). Almost nothing has been said about them elsewhere. I want to close this consideration of *Une Tempête* by looking at the first of them:

Alezan des sables
leur morsure
Mouiroir des vagues
langueur pure.
Où s'épuise la vague.
tous ici venez
par la main vous tenez
et dansez.

Blondeur des sables,
leur brûlure!
langueur des vagues
Mouiroir pur.
Ici des lèvres lèchent et purlèchent
nos blessures. (*UT* 29–30)

Richard Miller's 1986 translation, at present the most readily available English version, offers the following where this song should be:

Sandy seashore, deep blue sky,
Surf is rising, sea birds fly
Here the lover finds delight,
Sun at noontime, moon at night.
Join hands, lovers, join the dance,
Find contentment, find romance.

Sandy seashore, deep blue sky,
Cares will vanish . . . so can I . . . (*AT*, Miller trans., 19)

Apart from its fifth line, this ditty has no connection to the French; it is not a translation but a replacement. One might defend the substitution of a song more accessible to an English-speaking audience; Crispin suggests substituting Shakespeare's "O brave new world, that hath such

creatures in't!" for the two lines from Baudelaire spoken by Antonio in Act 2, Scene 2 (*AT*, Crispin trans., 63). Miller's substitution, however, is doggerel (Rachel Ney, appropriately horrified, called it "the Club Med version"). Even that might be defensible if the original were doggerel—the bad neoclassical poems of the court poetaster Chanlatte in *Christophe*, for example, should be translated into bad heroic couplets. But Ariel's song is not the sappy tourist poetry Miller has supplied. It describes the island as a "mouroir" and a place where the waves come to lick at wounds. Even Crispin's far more scrupulous translation misses the creepiness of *mouroir* by translating it as "resting-place." *Mouroir* is a derogatory term for an old-folks' home, and it differs by only one letter from its etymological source, the word *mourir*. "Dying-place" would be closer. And while licking one's wounds may at first soothe them, after a time it will irritate them and slow their healing. By the end of the play, the island has indeed become a "mouroir" for the aged Prospero, and the psychic wounds he and Caliban have inflicted on each other remain fresh and raw. The song turns out to be prophetic of the static deadlock of the final scene.

Une Tempête comes late in the sequence of Caribbean rewritings of *The Tempest*. As Rob Nixon points out, the *Tempest* motif peters out in the 1970s, as with independence Prospero moves offshore (576). *The Tempest* makes a good analogy for the situation under slavery, when the white master lived on the plantation and created a theater of power by punishing disobedient slaves. To some extent, this proximity continued in exploitive plantation work after emancipation. By the time Césaire wrote *Une Tempête*, however, "Prospero" was becoming an absent presence, found somewhere behind the desk of a multinational corporation. Césaire wanted to create a "théâtre des pays sous-développés" ("theatre of the underdeveloped countries"), but to do so in such a way that "le particulier, l'individuel . . . aboutit inévitablement à l'universel" (qtd. in Laville 240 ["the particular, the individual, leads inevitably to the universal"]). *Une Tempête* registers the collision of this universalist project with the diminishing power of *The Tempest*'s plot to bind diverse histories of colonialism and its aftermath in a common narrative.

La Tragédie du roi Christophe and the "Épaisseur du texte dramatique" ("Density of the dramatic text")

Rob Nixon remarks that *The Tempest* "lacks a sixth act which might have been enlisted for representing relations among Caliban, Ariel, and Pros-

pero once they entered a postcolonial era, or rather (in Harry Magdoff's phrase) an era of "imperialism without colonies" (576). And Joan Dayan proposes *La Tragédie du roi Christophe* as that sixth act (150). The latter play tells the story of Christophe's rise to power in the early years of Haitian independence. After Jean-Jacques Dessalines was assassinated in 1806, Christophe refused the presidency of the Haitian Republic, instead setting up a monarchy in the northern part of the country in 1811. He put his people to forced labor in the construction of his palace, Sans-Souci, and of La Citadelle Laferrière, an enormous fortress built partly for defense against French reinvasion and partly as a symbol of black achievement. His exactions caused growing resentment until, in 1820, the army and the people turned against him, and Christophe committed suicide.

Seen as a sixth act for *The Tempest*, *Christophe* might seem to confirm Prospero's doubts about Caliban's readiness for self-rule. But *Christophe* resists being read within the frame of *The Tempest* (or proleptically within the frame of the as-yet-unwritten *Une Tempête*) by its difference in genre and its different way of treating the relationship between universals and particulars. It resists boiling down, and unless anticolonial romance is allowed to have an unhappy ending, it especially resists that allegorical emplotment. As A. James Arnold remarks, "la structure ouverte du drame de la décolonisation s'oppose à la structure fermée de la tragédie" ("D'Haiti" 140 ["the open structure of the drama of decolonization is opposed to the closed structure of tragedy"]). We might question, with David Scott, whether tragedy is necessarily closed or rather "opens up space for ethical-political theorizing about the postcolonial present" (176), but the disparity in dramatic form and idiom separating *Christophe* from the tempests of Shakespeare and Césaire remains wide and obvious.

Admittedly, critics have often taken *Christophe*'s depiction of political events in the early years of Haitian independence as a commentary on the politics of newly independent black nations in Africa,⁴ thus mapping one story onto another in a quasi-allegorical manner. The play hints at this parallelism at such moments as Césaire's anachronistic note identifying the court's master of ceremonies as a "white man sent by the TESCO (Technical, Educational, and Scientific Cooperation Organization) in order to provide technical assistance to underdeveloped regions" or Christophe's sigh of "Poor Africa! Or rather, poor Haiti!" (*TRC* 49).⁵ But apart from these moments, "Africa" within the play is primarily evoked as a lost past, belonging more to myth than to history.⁶

The registers of history and myth turn out to be tangled together. Césaire did historical research, and virtually all his characters depict actual persons. Many of the most seemingly improbable incidents in the play—such as Christophe’s firing a cannon on a sleeping peasant or Hugonin’s dog impersonation—are attested in historical documents.⁷ But the central characters Christophe and Hugonin begin to outgrow their historical referents, acquiring mythical and symbolic meanings as the play unfolds. This accretion of myth and symbolism effects, in Régis Antoine’s phrase, “un dévoilement du sens” (83 [“unveiling of meaning”]) over the course of the play, so that our sense of the characters’ identities and significance alters. In this respect, too, the play differs from *Une Tempête*, where the identities of Prospero, Caliban, and Ariel remain fixed by the terms of the allegory.

Christophe is also more linguistically diverse than *Un Tempête*, ranging from the Kréyòl of its *vaudou* chants through Pétion’s parliamentary rhetoric to the visionary poetry of Christophe; there are even linguistic registers specific to certain characters (Antoine 16–19). In these and other ways, *Christophe* has greater “épaisseur,” that is, greater density or thickness (Antoine 91). It is also, in these respects, closer to Shakespeare’s typical practice than is *Une Tempête*. Finally, it is more resistant to paraphrase—and to translation.

The difficulties of translation begin with the word *nègre*, which appears frequently and most often in Christophe’s mouth. The major conflicts and paradoxes of the play are to some extent latent within the divided meaning of this word. By 1961, the idea of *négritude*—a word coined by Césaire in the *Cahier* (1939)—had been around for a long time. Though the word *nègre* still retained its abusive impact in colloquial usage, it was in common use among intellectuals and writers either as a neutral descriptor, such as *noir*, or as an honorific designation of a black person with an awakened consciousness of black identity.⁸ (The term *noir* was, of course, also available to Césaire, but it appears far less frequently than does *nègre*, usually as an adjective rather than as a substantive.) All three valences of *nègre* appear in *Christophe*, but it is not always easy to say which is intended; one might say that there is a continuum from most laudatory to most pejorative with some uncertainty in between. Many of the instances of *nègre* are cast in the plural; they appear at moments when Christophe perceives his people as rabble. But even the plural instances can be ambiguous, as in Christophe’s retort to his wife: “Je demande trop aux hommes! Mais pas assez aux nègres, Madame!” (*TRC* 59 [“I demand too much of men! But not enough of nig-

gers/blacks, Madame!”]). The difficulty is that Christophe’s emphasis on his own messianic rescue of his people *depends* on his assumption of their nullity and degradation—only as transformed by his intervention will they become *nègres* in the honorific sense.

When Christophe tells the mulatto Vastey “tu es nègre!” he means it as a compliment—even though Vastey “n’est pas nègre,” the king wants to claim him as a racial ally at a time when others have turned against him (*TRC* 145–146). But when Christophe scornfully claims that before his regime, there were only “quelques nègres au cou pelé” (*TRC* 97 [“some burnt-necked niggers”]), he clearly means to disparage. Sometimes, even when the term functions honorifically, there is an ironic twist on the pejorative meaning, as when he shows a work gang “comment travail un nègre conséquent” (*TRC* 103). One could translate this phrase as “how a black man of consequence works,” but “nigger of consequence” better captures Christophe’s oxymoronic wit.

Femi Ojo-Ade, in his critique of Manheim’s translation, objects to the translation of *nègre* as “nigger”: “The word ‘nigger’ is strictly American and is therefore disqualified from worldwide circulation.” He believes that by making Christophe use this word, Manheim overemphasizes his contempt for his people and makes him “too much of a villain” (Ojo-Ade 16).⁹ It is certainly true that the discursive history of the word *nigger* does not parallel that of *nègre*. It would be offensive, for instance, to translate Mbom’s phrase “le monde nègre” as “the nigger world” instead of “the black world.” But *nègre* is still in most contexts a pejorative, not a neutral synonym for *noir*. *Le Petit Larousse* (2007) cautions, “La connotation fréquemment raciste de ce mot rend préférable l’emploi du terme *noir*” (“The frequently racist connotation of this word makes the use of the term *noir* preferable”).

Against Ojo-Ade’s objection one must weigh A. James Arnold’s criticism of Emile Snyder’s revision of Lionel Abel and Yvan Goll’s translation of the *Cahier*. The Abel-Goll version “stressed ‘niggers’ and ‘nig-gerness’ from beginning to end,” says Arnold, while Snyder’s “sees only Negroes and Negritude” (“*Cahier*” 35). Both versions

flatten out quite incomprehensibly the essential dramatic tension of the poem. . . . Depending upon the point of view represented, blackness may be translated as it is seen by racist whites, or by blacks having incorporated the racist viewpoint, or again by blacks who accept and proclaim their blackness affirmatively. . . . The refusal to recognize that “nigger” is connoted by the slave context of “Les blancs disent que c’était un bon nègre” comes close to bowdlerizing Césaire. (“*Cahier*” 35–36)

But whereas Arnold finds in the *Cahier* a progression from white racism through black incorporation of white racism to black self-affirmation that can guide the translator's decisions, Césaire's Christophe remains a self-divided figure almost to the very end of the play; it is not always easy to judge the proportions of contempt and affirmation in his references to blackness.

Césaire said of Christophe that "il incarne la négritude" (qtd. in Mbom 64 ["he is the incarnation of *négritude*"]), but much of what he does and says is directly contrary to *négritude* as concisely summarized by Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (with a quotation from Césaire himself):

[T]he characteristics of black culture on which all interpreters of negritude agreed were antipodal to the Western values of rationalism, technology, Christianity, and individualism. They spelled out not the control of nature by reason and science but a joyful participation in it; not its control by technology but a coexistence with other forms of life; not the Christianity of the missions but the celebration of very ancient pagan rites; not the praise of individual achievement but the fraternity and communal soul of the clan, the tribe, as well as the love of the ancestors. "A culture is born not when Man grasps the world, but when he is grasped . . . by it." (Eshleman and Smith 7)¹⁰

But the king's rhetoric is full of seizing and grasping: "Batôn du commandement / sur toi / de ma race qui sert / je serre le poing! / Je serre! Nos poings!" (*TRC* 40 ["Rod of command, / Around you, I, / Of my servile race, / clench my fist! / I clench! Our fists!"]). Christophe is obsessed with the conquest of nature by technology—the rationalization of agriculture, for example, or the construction of gigantic buildings. He sees Haitian nature as a nullity of dust and debris, its only structures technologically primitive "terre et chaume, le bousillage désassemblé" (*TRC* 45 ["Earth and thatch, crumbling mud-wall"]). He defies nature by ordering his people to work in a wind that "could dehorn an ox" (*TRC* 103 ["décorner les boeufs"]). Nor is he any respecter of ancient primitive rites and the primacy of the community. He suppresses the African-derived rites of *vaudou* and is crowned king by a bishop from France. When he claims that his people must achieve something impossible, "contre le Sort, contre l'Histoire, contre la Nature" (*TRC* 62 ["against Fate, against History, against Nature"]), he sets himself against the organic vision of *négritude*.

Nick Nesbitt reads the play as a concrete instantiation of the Hegelian

master-slave dialectic, which Césaire, along with an elite of other Francophone intellectuals of his generation, had studied with Kojève in Paris in the 1930s. In trying to “prime a dialectic of self-overcoming” (Nesbitt 133) in the Haitian people by setting them to forced labor, Christophe does not reckon on the consequence: having become conscious of their own agency through their work on the Citadel, they become capable of overthrowing Christophe. Nesbitt sees in the play a moment in which the dialectic goes into gridlock, as the “Haitian Enlightenment remains blocked, stuck at the unmediated extremes of Christophe’s idealism and the peasants’ passive suffering” (135).

Nesbitt’s account, though compelling, slights the role of Afro-Caribbean myth. Hegelian dialectic is itself one element in a metadialectic between African and European discourses. Dialectic is a discourse of European modernity, the order that Christophe, as head of state, must unavoidably enter in his dealings with the modern nations of Europe and North America. But pent up within this modernized Christophe is indeed, as Césaire claimed, an “incarnation of negritude.” According to Hegel, tragedy results from the unavoidable collision of two principles, each right in itself but mutually incompatible, and Christophe faces such an impasse with respect to modernity and myth. As head of state, he must bring Haiti into modernity if the nation is to survive economically and militarily.¹¹ But authenticity for him, and for the Haitian people, is grounded in symbolic orders that are incompatible with modernity: the gods and mythical narratives brought from Africa, creolized as the *lwa* of *vaudou*. Afro-Caribbean allusions permeate the play, having at their center the identification of Christophe with Shango.

Robert Farris Thompson’s concise summary of the Shango myth reveals the precise parallelism with Césaire’s Christophe:

Once upon a time . . . Shàngó was recklessly experimenting with a leaf that had the power to bring down lightning from the skies and inadvertently caused the roof of the palace to be set ablaze. In the blaze his wife and children were killed. Half crazed with grief and guilt, Shàngó went to a spot outside his royal capital and hanged himself. . . . He thus suffered the consequences of playing arrogantly with God’s fire, and became lightning itself. (Thompson 85)

Before becoming a god, Shango was, like Christophe, a king. Like Shango, Christophe through his arrogance destroys his own family—the Haitian people, which he repeatedly describes as a family of which

he is the patriarch. Like Christophe, Shango dies a suicide. The lightning strike that ignites the powder and blows up Christophe's "bâtiment du Trésor" ("Treasure Storehouse") at the end of Act 2 literalizes the myth.

The play uses contrasting metaphoric registers to perform the struggle between its two modes of interpretation for control of the play's meanings. In the Hegelian context, Christophe is a builder, an architect, a shaper of raw material. He must force Haiti to enter modernity by building the visible and invisible structures of a modern nation-state. If his people live in dwellings of mud and straw, he must bring stone. If the people are too fond of dancing (*TRC* 60, 85–87), he must make them work. If the people prove intractable, he must turn them into what they are not.

In the course of the play, the metaphors for this transformation become more and more industrialized. Early in the play (1.3), Vastey praises Christophe's "formidables mains de potier, pétrissant l'argile haïtienne" (*TRC* 32 ["magnificent potter's hands, kneading the clay of Haiti"]). This homely metaphor at first seems nonthreatening. Pottery is practiced by independent craftspeople who are not subordinated to rationalized production. But the Haitian subject is not the potter but the clay—agency is reserved for Christophe. And it is a short step down from clay to "merde" ("shit"), which is all Christophe acknowledges in Haiti prior to his own agency (*TRC* 97). Later in the first act (1.4), Christophe uses a more industrial metaphor: he says that "le matériau humain lui-même est à refondre" (*TRC* 50 ["the human material itself needs recasting"]). Haiti becomes a foundry and then an "atelier" (*TRC* 50)—a workshop, but in prerevolutionary times, the term referred to a work gang of slaves. By the end of the second act (2.8) the labor is heavily regimented, with an exacting foreman and unwilling laborers divided into groups of one hundred (*TRC* 104).

At the same time that Christophe speaks, and is described, in metaphors of a master workman shaping the mere raw materials of his people, there is also a counterlanguage describing him not as a rational architect of the state but as intuitive or even mystical in his divination of Haiti's destiny. In the same speech that likens Christophe to a potter, Vastey says, "je ne sais s'il sait, mais mieux, il sent, la flairant, la ligne qui serpente de l'avenir" (*TRC* 32 ["I won't say he knows, but better still, he senses, smelling it, the serpentine path of the future"]). Here, the rationality of knowledge is revised to the physicality of brute perception—smell—and the straight line of reason becomes "serpentine."

Perhaps the most important manifestation of Christophe's resistance to modernist rationality is the poetry that he speaks. The style of his soliloquies is rather like that of Césaire's own lyric poetry, which is to say associative, formally free, and at times surrealistic in its surprising juxtapositions of images. It is the polar opposite of the predictable neoclassic verse spouted by Chanlatte. And Christophe is most a poet when he is alone or speaking to just one person rather than performing his public role as king. Any translation of the play—and any realization of it on stage—must convey the poetry of Christophe's speech, lest the readers or audience miss the power of his vision and see only his cruelty and failure.

Pierre Laville (252) notes that the play alternates between “les scènes de groupes [qui] sont tragi-comiques et volontiers bouffones” (“group scenes that are tragicomic and intentionally clownish”) and “scènes d'idées” (“scenes of ideas”) that present “un nombre relativement réduit de personnages ou un dialogue équivalent à un monologue déguisé du personnage principal” (“a relatively small number of characters or a dialogue that amounts to a disguised monologue by the protagonist”). This alternation in the play translates the conflict between the grandiose vision of Christophe's soliloquies and the lived experience of his people, Christophe the poet and Christophe the Westernizing autocrat. In the intimate scenes, the energetic realism of the crowd scenes dissolves and the mythical imagination takes flight. In his rapt vision of the Citadel at the end of Act 1, Christophe disastrously fuses his poetic imagination with his political will. In so doing, he replaces the Haitian people with their reification in a literalized symbol.

Antoine, Laville, and Nesbitt all remark on the contrast, within the play, of the slow-moving and cyclical vision of time found among the common people and Christophe's constant evocation of clock time and hurry (Antoine 68–69; Nesbitt 134–135; Laville 250). Laville (250) notes a progression in the temporal mode of the play, from the rapid pace of the first act to the slower beginning of the second, followed by a quickening as the harbingers of Christophe's fall arrive, to the almost complete stasis toward the end of the third. As clock time winds down to stasis, the historically mimetic, critical, and comic register of the play gives way to the oneiric and mythic. Christophe dies divested of his kingship—and with it his entanglement in the rational and instrumental discourse of state power—but in full possession of his poetic gift.

The turn away from the European dialectical mode to the African

mythical mode registers in the progression of the ceremonial scenes. In the coronation ceremony, Christophe promises, in Latin, to serve the Catholic Church, but the people break into chants to the *vaudou lwa*. This dynamic is reversed in the later service for the Feast of the Assumption. By this time, Christophe has offended both the *lwa*—by his suppression of *vaudou*—and the Christian God, by violating his coronation oath, by having Archbishop Brelle murdered, and by demanding that the Feast of the Assumption be celebrated at Limonade rather than the cathedral at Cap Haïtien. As Juan de Dios Gonzales, Brelle's replacement, intones the litany, it is Christophe who replies with invocations of the *lwa*. Then Christophe sees the ghost of Brelle rising behind Juan de Dios, and he collapses, crying, “Qui a chanté sur moi le Bakulu Baka” (*TRC* 128 [“Who has set Bakulu Baka on me?”]). This is the turning point of the action. The king is thereafter weakened and partially paralyzed; the man who prided himself on grasping and shaping his people and his kingdom has himself been seized by a power stronger than himself, and his kingdom dissolves around him.

When Hugonin comes onstage to announce Christophe's death, he identifies himself as Baron Samedi, one of the *gede*, or death *lwa*. Looking back at the play, one is likely to revise one's understanding of it in the light of this revelation. Hugonin's wordplay, frequently obscene, is indeed characteristic of Baron Samedi. What if Hugonin, the doglike sycophant, has been Baron Samedi all along, reversing the apparent power relation between himself and the king? What if the parodic laughter of the earlier crowd scenes has been the unnerving laughter associated with the *gede*, terrifying and ridiculous at once (Pestre de Almeida 68–69)? Césaire alerts us to the precarious balance of tone in his directive for the first act, which is to be acted “en style bouffon et parodique, où le sérieux et le tragique se font brusquement jour par déchirures d'éclair” (*TRC* 18 [“in a clownish and parodic style, where the serious and the tragic suddenly dawn in rendings of lightning”]). This instability of tone presents a challenge to the actors and the director—and to a translator as well.

In translating the play, Rachel Ney and I found that an awareness of its Afro-Caribbean symbolic register influenced our decisions. The mythical register has to be discernible even when it is subordinated to the dialectic of will and power. So, for example, when Christophe envisions the Citadel as an “Assaut du ciel ou reposoir du soleil” (*TRC* 62), we were prepared to render this as an “Assault of heaven or rest-place of

the sun.” But then we came upon Métraux’s gloss: “Reposoir: Tree or any other place where a *loa* is supposed to live” (377). Our current draft, accordingly, has “sun’s dwelling-place.” When the African page commits Christophe to Ifé, “A l’origine / biface” (*TRC* 152), we tried to evoke both the primitive stone tool and the “thunder-ax” of Shango: “At the double-faced blade / of origin.” We puzzled over Vastey’s “Roi sur nos épaules, nous t’avons conduit / par la montagne, au plus haut de la crue, / ici.” Should *crue* have its usual sense of high water or flood, or is it used in its less common metaphorical sense to refer to the highest part of the mountain? Might the apparent incongruity of the metaphor of high water in a mountainous landscape have something to do with the fact that the mythical kingdom of Ifé appears in some versions as a city on top of a mountain but in others as a city at the bottom of the sea (Antoine 97; Case 22)? Or, as Antoine suggests, has Christophe been carried to his destiny by the *crue* of revolutionary fervor? In the end, we tried to preserve the hieratic opacity of the original: “King on our shoulders we have carried you here / by way of the mountain, in the time of the cresting of waters.”

I end this essay of generalization by brooding on minute particulars because it is through the mediation of such minute particulars that we discern what sort of text we are reading, what its intertextual engagements are, and how it positions itself in relation to these. Only then are we in a position to generalize. Even then, of course, one cannot avoid some degree of misrecognition and mistranslation, since no description and no translation can be fully adequate. But if we approach postcolonial texts with the awareness that they may resist, revise, or even ignore our habitual categories of explanation, we are less likely to flatten them under the will-to-theory.

The complex language, tone, and dramatic form of *Christophe* permit a complex judgment on the protagonist. The tragedy of the play, says Édouard Glissant, is that “the resolution of the dissolution [of colonialism] miscarries,” as “the formerly colonized adopts the manners, strategies, and injustices of the former colonizer” (“Aimé Césaire” 122). But as David Bradby observes, the play’s “structure is eminently Brechtian, since every judgement that appears to be made about the king and the political situation is then undermined by a different judgement in the following scene” (148). In the end, Christophe is both monster and hero, his story both a cautionary tale and a praise song—there is something splendid as well as something horrible in him, and the play challenges us to confront these contraries and disentangle them if we can.

Notes

1. Both Miller and Crispin translate this as “Master of Ceremonies,” though that misses the emphasis on play and performance in *jeu*.

2. Richard Miller loosely translates this as “slave,” while Philip Crispin makes it “black labourer”—accurate enough, but a long-winded birdcall.

3. *Nindien* is the Haitian Kréyòl word for “Indian.”

4. Lilyan Kesteloot’s article “*La Tragédie du roi Christophe* ou les indépendances africaines au miroir d’Haïti” sets an early and influential precedent for emphasis on the African parallel.

5. All English-language quotations of *The Tragedy of King Christophe* are from the translation by Breslin and Ney, in manuscript. The page numbers refer to the French-language edition.

6. Nesbitt and Antoine remark that Césaire’s depiction of Christophe may be read as an implicit critique of Sékou Touré of Guinea (Nisbett 112–117) and François “Papa Doc” Duvalier, dictator of Haiti from 1957 to 1971 (Antoine 78–79).

7. For Césaire’s use of source material, see Harris, *L’Humanisme*.

8. Arnold (*Modernism* 34–35) points out that the noun *nègre* had already been used in a neutral descriptive sense in *Les nègres* (1927) by Maurice Delafosse.

9. But the term *nigger* is not exclusively American, as any reader of Conrad can attest.

10. The Césaire quotation is from Leiner (xvii).

11. Christophe was not wrong in believing that a strong economy and military were needed. In 1825, just five years after his death, the French exacted, by threat of invasion, crippling reparations for their lost “property.”

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AFTERWORD

**How This Book Reads You:
Looking beyond *Analyzing World Fiction*:
*New Horizons in Narrative Theory***

WILLIAM ANTHONY NERICCIO

[Ramon Barreto] understood the restlessness of people made of paper. . . . And on those days, when it was lonely to remember her, he stuffed his mouth with tissue paper and crumpled the Sunday news, and at night he pressed the paper between his knees.

SALVADOR PLASCENCIA, *THE PEOPLE OF PAPER*

After glimpsing the “new horizons” through the words of Frederick Aldama and his intrepid crew of fiercely intelligent critics, what is left to be seen or said about what we have seen? The worlds of literature are changing, or (to adapt Salvador Plascencia’s visionary fictional nightmare) the people of paper are evolving, and the tools we use to parse these facsimile/ersatz oddities need to change and *are changing* as well—a vivid transmogrification is afoot, to say the least.

Working my way through a manuscript of Frederick Aldama’s curated volume, the book you’ve just finished, I rediscovered how deliciously impossible it will be to claim mastery in comparative literature or even in American studies. The diasporic cacophony of narrative threads may well dance just beyond or far beyond our ability to map. (My present fave? The chain of affection, translation, and obsession that ties Joyce to Faulkner, Faulkner to Borges, Borges to García Márquez, García Márquez to Toni Morrison, Morrison to Zadie Smith, and Zadie Smith to [antagonistically, *por supuesto*] David Shields [he of *Reality Hunger: A Manifesto*], who would have it that the end of fiction is upon us. Shields needs to spend more time with Oscar Wao, if you ask me—or just let Junot Díaz hit him upside the head.)

Aldama’s apt editorial self-issued mandate, to eschew “editorial dog-

matism,” has placed him in the unenviable position of issuing a collection that might appear at first glance to offer all things to all readers, but the narratological plotline is there for all to see and assimilate: both *Analyzing World Fiction* and the tools for analyzing it are in flux—aesthetics and hermeneutics look into a mirror and see metamorphosis. Where the drab, turgid days of New Criticism lent us some way to ponder and enjoy a staid stability, the first part of the twenty-first century finds us in chaos and mutation. Forgive this recovering Catholic’s impulse for regression, forgive your would-be priest’s penchant for papist metaphors, but what Aldama and crew capture in this collection is an ever-evolving matrix of *transubstantiation*, which, the *Catholic Encyclopedia* admonishes (picture Mother Superior with a stick), “is *not a conversion simply so called*, but a substantial conversion (*conversio substantialis*), inasmuch as one thing is *substantially* or *essentially* converted into another (Herbermann et al. 580 [emphasis added]). The MLA, it seems, has a healthy future.

Into and out of the Book You Are Reading

Aldama begins the book playfully, the trope of the primer guiding his hands with “How to Use This Book.” But ultimately, as I suggest in my own title, it is the book itself that is using us, pushing us here and there in our understandings, making us aware simultaneously both of the range of world fiction out there and of the myriad methodologies necessary for ferreting out those texts’ complexities. Brian Richardson’s “U.S. Ethnic and Postcolonial Fiction” ultimately posits a means for fusing postcolonial theory (the spawn of Spivak, Guha, Said, and their ilk) with the best cutting-edge findings making their way out of the American Studies Association—in a way, Richardson surfs the waves (we are all now caught by them) following on the tsunami of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and the similar flux and flow brought on by *This Bridge Called My Back* (Gloria Anzaldúa’s and Cherrie Moraga’s landmark anthology)—the waves merge as multicultural America’s literary armies combine with postcolonial second-wavers such as Zadie Smith and Hanif Kureishi. Out of the corroborative oscillations of this fusion, much has and will come. One thing is for sure—one shoe does not and will not fit all! Dan Shen’s musings on challenges to any universal narrative poetics

is a welcome and bracing study that cleverly foregrounds the need for a neo-comparative literature renaissance; for those of us who find the possibility of a univalent narrative theory possible (or even desirable), Shen's conclusions on the peculiarities of Chinese modes of speech and thought are heady indeed—we'll need a bigger closet.

It stands to reason that narratological meditations on fictions born from the clash/marriage/fusion of cultures will necessarily have to do yeoman's service attending to the linguistic, cultural, and, yes, narratological consequences of these couplings. And it should be noted that the best contemporary hermeneutic meditation on this phenomenon happens to be *not* a scholarly essay but a novel: Junot Díaz's *Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007). Few pieces of expository prose even come close to matching the knowing, subtle mastery of the consequences of colonization, exploitation, emigration, slavery, thuggery, demagoguery, and the like that appears throughout the pages of Díaz's masterpiece. Like Eduardo Galeano's epic trilogy *Memory of Fire*, Díaz's volume reveals the contours of our "Great American Doom," the fucked and fucked-up legacy/destiny of Europe's imperialism in the Americas and the Americas' own mash-up of the same evident in the handsomely costumed, monstrous holocausts authored in the name of Uncle Sam by Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina in the Dominican Republic, Augusto Pinochet in Chile, and Maximiliano Hernandez Martínez in El Salvador, just to name a few. But Junot Díaz's "novel" does not stop there—it is also one of the first texts to prove that the semantic world of the novel itself is now experiencing serious impacts from other media: television and film, to be sure, but in Díaz's case, strikingly, comic books as well (graphic narratives, or *bandes dessinées*, for the more snobbish).

Without a rudimentary understanding of late twentieth-century comics, readers (spectators?) will be at sea reading parts of Díaz's opus. Documenting the "tumescent horribleness of [Oscar Wao's] proportions," Díaz describes Wao as looking like he comes "straight out of a Daniel Clowes comic book" and, elsewhere, like the "fat, blackish kid from Beto Hernandez's Palomar." To glean the meanings of these deceptively simple allusions, you have to jump-cut media, ditch semantic pleasures for those of a semiotic variety. Let me show you what I mean and what Díaz means for you to see by showing you first a snapshot of Clowes' grotesqueries snipped from a proof cover spread of *Like a Velvet Glove Cast in Iron* (1995):

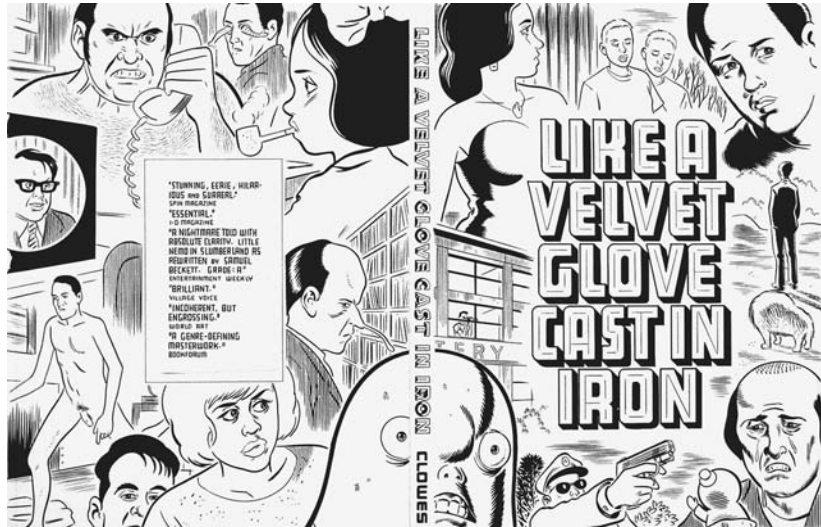


Figure 16.1. Daniel Clowes's *Like a Velvet Glove Cast in Iron*

And here, for your reading pleasure, is a panel from the first page of Gilbert Hernandez's short story, "Space Case"—a vignette from his *Blood of Palomar/Human Diastrophism* epic novel, recently republished in Gilbert Hernandez, *Palomar: The Heartbreak Soup Stories (A Love and Rockets Book)*—that uncannily pictures (literally) the complex minds/realities of young people, including children:

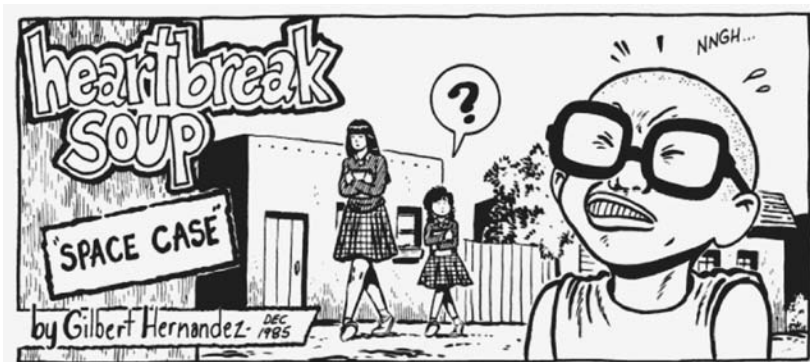


Figure 16.2. "Space Case," in Gilbert Hernandez's *Blood of Palomar: Human Diastrophism*

Junot Díaz uses Clowes, an American Breughel the elder, a master of the grotesque, to focus his narratological camera on Oscar Wao's outsider-ness, his *outsider art* peculiarities (and oddities) that set him apart and make him who he is; Díaz drops in the *shadings* of Beto Hernandez's Palomar, his fictional Central American Yoknapatawpha, for it is a world of brown and black wonders, a multicultural melting pot of diverse human entities. Díaz asks that we know the grotesque, spectacle-ular, spectacular, mixed-blood, mixed-race beauty that is Oscar—and we *know* him, and *only* know him, if our cognitive pathways are at least familiar with Clowes's and Hernandez's "comic" antics. Our eyes, touched by the black-and-white contours of Hernandez's and Clowes's visions, move to another beat.¹

Aldama's collection shows that readers of fiction and critics of fictional narrative are primed for a moment of sensual, mixed-media synesthesia. Where in the term's literary register classic synesthesia involves a "poetic description of a sense impression in terms of *another* sense, as in 'a *loud* perfume' or 'an *icy* voice' (*New Oxford American Dictionary*, s.v. *synesthesia* [emphasis added]), I am thinking more of a material, chiasmatic *transvestism*—a world where narrative fiction's synesthetic machinations are tough to control: a novel that is ruled by the logic of television (Hideki Murakami's *After Dark*); a film that is slave to the logic of books (Peter Greenaway's *Pillow Book*); a recording that mimics the beat of a city, such as Los Angeles (Beck's *Midnight Vultures*). In Aldama's volume, this is most evident in Jim Phelan's excellent picturing of "voice" in the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, by Zora Neale Hurston, and the criticism thereof; in Hilary Dannenberg's notes on the *televisualization* of people of color in the United Kingdom; in Patrick Colm Hogan's metametaphoric thoughts about Indian cinema; and in Arturo J. Aldama's feverish exegetic ponderings regarding Alfonso Cuarón's singular cinematic dystopia, *Children of Men*.²

Narratological Jump Cut

Were Aldama to ponder a sequel to this book, he should, I suggest, move to this visual domain; with your indulgence, here is a sketch of those pages.

We have come so far. It is all moving so fast. Let me take you back to 1944 and to a couple of panels from a "Dan Turner: Hollywood Detec-



Figure 16.3. “Zoot Suit Killers,” by Robert Leslie Bellem and Adolphe Barreaux, in *Hollywood Detective* no. 3

tive” comic-book story (penned by Robert Leslie Bellem, with art by Adolphe Barreaux) that appeared that year in *Hollywood Detective*, no. 3. The title of the lurid story, “Zoot Suit Killers” (see Fig. 16.3), requires an essay in and of itself.

Bellem and Barreaux conjure up one hell of a story, as Japanese and Japanese American ne’er-do-wells infiltrate the American West Coast hell-bent on terrorist destabilization by donning the garb and “skin” of Chicano zoot-suiters. Stateside, 1943 was a chilling year, with General John L. DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command, declaring before the House Naval Affairs Subcommittee, “A Jap’s a Jap. There is no way to determine their loyalty. This coast is too vulnerable. No Jap should come back to this coast except on a permit from my office.” (qtd. in Ina and Ina); Bellem and Barreaux give their *Hollywood Detective* readers a veritable smorgasbord of tasty ethnic treats as the specter of the Japanese enemy blends with the outrageously spectacular (in Guy Debord’s sense) zoot-suiters.

Let’s zoom forward now in time to December 2007 and to a panel

from Adrian Tomine's graphic novel *Shortcomings* (see Fig. 16.4). The panels features an early scene of flirtation and courtship between Ben Tanaka, a Japanese American from Corvallis, Oregon, who manages "University Theater," and Autumn Phelps, an Anglo-American "Artist/Performer/Moviehouse Employee" from Tacoma, Washington.

The leap from 1943 to 2007 moves us in space, time, and, for the purposes of this afterword, narratology. Where the wartime fiction of Bellem and Barreaux entertains us by metastasizing our fears of the enemy other, fusing exotic, camouflaged bodies of Japanese as zoot-suiters, Tomine's simple (and anything but simplistic) tracings are of another world, as an Asian American theater manager (a not too subtly veiled outing of Tanaka as a purveyor of representations) walks/falls into an



Figure 16.4. Ben Tanaka flirts with Autumn Phelps in Adrian Tomine's *Shortcomings*.

erotic intrigue, with voyeuristic bon mots spicing things up between the young, hot *güera* performance artist/employee and her artsy, somewhat self-loathing boss. Our leap here is not just in terms of theme and characterization, for hermeneutics also makes a cameo. Where the simple black-and-white pen-and-ink drawings of Barreaux speak to the exigencies of World War II-era pulp comic production, Tomine's nuanced "plain" expositions are part of a twenty-first-century wave of minimalism in comic book "syntax"—a world where Chris Ware, Dan Clowes, and Adrian Tomine lead the way as graphic innovators in a rapidly evolving medium.

We look to a new horizon, and, lo, it is in pictures.

Notes

1. See also my articles "Artif[r]acture: Virulent Pictures, Graphic Narrative and the Ideology of the Visual" and "Watching Critics, Watching Journalists, Watching Sheriffs, Watching Pee Wee Herman Watch: The Extraordinary Case of the Saturday Morning Children's Show Celebrity Who Masturbated."

2. For more on the televisualization of people, see my forthcoming *Eyegiene: Permutations of Subjectivity in the Televisual Age of Sex and Race*—a follow up to my *Tex[t]-Mex: Seductive Hallucination of the "Mexican" in America*.

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